

POSTMODERN THOUGHT, THE DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE, AND THE ONTOEPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

O PENSAMENTO PÓS-MODERNO, A PERSPECTIVA DECOLONIAL E A CONSTRUÇÃO ONTOEPISTEMOLÓGICA DA DEMOCRACIA NO SUL GLOBAL

PENSAMIENTO POSMODERNO, LA PERSPECTIVA DECOLONIAL Y LA CONSTRUCCIÓN ONTOEPISTEMOLÓGICA DE LA DEMOCRACIA EN EL SUR GLOBAL



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ABSTRACT: Taking decolonial thought as a foundational element for the emergence of other epistemologies, we discuss the importance of the postmodern turn in confronting colonial/modern paradigms and the development of contemporary studies involving the concept of democracy, from local perspectives. To this end, we draw on Bezerra (2007) and Portela Júnior (2015) to address the concepts of modernity and postmodernity; Queiroz (2020) and Mignolo (2020) to discuss the concept of coloniality; and Nascimento (2021) to link our discussion to the idea of locus of enunciation. We conclude that adopting postmodern thought, grounded in the perspective of decolonial studies for research on democracy, contributes to overcoming socially shared archetypes perpetuated for centuries in colonized countries, such as Brazil.

KEYWORDS: Postmodernity. Decolonial Studies. Global South. Epistemologies.

RESUMO: Tomando o pensamento decolonial como elemento fundador para o surgimento de epistemologias outras, discutimos a importância da virada pós-moderna para o enfrentamento dos paradigmas coloniais/modernos e o desenvolvimento de estudos contemporâneos envolvendo o conceito de democracia, a partir de olhares locais. Para isso, buscamos apoio em Bezerra (2007) e Portela Júnior (2015), para abordar o conceito de modernidade e pós-modernidade; em Queiroz (2020) e Mignolo (2020), para tratar do conceito de colonialidade, e em Nascimento (2021), para interligar nossa discussão à ideia de lócus de enunciação. Concluímos que adotar o pensamento pós-moderno, fundamentado na perspectiva dos estudos decoloniais para pesquisas sobre democracia, contribui para a superação de arquétipos socialmente compartilhados e perpetuados há séculos em países colonizados, como é o caso do Brasil.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pós-modernidade. Estudos Decoloniais. Sul Global. Epistemologias.

RESUMEN: Tomando el pensamiento decolonial como elemento fundacional para el surgimiento de otras epistemologías, discutimos la importancia del giro posmoderno para confrontar los paradigmas coloniales/modernos y el desarrollo de estudios contemporáneos que involucran el concepto de democracia desde perspectivas locales. Para ello, buscamos apoyo en Bezerra (2007) y Júnior (2015), para abordar el concepto de modernidad y posmodernidad; en Queiroz (2020) y Mignolo (2020), para abordar el concepto de colonialidad, y en Nascimento (2021), para vincular nuestra discusión a la idea de locus de enunciación. Concluimos que adoptar un pensamiento posmoderno, basado en la perspectiva de los estudios decoloniales sobre la democracia, contribuye a superar arquetipos que han sido socialmente compartidos y perpetuados durante siglos en países colonizados, como Brasil.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Posmodernidad. Estudios Decoloniales. Sul Global. Epistemologías.

Introduction

This paper presents our reflection on the potential contributions of postmodern epistemologies, especially those centered on the decolonial turn, to research in the social sciences and humanities. Accepting decolonial thinking as a founding element for the emergence of other epistemologies, we discuss the importance of the postmodern turn in confronting colonial/modern paradigms and the development of studies involving the concept of democracy from local perspectives. To do this, we sought support from different discussions in the fields of social and human sciences, including sociology, language studies, and Education.

With regard to the methodological perspective, we are presenting an essay that, like the epistemological visions we defend, is not intended to be complete, closed, or prescriptive. With an essentially qualitative and interpretative approach (Creswell, J. W.; Creswell, J. D., 2021), we believe this is a critical text in which we aim to "[...] make clear other possibilities, new paths. To discover new possibilities, you have to go beyond what you see. A leap into the doubtful, the unknown and the unusual and accepted by the system" (Boava; Macedo; Sette, 2020, p. 70, our translation). That's why we don't promise to provide closed answers, but rather to encourage reflection and questioning. To this end, we relied on bibliographical research to develop our visions and instigate propositions.

