



The Pedagogy of Detachment and Decolonial Options: Reflections from a ‘minoritized’ Point of View

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Abstract

Drawing on my personal story and experiences from ethnographic fieldwork among the Mbya-Guaraní of Northern Argentina, this article provides a critical perspective on the colonality of modern schooling. I illustrate the workings and effects of what I call a pedagogy of detachment, and argue for decolonial options to this pedagogy. The article starts from my personal history as a minoritized pupil in Argentina, and bring in cases from my experiences with the Norwegian school system as an immigrant, followed by vignettes of my ethnographic work in Northern Argentina. These examples aim to show the geopolitical scope of the detrimental impact of a colonial pedagogy that creates a disassociation and disconnection of the pupil with their bodily experience, origins and socio-natural environment. I argue that a starting point towards the replacement of the pedagogy of detachment is working for integration, dialogue, visibilization, positionality and open-ended diversity, and provide some suggestions on how to gesture towards a pedagogy otherwise.

Keywords: Decolonial, pedagogy of detachment, minoritized, education

Introduction

...From the moment we enter school or church, education chops us into pieces: it teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart... (Galeano, 1991, p. 121)

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Decolonial perspectives highlight how modern schooling has been developed on a body of knowledge that is racist, patriarchal and reductionist (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Despite the numerous critics and its diverse local transformations—methodological, pedagogical, political, cultural and technological—this body of knowledge endures, adapting to new global and local conjunctures, and thus maintaining its supremacy. The colonial knowledge-power matrix (Quijano, 2000), in which this modern schooling is embedded, has gone mostly unchallenged. This has had, and continues to have, detrimental impacts on minorities, indigenous and minoritized² groups. By drawing on my personal story, and my ethnographic experience among the Mbya-Guaraní in Northern Argentina, I aim to show the scope of the detrimental impacts of racism, patriarchalism and reductionism through schooling.

The article offers a comparative approach to schooling systems in Argentina and Norway, employing an interdisciplinary lens which takes my bodily-emotional experience as point of departure. Since I argue that the pedagogy of detachment is instrumental to the geo-politics of modern knowledge (Mignolo, 2011), I switch between geographical terrains and periods (1980-90, 2001 and 2012), to make visible the universalising epistemic structure that underlines the modern world.³ Through applying decolonial perspectives, I will argue against a pedagogy of detachment and for one of connection, relationality and dialogue, which connects the pupil with him/herself and others (human and other-than-human), in addition to the world at large.

I will start with my school experience in Argentina, followed by my experience with a school in Norway as an immigrant, and in an indigenous community in Northern Argentina as anthropologist. Throughout my schooling in Argentina and Norway, I gained knowledge along with an inferiority complex, shame and detachment from my origins and bodily experience. Negative experiences I brought with me from home and outside my school were reinforced at school by new ones, and the pain and at times rage were disconnected from the relationships (economic, social and political) that provoked them in the first place. Later, in coming of age, I would learn that the marginalization, discrimination and exclusion I experienced at school were common experiences more broadly (e.g. Vergès, 2019). During my ethnographic fieldwork among the Mbya-Guaraní, I once more experienced racism, paternalism and arrogance on the part of the state bicultural school. Mbya pupils were taught by a particular standard that was far from bicultural, hence losing their indigenous identity and learning to be state subjects without a voice.

² I borrow this notion from Rita Segato (2016) and expand it to include groups who are different in race, religious belief, nation of origin, sexuality, and gender and who even being a majority in terms of number, due to colonial modernity, are minoritized in terms of power. They are as such not minorities, but reduced to such. Thus, what matters for them are seen as minor issues.

³ With modernity, the only valid knowledge is that which is produced in some spots of the West and spread across the planet, As Ramón Grosfoguel has pointed out “the knowledge produced by other epistemologies, cosmologies, and world views arising from other world-regions with diverse time/ space dimensions and characterized by different geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge are considered ‘inferior’ in relation to the ‘superior’ knowledge produced by the few Western men of five countries that compose the canon of thought in the Humanities and the Social Sciences” (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 75).