Initially, our discussion is based on the work of Bezerra (2007), Portela Júnior (2015), and Mignolo (2020), which address the concepts of modernity and postmodernity, highlighting their main characteristics and the paradigms that have guided (and to some extent, continue to guide) scientific practice and knowledge construction. Within this framework, the concept of modernity is interchangeably associated with rationality and coloniality, which, from the late 15th century to the early stages of globalization, have articulated "[...] a framework and a conception of knowledge based on the distinction between epistemology and hermeneutics and, in doing so, have subalternized other forms of knowledge" (Mignolo, 2020, p. 36, our translation).

Later in this discussion, we return to the considerations of Mignolo (2020), to articulate the notion of coloniality and, in particular, that of the "colonial difference" (i.e., space where the "coloniality of power" emerges), to consider the eminence of consciously confronting hegemonic paradigms, with a view to building epistemologies highlighted in/by the decolonial turn and we point out the importance of guiding decoloniality and (in) defense of studies

developed from the perspective of the global South and the consequent strengthening of epistemologies that value being/knowing from other perspectives.

Finally, we address the contemporary social clash over the idea of democracy, anchored in the studies of Miguel (2022) and Engelke (2022), who operate in the field of Social Sciences, and Apple (2020) and Saviani (2021), who focus their discussions on Education. Finally, we articulate dialogues with the concept of "locus of enunciation" (Nascimento, 2021), and, as an example of our argument, we bring the case of the recent massacre in the Yanomami reserve.

We want to defend the idea that, by embracing the bias of postmodern thought, the perspective of decolonial studies, and the critical approach (Hooks, 2020), we expand possibilities for the construction of onto-epistemologies aimed at overcoming socially shared archetypes that have been perpetuated for centuries in colonized countries - as is the case in Brazil.

Modernity, postmodern thought, and the decolonial turn

Problematizing issues dear to society is par excellence, a seminal function of scientific work. However, the question we are posing here is to reflect on what kind of science this refers to, in other words, what ontology(ies) has/have mobilized research in the contemporary scenario and, at the same time, what epistemologies social scientists and humanities have been dealing with recently.

According to Portela Júnior (2015, p. 77-78), in the 1950s³ the problematization of terms such as coloniality/postcoloniality⁴ and modernity/postmodernity began. Over time, this trend has spread to other continents and is gradually gaining strength as an alternative way of understanding issues that are fundamental to colonized peoples, marked by relations of power and oppression established by the colonizers.

By modernity, we mean the European philosophical, cultural, and ideological movement, marked by the Enlightenment thinking of the 18th century, whose foundation was based on the use of reason in the search for knowledge in the most varied areas, including the humanities. As a consequence, ontologies have emerged that approach the human being from

³ For some authors, such as Bezerra (2007, p. 191), the 1960s, were marked by movements of political and cultural protest, the so-called counterculture, in which minorities such as women, students, blacks, and homosexuals, among others, came out to claim the right to defend their rights, can be considered the beginning of what would become the postmodern turn.

⁴ The terms decoloniality and decoloniality have often been used interchangeably with the term postcoloniality. Here, we will use the term decoloniality, according to Queiroz (2020).

the point of view of rational and structuralist thinking. From this perspective, the individual would be "freed" from mythical and religious explanations for many of the phenomena of his time. Thus, "[reason] comes to be understood as a process of enlightenment, self-awareness, and disenchantment of nature and the world, with a view to guaranteeing man's autonomy and freedom" (Bezerra, 2007, p. 181-182, our translation).

As opposed to medieval thinking, modern postulates represented (and still represent) a major advance in all areas, including, of course, scientific endeavors. However, as time progresses, it would be natural (and even desirable) for modernity to be questioned on the basis of its structurally established premises.

These questions gave rise to the so-called "postmodern thoughts" from the second half of the 20th century onwards, in opposition to the bias of modernity, which, until then, had always prioritized rationality and accuracy in scientific data analysis. Thus, post-modernity has brought with it the perspective of imprecision, plurality, but also individuality, the particular contributing to the awakening of new science, willing to study themes that were often overlooked by modernity because they didn't fit into Cartesian postulates, as can be seen in the most diverse research in the social and/or human sciences.

In this sense, Queiroz (2020) states that

[In] fact, after the end of the Second World War, scientists in the social sciences and humanities began to perceive the weaknesses of modern rational discourse more vehemently, and there was no denying that the paradigm clad in the masks of positivism and the progress of peoples was going through a kind of ethical crisis with no foreseeable brakes (Queiroz, 2020, p. 29, our translation).

Now, suppose academia has dedicated itself to discussions about the validity of modern and structuralist thinking for many contemporary research projects. In that case, it is because much of what has been conceived as epistemologies so far, although still valid in other contexts, may not be enough to support the development of contemporary studies, especially those carried out in the field of humanities. Hence, it is important to promote much-needed dialog on the subject as an alternative to the limitations of modernity's positivist and technicist hegemony in determining research, especially that which is yet to come.

In this new context, which now values the local, the plural, the ignored, so-called decolonial thinking has also emerged as an alternative to making minorities who were silenced during and after the period of European colonization, and also after the Second World War, with the emergence of new economic powers on the world stage. Furthermore, as Lírío and

Azzari (2023, p. 243, our translation) point out, "[...] the decolonization of knowledge demands respect for and commitment to non-Western cosmologies brought by critical thinkers from the Global South". It is important to note that, in this work, we use the term Global South with a view to decolonial thinking, produced as a counterpoint to the coloniality that derived/derives from territorial, socio-economic, and/or cultural colonization, which emerged especially in/from countries in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. To this end, like Menezes de Souza and Hashiguti (2023), we agree with Mignolo (2011), who emphasizes that

[...] decolonial thinking arose together with the foundation of modernity/coloniality, during the colonization processes in the Americas, and as a counterpoint to it. (...) (...) This thought also continued to develop during the colonization that took place in Asia and Africa and, later, during the period of independence of the colonies on the different continents. It also continued in the context of the Cold War and the rise of the United States as a world power, at which point the genealogy of what would become the decolonial turn began to be defined (Mignolo, 2011, p. 46 *apud* Menezes de Souza; Hashiguti, 2023, p. 150, our translation).

On this subject, Mignolo (2020, p. 9), in a more recent work, argues that decolonial thinking emerges from the need to look at the world "from outside" the modern world system, in which the so-called "colonial difference" was established and which, until the mid-twentieth century, was established through the maintenance between center and peripheries. Later on, the same author (Mignolo, 2020, p. 10, our translation) points out that "[...] colonial difference is the space where the coloniality of power emerges. The colonial difference is the space where the local stories that are inventing and implementing the global projects meet those local stories that receive them." Thus, complementing this thought, the scholar clarifies that the "colonial difference" can be understood as a place ("both physical and imaginary") in which there is space for the coloniality of power to act.

In this scenario, we believe that taking part in the studies developed in this field is a necessary action, which deserves to be seen as a real interest of the Latin American academic-scientific communities, in which, as Brazilians, we are inserted. Colonized, we have been governed by the structuralist/rational scientific practice of coloniality/modernity. Portela Júnior (2015, p. 78), reflecting on the epistemological contributions of postmodern ontology, states that

[the] so-called post-colonial perspectives have in common a critical reference to the discourse of modernity, which was historically and socially constructed based on conceptual binarisms and essentialisms (East/West, North/South, Centre/Periphery, Developed/Undeveloped...) that refer, in their

conformation, to the process of colonization by the European metropolises (Portela Júnior, 2015, p. 78, our translation).

In this way, a relationship is established between colonization and scientific practice, which is still predominantly guided by the Eurocentric colonialist gaze, which was/is strongly supported by the paradigms of modernity. In this sense, we are interested in (re)visiting these socially and historically situated landscapes, so that we can glimpse contemporary studies that take into account, among other aspects, the construction of concepts of democracy in our locality, while being oriented from the perspective of the global South.