The painful experiences with three very different schools at different times and places made me realize that due to its colonial legacy, modern schooling operated through what I denominate as a *pedagogy of detachment*.⁴ It is a pedagogy that removes the association or union of emotional knowledge and intellectual knowledge, which are intimately entangled in the given context (material, economic, spiritual, emotional, cultural, historical and political) of the pupil. Even when children are not necessarily or intentionally treated as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge, schooling detaches them from the whole they are part of. Knowledge about the world is created and imparted through fragmentation, as the whole is divided into parts. It is in this sense that I claim that the pedagogy of detachment is intrinsically colonial. It was during the Renaissance that this fragmentation emerged along with the idea that thinking is only linear, objectivist and dichotomous (Bernal, 2017; Mignolo, 1995; Maldonado-Torres, 2007), and were globally imposed and naturalized through colonial projects. Furthermore, under colonial projects, living beings on the planet were hierarchized through a racial notion and made into governed subjects to serve a particular model of production and distribution of wealth. Groups of people were denied their humanity and turned into slaves, while others were emotionally detached to commit the most heinous crimes against other humans and non-humans (de las Casas, 1951). Thus, the enterprise of colonialization implied practices of eliminating certain subjects, both indigenous and black (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), considered as inferiors. These practices have not disappeared, but extended upon the effects of the coloniality of power. Scribe's (2017-2018) notion of a pedagogy of indifference clearly captures one of the current mechanisms of elimination. By disregarding, negating and exterminating ways of knowing and doing, it has been possible to sustain the idea that the alienation of the mind from the body, and the self from others and from their environments, is natural and desirable. However, this notion has led us away from understanding. As the Chilean economist, Max-Neef argues, we have come to a point in history where we know a lot but understand very little. We know how to describe and explain, but "we seem to overlook the fact that describing plus explaining does not amount to understanding" (Max-Neef, 1991, p. 93). He points out that we actually need to fall in love to understand it. Studying the phenomenon of love will yield facts, but no understanding. We can only understand that which we attempt to become part of. Understanding, he says, is holistic and the result of integration, whereas knowledge is fragmented and results from detachment (Max-Neef, 2009).

The kind of schooling I envision is one that fosters understanding through decolonial pedagogies (Simpson, 2014; Walsh 2013; Jong et al., 2019; Todd 2017; Arashiro, 2015; Walsh, 2015), adapted and developed in relation to the specificities of different contexts. This is the opposite of a schooling of detachment, which dislocates and creates uniformity

⁴ The concept of pedagogy of detachment should not be confused with Bogdan's (1988), which refers to critical distance. For Bogdan, authentic learning depends on detachment. However, what I refer to as detachment is not critical distance, but rather a disassociation and disconnection of the above-mentioned context.

by imposition and mechanisms of erasure. Thus, in this article I shed light on the detrimental impact of this disassociation and disconnection of the pupil with their bodily experience, origins and socio-natural environment. I do so by reflecting on my experience as pupil in a primary and secondary school in Argentina, followed by my experience as a student at an adult education centre in Norway and also my experience as with a state school in an indigenous community in Northern Argentina during an ethnographic fieldwork (Salinas, 2016). With examples from these cases, I will argue that a starting point towards the replacement of the pedagogy of detachment is working for integration, dialogue, visibilization, positionality and open-ended diversity, and suggests that the classroom is the place to foster a pedagogy otherwise.

Childhood and schooling in Buenos Aires

I grew up in a poor neighbourhood on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. My parents are descendants of generations of interethnic relationships of unknown origins: indigenous peoples, Europeans and people from the Middle East. Some of my great-grandparents came from abroad, as they escaped war and poverty and ended up in Paraguay. Another bloody war would chase them away from Paraguay to Argentina. Some of my grandparents were born in the woods, but conquest and regional wars also pushed them away from their homes.