Like Portela Júnior (2015), we understand that, in parallel with the territorial colonization of the Americas, there was also the colonization of knowledge, which culminated in the formulation of a narrative in which Europe was taken as the only center of reference and, consequently, as the representative of the epistemological norm in force. As a result, the dominant epistemology has become the only weight and measure for any study carried out. This is a striking feature of the colonial difference which, as Mignolo (2020, p. 11, our translation) emphasizes, "[...] creates conditions for dialogical situations in which a fractured enunciation is staged from the subaltern point of view, as a reaction to the hegemonic discourse and perspective".

Portela Júnior (2015, p. 88), using Martuccelli (2010, p. 25-36), ponders that the social sciences, guided by the Eurocentric gaze, have contributed very little to the knowledge of the historical and cultural specificities of the colonized countries, since they have served more to identify what they lack and what needs to be "overcome". In other words, over the last few centuries, we have lost the local reference of what we are and want to be to characterize ourselves based on what we lack, orienting ourselves by constructions biased towards/by the gaze of the Global North.

Corroborating this discussion, Queiroz (2020, p. 55, our translation) points out that the so-called "coloniality of power", based on modern thinking, is characterized by flexibility and adaptation to realities, so that its "[...]discourse appears to be indispensable and natural". In addition, the author seeks support from Quijano (1992) to argue that becoming aware of this modernist project and taking a position of negation of these prevailing paradigms, on their own, are not enough as a counter-hegemonic action, not even in the field of knowledge production. According to Quijano (1992), it is necessary to seek the liberation of knowledge from the prison of modernity and European rationality - which implies investing in decolonial thinking.

This means that our scientific work was established on the basis of the *modus operandi* of the colonizer, which was accepted as an exclusive bias. In this way, not only the form but also the content of the research carried out so far has been delimited by the viewpoint of the dominators, and never by the viewpoint of the dominated, silenced by centuries of exclusion. In this sense, Walsh (2013, p. 25, our translation) argues that, when confronted by/confronting coloniality, it is not possible to maintain a supposed position of neutrality, but that, on the contrary, it is necessary to assume "[...] postures, positions, horizons and projects of resisting, transgressing, intervening, emerging, believing and influencing".

In this way, we believe that embracing decolonial epistemologies in contemporary scientific practice implies taking on transgressive projects and practices which, by guaranteeing an increase in the scientific representation of the global South on the world academic stage, can contribute to overcoming colonial archetypes.

Against this backdrop, we will now address issues relating to the role/place occupied by language in the plot and articulation of a science that accepts other forms of being/knowing/power.

Other ontoepistemologies for doing science and the role of language

In this part of our work, we start with the following question: what can we expect from the decolonial scientific constructs that come from postmodern thinking?

Bezerra (2007, p. 199-200, our translation), in a preliminary study on the epistemological turn from modernity to post-modernity, and referring to the postmodern project, highlights the "[...] emphasis on the other of reason, on what would have been forgotten, subsumed or reduced with the prevalence of Cartesian logic in modern science, namely: the problem of difference, imagination, the imponderable, heterogeneity, plurality". As this author suggests, it is necessary to consider that the recognized lack of consensus around postmodern thought does not invalidate its contribution to the study of social phenomena and to confronting modern Cartesian hegemony, since its potential for contributing to research in becoming is undeniable.

In this way, we understand that decolonial studies favor research that is committed to the realities from which it emerges and, consequently, contributes to the establishment of other paradigms, centered on alternative epistemologies that meet the needs of contemporary scientific practice. This is a movement of great importance in/for the field of scientific endeavor when what is sought is to confront the "imaginary of the colonial/modern world system", which,

according to Mignolo (2020, p. 51, our translation), "[...] is not only visible on the 'ground', but remains hidden from view in the 'subsoil' by successive layers of mapped peoples and territories". The author emphasizes that it is not a question of proclaiming a "study" or "representation" of the subaltern, because that would mean promoting "[...] epistemic denotative hypotheses", which he calls "territorial epistemology" which is, "[...] in Ortega Y Gasset's terms, the 'enemy'". For this reason, Mignolo (2020, p. 51-52) points out that it would be more appropriate to ask "[...] what are the soil, the subsoil and the enemy of these and other narratives?"