My parents were one more generation in flight. They found their way from a rural north in decline down to the shadows of the magnificent Buenos Aires. They settled down in a sparsely populated area, which would quickly become heavily populated by immigrants, not only from the poor Northern provinces but also from Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru and Chile. My parents left the countryside to seek a future in Buenos Aires, but in a race-class-based society, their mixed ethnic background would not make the search easier. In Buenos Aires, they were once again forced to adjust their provincial accents and forget their native language, Guaraní. My parents learned before they were able to speak that their mother tongue was something to be ashamed of. They lived the dream of education through their three children. Therefore, it was important for them that we went to a private school in a middle-class neighbourhood, as public schools in our neighbourhood were not good. As a result, we travelled by bus 45 minutes each way every day. My mother told us that we were lucky in our poverty, but the road to our good fortune felt inscrutable.

In the morning, we walked through pretty alleys with decent houses and lush gardens, white porches and gleaming prosperity. In the afternoon, we walked through dilapidated houses, broken sidewalks and flowing sewage. My mother used to say, “We are poor. I do not have the chance to bestow on you material things, but I will give you an education. With an education, you would make a difference in your life; with an education, you will better adapt to the system that oppresses us.” My mother knew that some groups inherit not only skin colour and a language, but also a socioeconomic position. This meant that we, even the children, had to work hard to earn money to pay for our education. I also had to work hard at school. It was not easy for me to learn. I was bullied and discriminated

against. At school, I learned to feel inferior and ashamed of being me. I constantly felt out-of-place, as my indigenous phenotype made me indigenous. I was indigenous whether I liked it or not.

The paradox is that I read in books, and the teachers taught us, that Argentinians were descendants of Europeans. Argentinians were the sons of European immigrants. The indigenous and black people were all killed, either on the arrival of the conquerors or later at the hands of their overseers. This was considered a happy event worthy of celebration. Therefore, each 12th of October, we had to celebrate colonization. Columbus was Latin America's first superhero. Since I was darker and looked indigenous, the role I got at the school play year after year was that of an indigenous person, or if it was a play for Independence Day, I could be the black street vendor of tallow candles.⁵ My skin colour and gender precluded me from getting any other role in the school plays.

The list of people I should “de-thank” for this is long, but I cannot go on without mentioning one of the national heroes, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, president of Argentina between 1868-1874 and author of *Civilization and Barbarism* ([1845] 1952). Sarmiento was a committed racist who believed that the indigenous population of the country should be exterminated, and worked for this to happen. In an article in an Argentinian newspaper, he stated:

For the savages of America, I feel an invincible repugnance that I cannot remedy. That rabble is no more than disgusting Indians that I would send to have hung at this moment... Incapable of progress... They should be exterminated without even forgiving the youngest who already carry the instinctive hatred of the civilized man (Arce-Trigatti, 2012, p. 79).

The ideology of Sarmiento was at the core of Argentinian schooling. Thus, to repudiate the natives and the descendants of this region was, rather than being morally condemnable, a duty. Sarmiento was the Nation's father, “the greatest of the great”, “Father of the classroom” as the Sarmiento's hymn states, and whom every child had to learn about and sing for to honor, every September 11th. Concerning his hateful statements, none of the teachers I had ever opposed them.

At school, I had to endure racist remarks and discriminatory ideas, all of which were terribly painful. The teachers wanted us to repeat what they said, and not question. We had to learn about others, about the “Great Western Civilizations” along with a distorted image of ourselves. I learned extensively about European history and European science, and nothing about Argentina and Latin America's bloody history or cultural richness and diversity. I learned that Latin America was an unintended discovery; this was why the people living in this “new” land were now Indians. I learned that, thanks to all the gold and silver taken from this side of the world, development and civilization were possible

⁵ Massone and Muñiz also refer to this practice: “Historically, and even today, the school stages are dotted of girls and boys - with their faces blackened - embodying the blacks of the colony dancing or selling empanadas or candles: in this way, a patriotic grammar was generated, in which [...] the identity of the black is built and announced through the body, expressed in the dance and the costumes, the color of the skin and its condition of slavery and of language” (2017, p. 214).