In this direction, centered on the changes in the colonial/modern world imaginary, this scholar points out that it is necessary to "[...] make an effort to 'see' beyond the maps the colonial differences, forged in the 16th century and then always reformulated until the current scenario of global coloniality" (Mignolo, 2020, p. 61, our translation).

Following this line of thought, we believe that adopting this perspective can make it possible to carry out research projects that, breaking with the logic of modernity/coloniality, contribute to shedding light on conceptions of democracy that circulate in the social spaces of colonized countries, reflecting, to a large extent, the "world imaginary" constituted from the logic of oppression and domination of the present-past. Identifying these visions is crucial so we can problematize them in scientific work guided by the Global South's perspective.

In order to approach this "imaginary", it is necessary to understand that "[...] every locutionary act is at the same time a 'pronouncement against' and a 'pronouncement towards'" (Mignolo, 2020, p. 51, our translation). The researcher complements this idea by stating that "[t]his double movement will acquire a complex dimension when considered at the intersection of local histories and global projects and at the intersection of hegemonic and subaltern soils and subsoils" (Mignolo, 2020, p. 51, our translation).

From our point of view, in order to deal with these locutionary acts, it is necessary to approach language and linguistic practices from a critical perspective. Hooks (2020, p. 33, our translation) argues that developing critical thinking requires "[...] first discovering the 'who', the 'what', the 'when', the 'where' and the 'how' of things". This implies that it is also necessary to decolonize our visions of language, accepting "[...] the complicity between language, literature, culture, and nation" which, in the project of modernity/coloniality "[...] was also related to the geopolitical order and geographical borders", as Mignolo states (2020, p. 291, our translation). Embarking on a dive into this issue is therefore fundamental if we want to confront the

coloniality of power and focus on the colonial difference, elements that act in the narratives materialized by/in languages and, consequently, cultures.

Bringing together the thoughts of Mignolo (2020) and Hooks (2020) mentioned above, we understand that doing science from onto-epistemologies oriented in these strands, which are housed under the umbrella of "postmodern thought", implies questioning, (re)telling, (re)constructing and (re)signifying narratives from a counter-hegemonic position.

Only when citizens are aware of what they want, what they lack, and what their rights are, in other words, when they are able to think critically along the lines discussed by Hooks (2020), do they have the conditions to seek to overcome the representative forms of inequality, abandonment and disrespect for their situation as subjects in a democratic state. Thus, there is a lack of political awareness that is socially shared, born out of everyday practices, and which can act as a driving force to confront the colonization of knowledge/power.

As long as the voice resonates and is replicated in various contexts, it continues to be that of the dominant hegemony, guided by the thinking of modernity/coloniality, and there will be no change. With this in mind, we would like to highlight our interest in redeeming the concept of democracy.

The imbrications of different versions of “democracy” and the contribution of decolonial thinking

At this stage of our discussion, we aim to reflect on the interrelations surrounding the potential of adopting a decolonial perspective as a paradigm for rethinking and constructing scientific practices grounded in studies centered on the concept of democracy. According to Queiroz (2020, p. 55, our translation), awareness of coloniality provides opportunities for the existence of “[...] counter-discourse and/or alternative discursive practices.” Therefore, it is essential to consider the voices silenced by the dominant discourse, which, although marginalized, persist nonetheless. Thus, more than for any other people, it is of particular interest to the colonized—once they are aware of the historical, political, and social weight of colonization—to understand the meaning of the word “democracy” and the extent to which various interpretations of the term have shaped social relations, often perpetuating oppressive and conflicting social practices.

Reflecting on social practices and (in) school environments, Saviani (2021, p. 15) refers to “symbolic violence”, present in situations where the cultural framework of hegemonic groups is imposed by the dominant class on the dominated, clarifying that “[...] the material violence

(economic domination) exercised by the dominant groups or classes on the dominated groups or classes corresponds to symbolic violence (cultural domination)”. For the researcher, there is a clear relationship between school practices and social practices in the process of building a society that is (or is not) democratic. In this regard, we should remember that the cultural domination to which we have been subjected over the centuries manifests itself on a daily basis in our schools. According to Saviani (2021, p. 61), our translation “[...] it is important to remember that the criterion for gauging the degree to which pedagogical practice contributes to the establishment of democratic relations is not internal, but has its roots beyond the pedagogical practice itself”.

Also situating his discussions in the educational field, Apple (2020, p. 15, our translation) highlights the need to problematize the various versions of democracy circulating in society, which, according to the scholar, are supported by worldviews (ontologies) that range between “thick”—advocating for “[...] full collective participation to achieve the common good and the formation of critical citizens”—and “thin” versions—focused on “[...] the market and consumer choice, individualist possession (...) as a tool for satisfying a limited set of economic needs defined by the powerful.” In the author’s view, it is evident that an “ongoing dispute” exists between these divergent concepts of democracy.

From our perspective, this dispute stems from the dominance of modernity/coloniality thinking, which must be confronted through a decolonial lens to initiate processes of deconstruction and challenge epistemological perspectives rooted in Eurocentric and colonial hegemonic knowledge/power. As Apple (2020, p. 15, our translation) argues, it is crucial to “[...] better understand what happens when these different notions of democracy confront one another in schools and communities,” for example.

The aforementioned researcher emphasizes the necessity of adopting a counter-hegemonic stance that includes “[...] multiple institutional and ideological forms and orientations, all directed toward a politics of interrupting dominant practices” (Apple, 2020, p. 19, our translation). However, could these socially circulating versions described by Apple (2020) be indicative of a democratic crisis?

According to Engelke (2022, pp. 59–61, our translation), Brazil has experienced “de-democratization” in the 21st century. The author contends that “[...] the democratic erosion that has characterized Brazil and many other countries in the past decade is a multifaceted process with different origins, effects, and perspectives of analysis.” Engelke (2022) argues that Brazil is undergoing a clear regression of democracy—a situation with “deleterious effects” that

weakens and undermines “[...] the value of democracy.” His argument draws on the work of Miguel (2022), who suggests that there is a “collapse of democracy,” not only in Brazil but across the Global South.

Miguel (2022, p. 16, our translation) asserts that de-democratization is part of a process aimed at “[...] retracting the power of popular sovereignty to constrain the actions of powerful groups, starting with property-owning classes”. This process is shaped by symbolic, economic, and political elements and operates centrifugally: within the democratic system itself, leveraging its rules to undermine democracy by promoting agendas that challenge democratic principles. Consequently,

[The] first set of evidence that supports the idea of a crisis of democracy is therefore linked to the ability of anti-democratic actors to triumph within the rules of the game, and from there to adulterate them, updating and giving drama to old questions of political philosophy: should we tolerate the intolerant? Should we give freedom to the liberticides? How can majority rule be combined with respect for minority rights? (Miguel, 2022, p. 26-27, our translation).

Given this social context, the proposal to approach social and human studies from the perspective of decoloniality is justified, understood as an (in)emerging action and a response to the centrifugal forces that, still strongly influenced by the thinking of modernity/coloniality, seek to destabilize democratic structures. Of course, analyzing these issues from the perspective of the Global North's scientific approach does not help local contexts, which are facing processes of democratic erosion. Therefore,

[It] is necessary (...) to interpret the phenomena of democratic retraction in Latin America not as mere examples of a global process - but taking into account its peculiar conditions. [...] importing the theoretical framework that studies de-democratization in Northern countries is not enough. Perhaps a theoretical construction that is attentive to the obstacles to democracy that have continuously operated in our countries would be more capable of illuminating historical exceptionality [...] (Miguel, 2022, p. 96-97, our translation).