on the other side of the sea, and that this was good for us because with that development Europeans could sooner save us from our backwardness. I was taught that people living on the land, people of mixed backgrounds, do not have a place in history. I was also taught that we all speak either Spanish or Portuguese in Latin America, that the Paraguayans speak Guaraní because they choose to be savages, and that English is the world's language, the language of superiority. In terms of religion, I learned that there existed only three religions: Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. I did not learn about the at least 40 indigenous groups living in Argentina, all the different languages throughout Latin America, and all the different religions that exist. I was not taught why my parents and my grandparents spoke Guaraní. What I learned at home and during the summers at my grandmother's farm was useless, something to be ashamed of, something to hide. I could never tell anyone in Buenos Aires that my mother bloomed when she spoke Guaraní; that my parents did not listen to *tango*⁶ but to *chamamé*⁷; that my grandfather healed animals and people with secret words; that I learned to thank what is called nature - but which my grandparents called Protectors, *Jaras*⁸ - or its fruits; that the dead were as alive as we were and kept crossing the boundaries of worlds. These were just superstitions.

The school curricula did not aim to nurture critical thinking. It was an instrument for the reproduction of the hierarchical, nationalistic, paternalistic, Catholic, heterosexual and racial social system that maintained the supremacy of white identity (e.g. Becerra, 2018; Lynch, 2016). The school did not guide us into an understanding of who we were. Children like me, with working-class parents with very little formal education, children of poor rural farmers themselves, with darker skin or with an indigenous phenotype, would not achieve social mobility through higher education. Nevertheless, my parents wanted to defy this fate. Their children would have a good education; they would learn English and get good jobs. The problem was that I was miserable at school and I hated English - the language of imperialism - so I did not want to learn it. I did not learn about "imperialism" at school, of course. I knew, however, that many young Argentinians died in the meaningless war in Malvinas, or Falkland, as the non-Spanish speaking world calls the islands, against the British in 1982 when I was 4 years old. I have to confess that I would regret my resistance to learn English many years later at the registration desk of the Norwegian language school in Oslo.

Adulthood and migration to Oslo

Without both English language skills and as recognized documents from my secondary school in Argentina, I was placed in a class of low progression. My almost five years of secondary school (after seven years of primary school) and four years of full-time art

⁶ A music and partner dance which originated in Buenos Aires and Montevideo (Uruguay) at the end of 1800 among immigrants.

⁷ A folk music genre from rural North-East Argentina.

⁸ See Salinas (2016) for further elaboration.

school, to which I went parallel to the secondary school, had little value. To go to university, I had to acquire a “Higher Education Entrance Qualification”. I then had to attend the *Skullerud Adult Education Centre*. At this institution, I was once more taken as *tabula rasa*, ready to be imprinted with “knowledge”. Even as an adult, I was exposed not to a pedagogy of dialogue, but to one of detachment. To paraphrase Vergès (2019), I was disconnected to my world, my senses and my capacity to understand phenomena from my experiences. Moreover, there was not only an attempt to indoctrinate me through amnesia, to borrow Vergès’ words, “to create a strong disconnect between the child and the world” (2019, p. 96), but also through alienation and devaluation. As such, I had to continue finding ways outside school to develop a perspective of care to protect myself from that devaluation.

As in my childhood in Buenos Aires, I was treated as inferior by some of my teachers in Oslo. I was a vessel to be filled with “proper” knowledge, which had to be acquired through unquestioning repetition and not through dialogue, sensorial experiences and an integration of mind and heart. However, this pedagogy had opposite and unintended effects. Even though the teaching was not aimed at the development of critical thinking, the constant devaluation and dissociation of bodily apprehension made me question who I was, where I came from and my place in this new country. I remember the nausea that my math and chemistry teacher created in me when he laughed aloud while trying to obtain my complicity, when he mockingly told the class that during the Malvinas (Falkland) war Argentine bombs did not explode upon hitting their targets. He was attempting to illustrate how obsolete our technology was. At that time, I was still struggling to appreciate myself and the place where I grew up, so I did not have a language to confront his mockery. I also did not answer the social science teacher who claimed with arrogance that peoples around the world have the “governments they deserved”. It was clear that for him authoritarian regimes, poverty and inequality in less-privileged countries had nothing to do with global history and politics. The teacher was unable to see that he was speaking to a group of students who came from all over the world, and knew better than him the impact that colonial legacies have had and continue to have in many countries.

The pedagogy of detachment

Through schooling, I internalized the system of oppression: hegemonic thoughts, values and knowledge traditions, which spring from North Atlantic countries.⁹ I have had to internalize hierarchies of knowledge, and even worse, hierarchies of humanity. The whites are at the top of the pyramid, mestizos right under, indigenous and blacks at the bottom. I had to ignore the silences in the historical narratives I read and was taught about. The global-local connections and inequalities of power that led my ancestors to flee, migrate, mix and live in poverty were omitted.

⁹ For a discussion of the concept, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003). He points out that the place we call the West should best be called the North Atlantic. The idea of the “West” is a fiction and an exercise in universal legitimacy (Trouillot, 2003).

What I learned at school was knowledge, while what I learned at home was superstition and ignorance; that my parents spoke Guaraní was met with mockery. At school, along with intellectual capacity development, I developed an inferiority complex, a lack of confidence and embarrassment. I still have to work hard not to reject the person I look at in the mirror every morning. Today, it is common knowledge that a negative response and feelings have negative effects on children's cognitive development, but this was not the case thirty years ago on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. My muteness was interpreted as a lower intellectual capacity. In addition to the negative feelings I developed at school, I think my own experience, my negative embodied experience of life in a race-class-based society, obstructed my intellectual learning. Similar to others, I am not a set of separate capacities— “I think”, “I feel”, “I sense”. I think-feel-sense at once, and this integration is the source of the understanding of myself and the world. The fact that I was systematically taught to despise my roots and heritage, as well as who I was, was not taken into account when assessing my intellectual performance.

The pedagogy of detachment did not create resonance. Wikan (2012) explains resonance with the Balinese notion of *ngelah keneh*, “creating resonance”, as follows:

It is what fosters empathy or compassion. Without resonance there can be no understanding, no appreciation. But resonance requires you [...] to apply feeling as well as thought. Indeed, feeling is the more essential, for without feeling we'll remain entangled in illusions (p. 55).

The school I went to did not create resonance between me and the world, or foster learning by helping me make sense of my own experiences. It was a pedagogy that created alienation and hindered my understanding. Many years later, I will have a similar experience during my ethnographic fieldwork among the Mbya-Guaraní in Northern Argentina (Salinas 2016). Hence, over a period of more than thirty years at different schools and countries, I discovered similar doings of coloniality as I experienced at my school. This similarity led me to urge to bring into words what I sensed as a pedagogy of detachment.

Let me expand on the pedagogy of detachment through a case from a Mbya community. The Mbya Guaraní lived within a natural reserve that is both private and state-owned. The group I primarily lived with in during the period 2012–2013, consisted of approximately 100 people. They lived in the forest, far from towns. They practised subsistence activities and lived in mud huts. There was a state school within the community. The school system was called bicultural, and the teachers were both non-indigenous and indigenous. However, instead of schooling based on the combination of two or more cultural expressions, ways of thinking and feeling, the schools were in reality only bilingual and bilingual in only one direction. The enforcement of the curriculum was to follow traditional Argentinian schooling. The indigenous teachers taught about the Argentinian non-indigenous society in Mbya, with the children learning with images and concepts of the non-indigenous society.

Picture 1: Mbya children starting school in the morning



Source: Salinas, 2012

Every morning, children from 5 to 13 met at the school. They raised the flag and listened to hegemonic historical facts that took place in the non-indigenous world that specific day in the past. The non-indigenous teachers talked and the Mbya teachers translated, while the children had to stand silently and rigidly in a row and passively listen.

Picture 2: Mbya children in the classroom



Source: Salinas, 2012

When the missionaries came to visit the community, the children had to pray or sing Catholic songs, even though the Argentinian state school system practised freedom of worship. A Mbya teacher remarked to me once:

We teach the children to count with images of balloons, which they do not have any relation to, instead of, for instance, with *ajaka* [Mbya bamboo baskets].