As Queiroz (2020, p. 67) suggests, we believe that by loosening the bonds of the domination of thought based on modernity/coloniality, decolonial perspectives are favored for the investigation of the social phenomena in which we are immersed and, with this, it becomes possible to echo/reverberate subjectivities that have been silenced over time. In this way, by investigating, identifying, describing, and problematizing the various (current) concepts of democracy through scientific work based on a decolonial approach, routes can emerge for

understanding the narratives and social practices that sustain them (not only "on the ground", but also "underground"), and which, at the same time, foster/are established on the basis of imbalances based on the colonization of knowledge. In this context, by recovering the decolonial perspective, we want to encourage the (re)thinking of social and political practices from a perspective that breaks with the paradigms established from the locutionary acts that come from the thinking of the global North, thinking that leads us to discuss the locus of enunciation.

Marking the unmarked: locus of enunciation, voice, and silencing

Referring to the importance of rescuing silenced voices, Nascimento (2021) considers that "[...] **bringing the body back** [to speech] has to do with recovering the experience of existence that has been consistently hijacked by coloniality to this day" (Nascimento, 2021, p. 66, our translation). Valuing the place of speech, communities from colonized countries, for example, and their respective and varied locus of enunciation implies making ourselves heard to those who carry within them the weight of a past of oppression, exclusion, authoritarianism and abuse of the most varied kind, so that (who knows) we can move towards overcoming these centuries-old obstacles.

The concept of locus of enunciation is imbricated with the notion that different enunciations generate and carry multiple discourses marked by the enunciator's place of speech. The construction of hegemonic discourse comes from perpetuating certain narrative(s), always oriented from the same locus of enunciation. In order to counter this movement of colonization of historical knowledge/power, it is necessary to return to the locus of enunciation and also to accept other perspectives for narratives, and to do this; it is necessary to "bring the body back" to speech, as Nascimento (2021, p. 66) argues.

The importance of "bringing the body back" to confront colonial hegemony lies not only in the perspective, but in the idea of doing epistemic justice. Beyond the field of education, we bring to the agenda a historically constructed Brazilian social issue, which has recently been made visible by the media, and which allows us to question the "locutionary acts" (Mignolo, 2020) that construct/are constructed by contemporary narratives oriented by the perspective of colonial knowledge/power. Let's take the case of the Yanomami people as an example to better understand the importance of approaching the concept of democracy from a decolonial perspective.

Originally inhabitants of the Amazon rainforests around a thousand years ago, the Yanomami⁵ occupy an area on the border between Brazil and Venezuela and are divided into communities, led by shamans (community and spiritual leaders). They live according to their traditions (fishing, hunting, and farming). Since the 1970s, with the arrival of mining, they have suffered from attacks and epidemics brought on by illegal exploitation, which, in addition to mortality, leads to mercury pollution of the environment, among other problems.

In the year 2023, we followed the news media⁶ describing the degrading situation of abandonment and lack of rights in which the Yanomami population found itself (most of whom were dying of preventable causes, malnutrition, for example), a fact that ended up decimating part of the population, represented in large numbers by children. This is not an episode dating from the early years of the colonization of Brazilian lands, but a current occurrence, reported in the middle of the 21st century, that is, more than four hundred years after the beginning of the occupation. We see here an event that denotes the perpetuation of colonial neglect of the original peoples, which is still very clearly and forcefully manifested today: a community that has been deprived of the democratic state.

Expressing a similar opinion to ours, Queiroz (2020) refers to Indigenous communities from the colonization period, recalling that they

[...] they were placed on the margins of the geopolitics of epistemes, they were denied their histories, condemned, rejected, and disallowed by the colonizing communities to produce any kind of epistemologies with 'validity' (Queiroz, 2020, p. 48, our translation).

The Yanomami case serves as an example to problematize the "different versions" of democracy referred to by Apple (2020), if they have been denied the right to life, it is not difficult to conclude that all the others, promised by the democratic rule of law to all Brazilians according to Article 5 of the Federal Constitution⁷, are being equally denied to them. Unfortunately, this situation represents one of many other examples of violence and affronts to human rights suffered during colonization which, unfortunately, are still reflected in Brazilian social practices today, as marks of the naturalization of coloniality⁸.

⁵ To find out more, [click here](#).

⁶ To find out more, [click here](#).