At the school, the children learned to speak Spanish. They learned about the State, the State's history and trajectory, about nationalism and the difference between so-called culture and barbarism. In the classroom, the children had to sit and write down what the teacher said. There was no dialogue, only empty repetition. The children were taught about the division of nature and culture. The children of the forest were taught about the forest in the classroom. They internalized the modern concept that they did not live *with* the forest, but rather *in* the forest. Forests were resources that were exploited (non-sustainable or sustainable), so they too could be developed. However, the Mbya's knowledge, to paraphrase Blaser (2010), is not oriented to transform the environment, but to anticipate where the food is naturally produced. At the school, this valuable Mbya knowledge was dismissed, and the Mbya children and their heritage were made inadequate for a modern world. They were not des-humanised as their ancestors, but the school's paternalistic rationale prevented the Mbya from being themselves. They had to be as "modern" as they could erasing the Mbya being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 2008).

Even when it was called bicultural, the curriculum at the state school did not feature material on the indigenous culture beyond teaching them in the Mbya language, at least in the first few grades. During my fieldwork, I experienced many discriminatory practices against the Mbya, such as when the children were taken to visit the remains of a Jesuit mission. Upon their return, the Mbya teacher told me that during the visit the guide and the non-indigenous teacher made the Mbya children become acquainted with the religious and philanthropic view of the missions. They were told that the Jesuits helped to develop their ancestors by teaching them agriculture, though the fact that the Guaranís were horticulturists previous to the arrival of the Jesuits was omitted. The Mbya teacher said that the bloody part of the colonial history was also disregarded, as the Jesuit missions were presented as something to be admired.

In *Land as Pedagogy*, Simpson (2014) explains that the way the Nishnaabeg people of Canada and the US learn, occurs through the land and through the "relationships within the family, extended family, the community and all living aspects of creation" (2014, p. 21). This applies for the Mbya-guaraní as well. The Mbya people's learning occurs with the territory, with its spiritual, ancestral and physical components. The Mbya learn by doing and by oral narratives. They learn about the Mbya way of life and life itself by participating in the everyday activities of the community, and by engaging with the environment by walking, gathering, hunting, swimming, singing, praying and dancing in the forest. Paraphrasing Simpson, it is through these activities that they engage in relationships of reciprocity, humility, honesty and respect among themselves, their ancestors, the

forest protectors, animals and plants. They learn care and love. Parents engage their children in their activities in silence, as the children learn through their bodies. In the evenings or early in the mornings around the fire, the elders transmit the words of the ancestors by sharing new or retelling old dreams they had had, or simply by sharing historical narratives.

After school, the Mbya children used to run into the forest. They climbed the high trees and set up traps, learning from each other to walk and move in search of honey, palm hearts and worms, or simply listened to the forests sounds so they could anticipate the future. They picked up bamboos with their parents to repair or construct new huts. They learned to be part of the forest and to breathe with it. They learned not to protect the forest, but to care for it. The forest was not a resource, it was home. Children learned that they were part of a whole, that living organisms (including stones) belonged to spirits or protectors that they had to respect and honour. Then, when hunting, gathering and bathing the Mbya had to ask for permission, taking only that which was necessary to survive. Any form of greediness would otherwise be punished by those protectors.

However, through the state schooling, Mbya children learned to be less Mbya, to dissociate, forget and ignore the experiences and wisdom of their parents and grandparents, as well as being entangled with what in the Western tradition is called nature. Mbya children underwent a pedagogy that separated and disconnected the person with him/herself and with the world. This was a pedagogy geared towards reason, atomization and enclosure.

Decolonial options

My personal experiences, and first-hand experiences living with the Mbya, cause me to envision pedagogies that foster knowing *otherwise*. As Walsh (2018) clearly defines it, the otherwise refers here to:

... ways of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, feeling, doing and living in relations that challenge the hegemony and universality of capitalism, Euro-centred modernity and the Western civilizatory logic, including its anthropocentrism and binary-based foundation [...] the otherwise is that which exists in the borders, edges, fissures and cracks of the modern/colonial order that which continues to be (re)molded, (re)constituted and (re)shaped, both against and despite coloniality (p. 12).

This knowing *otherwise* can be fostered through decolonial thinking. Icaza (2017) points out that decolonial thinking “contributes to a shift in the forms of knowing, in which the world is thought from the concrete incarnated experiences of colonial difference and the wounds left” (p. 29). Thus, decolonial options can challenge the pedagogy of detachment. These options are in the making, and developed from the understanding that colonial forms of domination survived the end of the colonial administrations. Aníbal Quijano (2000) refers to this form of domination as the coloniality of power, which are the racial, political and social hierarchical orders imposed by European colonialism. These orders

were not demolished with the processes of decolonization throughout the 20th century; on the contrary, they established the base of the modern world and of modernism.

The colonization of the so-called Americas established and bequeathed a structure of management of the economy, authority (government and politics), knowledge production and subjectivities based on racial, heterosexual, patriarchal and hierarchical classification. This classification system prescribes value to certain peoples and societies, while disenfranchising others based on gender, phenotype, skin colour and cultural expressions perceived as inferior. As Quijano (2000) argues, this particular colonial matrix of power was transferred from Europe to the social and economic structure of the colony, which subsequently came to constitute the structure of modern postcolonial societies. This colonial matrix of power has been the condition of possibility for the subordination and negation of other knowledge systems, subjects and thinkers outside the mainstream Western epistemology. By hierarchizing peoples, it was possible to hierarchize bodies of knowledge as well, thereby giving epistemological supremacy to the so-called Western. De Sousa Santos (2010) calls the erasure of knowledges produced by indigenous, Asian, Afro and mestizo people as an epistemicide.

This epistemological supremacy was raised during the Enlightenment, and from that time reasoning was taken as the only scientific valid source of understanding of both the world and the human being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo 2007, 1995). Hence, other ways of knowing, which did not take reason as the only source of insight, were disqualified (e.g. Max-Neef, 2009) and through multiple strategies - cancellation, negation, deleting, belittling and suppressing (e.g. Hall, 2008; Walsh, 2013; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Cadena & Starn, 2007) - attempted or managed erasure. Certain ideas, following the genealogy of the reason, were imposed as universal truths. It could take centuries before the conception that all knowledge is socially constructed and historically situated would take root and challenge the hegemonic idea of one truth.

Scientific knowledge today is indeed understood by many social and human scientists as the result of more than only the faculties of observation and thinking. But, for a long time, scholars did not acknowledge that the corporal, imaginative and intuitional faculties were essential in knowledge production. These faculties were separated from “rationality” and attributed to different peoples in the world, particularly indigenous people who were seen as irrational and uncivilized. In this manner, schoolchildren throughout the world, similar to me, have been indoctrinated to think that the Cartesian “*cogito, ergo sum*” (I think, therefore I am) is an absolute truth, and not a partial one by the power of negation. I think (others do not think or do not think properly), therefore I am (others are not, lack being, should not exist and are dispensable) (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 252).

Negating *Others* also meant the negation of other understandings and of the intimate relationship of emotions and reason. According to Descartes, a human *is* its capacity to think, not its capacity to feel-think. Allow me a digression to briefly explain the last concept. I became aware of the concept of feel-thinking (*sentipensamiento* in Spanish) by

two different genealogies of thought, Latin American and Asian. Fals-Borda (2009) reported the concept of feel-thinking as learned from fishing communities in the Colombian Caribbean coast. It denominates the faculty of thinking with both heart and mind. It was later further developed, among others by Escobar (2014), who explains:

It implies thinking from the heart and from the mind, or co-reasoning [...] is the way in which territorialized communities have learned the art of living (p. 16).

This concept is today widely used throughout Latin America. The other genealogy of thought is Balinese. Wikan (1992) reports that the Balinese regard feeling and thinking as part of one process and is reflected in the concept of *keneh*, which means feeling-thought. Both genealogies then acknowledge that the cognitive process is embodied emotional, intuitive and rational. This stands in stark contrast to the disembodied Cartesian rationalism, which is a conception that is still central in the modern schooling practised around the world.

Fortunately, many are the voices and projects proposing and advocating for pedagogies otherwise (Jong et al., 2019; Santos, 2010; Walsh, 2013; Simpson, 2014; Escobar, 2014; Massone & Muñiz, 2017; Walsh, 2015; Smith et al., 2018), that take into account the diversity of human experiences and forms of knowledges, as well as the material and immaterial histories of colonialism that cannot be undone. It is beyond the scope of this article to review these works, so instead I share some ideas that have grown from personal experiences, in which direction the search for decolonial pedagogies can move.