⁷ Article 5 of the 1988 Federal Constitution provides all Brazilians and those living in the country with the right to life, liberty, equality, security and property.

⁸ Queiroz (2020, p. 52) points out that there is a difference between the concepts of colonization - a historical period between the 16th and 20th centuries - and coloniality - a discourse of domination that continues to this day.

When dealing with coloniality, Queiroz (2020, p. 63, our translation), a reader of Mignolo (2010a, p. 14), points out that this concept has played an important role in opening up spaces for the restoration and reconstruction of "[...] silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, languages and knowledge subalternized by the idea of Totality defined under the name of modernity and rationality". From our point of view, this author's ideas ratify the treatment of the Yanomami people, even today, in the midst of a "democratic" state.

The Yanomami issue that we are returning to here represents, in a very emblematic and current way, a sad example of how much we need to be attentive to marking the unmarked, so that old social patterns can be overcome. Therefore, if coloniality is not discussed, it remains structurally instituted and repeats, in an eternal continuum, ideologies of domination, oppression, and inequality, and even if in a disguised and/or unconscious way, we start to naturalize what we should reject. From our point of view, to naturalize events that reinforce the silencing of long-colonized minorities is to enter into the game of imploding democracy referred to by Miguel (2022) and Engelke (2022).

In this way, we conclude that, even today, there are many forms of control and maintenance of colonial knowledge and power relations.

Final considerations

The purpose of this paper was to briefly present our reflections on the importance of returning to the discussion on the concepts of modernity/coloniality and post-modernity/decoloniality and interrelating them in their interfaces with the possible identification (and consequent problematization) of (different) notions of democracy. In our proposal, we accept the construction of such concepts and relationships as onto epistemological processes perpetuated in societies of the Global South, such as Brazil's, where there are daily marks of the coloniality of thinking and of acting through language.

We are not trying to disregard the contributions made by modern epistemologies, but we do want to question the ontoepistemological directions that have guided practices that are socially and historically marked by the project of modernity. In this direction, we defend our favorable view of adopting postures to confront hegemonic discourses (which are/were based on modern/colonial thinking), and we advocate scientific work aimed at producing knowledge from a decolonial perspective, in order to stimulate the (de)construction of ways of being in the world.

In order to do this, we believe that it is necessary to adopt critical positions and thoughts that take locutionary acts back to the notion of the locus of enunciation so that the guiding biases that construct, disseminate, establish, and maintain colonial and colonialist narratives can be made visible. The confrontation must start from the dispute, from questioning who speaks, to whom they speak, how they speak, why they speak, when they speak, and, above all, who, in this society, has (or doesn't have) the power to speak.

In the same way, we proposed a reflection on the importance of returning to the contribution of the decolonial perspective in understanding and overcoming the challenges still faced by colonized peoples. There is still a lot to be done to bring secularly silenced voices to the agenda. As Brazilians, we are silenced in many ways on a daily basis, whether by inequality, violence, established corruption or any other form of expression of abuse and disrespect to which we are exposed, even though we are part of a so-called "democratic state".

By adding reflections on post-modernity and decoloniality, we simultaneously discuss the relevance of revisiting the current disputes around the concept of democracy, guided by these perspectives. This approach presents an alternative and a possible confrontation with ideologies marked by colonial logic. This proposal is not limited to a position on the daily manifestations of coloniality, but also points to an alternative path that, anchored in diverse onto-epistemologies, seeks to open up space for the promotion of epistemic justice.

Naturally, the issues presented here are highly complex and require further analysis and reflection. We leave our text as a proposal for an initial dialog, which aims to open up possibilities for future discussions on contemporary scientific practice in the social sciences and humanities and on the pressing issues in our society, including those that we briefly point out in this text, by way of illustration.

Considering that, among the Latin American countries, six (including Brazil)⁹ have recently been under dictatorial and anti-democratic regimes, and that these nations, historically colonized, continue to be subject to the daily dynamics of coloniality in its different nuances, it is important to promote debates, seminars and research. These initiatives represent ways for society to engage with the studies highlighted here, with special attention to the clashes that permeate the concept of democracy.

⁹ The others are: Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

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