Before I present my ideas, I have the need to clarify that they were first and foremost developed in an effort to understand my own experiences with different schools. Sharing them does not mean that I am claiming to have any kind of universal answer. They reflect my search for ways to decolonize myself and my own teaching-learning practices within a university system in a Nordic country. It is an existential-intellectual project that does not aim to disregard the fact that pedagogies have otherwise existed and continue to exist in different spaces, as for instance, Latin America, in the margins or borders of the modern/colonial order.

For me, a starting point to move towards a pedagogy of connection and replace the pedagogy of detachment is working for integration, dialogue, visibilization, positionality and open-ended diversity. In this context, integration means to see the pupil from a holistic perspective and foster learning, reconnecting him/her with the materiality of his/her body, emotions and of the context she/he is part of. Dialogue is primordial in the learning process of knowing with the bodily experiences of the colonial traces and difference. Freire's notion (1972) of dialogical thinking is good to think with, even when this notion was first thought of within a modern/colonial paradigm. Dialogical feel-thinking can foster understanding through critical dialogue, without hierarchical valuation, and within colonial relations that cannot be undone and between a diversity of past histories, different sets of knowledges and ways of conceptualizing "Life". Critical dialogue cannot mean incorporation, that is to say adding insight to an existing body of knowledge, but can bring

into existence a new body of understanding.

Visibilization in this context first implies the recognition of historically exploitative relations, exclusions, silences and suppressions in the production of knowledge. Secondly, it means to acknowledge those scholars and other important voices that have been overlooked for being women, being of colour, being indigenous, being queer or not representing what is seen as valid knowledge. In this sense, the many cultural expressions and systems of knowledge of non-indigenous groups in Europe, Australia and North America that have also been suppressed must be taken into consideration. They too have to be acknowledged.

Positionality refers to making known the ideological and epistemological genealogy that a given school speaks from. In the classroom, it will mean to present different and contradictory bodies of knowledge, therefore inviting the pupils and teachers to actively participate in critical thinking, no matter their age. As Povinelli expressed, “All judgments and considerations emerge out of the thickness, particularity and multiplicity of life projects, and no one ever lives the exact same project” (2011, p. 6). Thus, both individual and collective experiences have to be taken into consideration in the process of learning in the classroom.

I believe that an open-ended diversity must be the way to inclusion (Ahmed, 2012). This stands in contrast to what is proclaimed as diversity in this neoliberal multicultural era. What I call open-ended diversity is the kind that emerges from all the complex constellations that have made the contemporary global world. It is not a limited version of diversity, as is mostly the case today when the concept of diversity is brought up. The limited version is a conventional diversity that does not challenge the hegemonic standard of what is to be accepted as difference (Cusicanqui, 2012; Povinelli, 2011). Decolonial options that take the issue of diversity seriously are those which make pupils engage with the world, categorize and represent without disregarding others and other ways of life just because they deviate from the default.

Looking forward

Through this article, I have shed light on how the pedagogy of detachment can be understood as instrumental to the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) by fostering disassociation and disconnection through binary oppositions: mind and body, culture and nature, self and other, colonizer and colonized, the speaker and the spoken. Even when a school representative might claim to apply pedagogies that attempt to give children tools for emancipation, the modern school is inserted into a system that reproduces violence and oppressions at all levels. Schools all over the world are inflicting pain on children. The image in the mirror that the school presents these children reflects back a distorted image of themselves. They are taught to value things they do not identify with, and have to internalize the idea of race, class, gender and inequality as a God-given hierarchical social order. It is therefore urgent to find ways of learning and knowing *otherwise*. Children

have to understand the works and effects of power, as much as of human inventiveness and the power of change.

In this current time of multiple global crises, I think there is an urgent need to stimulate our collective imagination to find ways of living, of humanity and of conviviality on the planet without colonialisms, racism, suppression and exploitation. We need to change relationships and ways of engaging in the world, and I strongly believe that the school and the classroom is a crucial starting point to explore alternative visions of conviviality with respect and love.

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