

Decolonizing bodies and emotions: a dispute with the expropriatory reason

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The current issue of the *Latin American Journal of Studies on Bodies, Emotions and Society* (RELACES) entitled “Decolonizing bodies and emotions: a dispute with the expropriatory reason” gathers a series of articles framed within those problematizations which, from different approaches (the ways of feeling beauty and body aesthetics; the pain of “victims” of human rights; the different ways to conceive health and “the medicinal”; the conceptions of precarity; the shapes adopted by individual and social fear, and breaks as ways of regulating emotions in present capitalism), analyze the assumptions of the western reason as the *reason par excellence*.

One of the cunning arguments of the western episteme has been to present as part of the common sense of the time (universalized) categories for the definition of a *capitalist world*. Departing from a making of Social Sciences as the practice of a situated science (Scribano, 2012), the authors suggest diverse problematizations which dispute such universalization of the categories for understanding the world. This set of articles, tasks of scientific knowledge, as vision as well as constitution of the world from a critical and post-independentist position², reveals an analysis of the categories which the imperial reason has imposed as universally valid. They collaborate with a vision that tries to unveil that which the imperial reason occludes and hides. The dominance over bodies, emotions and social sensibilities from their nomination and definition and up to that which subjects seem to feel constitutes a problem present in the articles of this issue.

² “the current material conditions of existence and the dialectics of world dominance –at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century- are characterized by a “renewed” colonial situation which we call post-independentist. This designation aims at highlighting emphatically the persistence of colonial ties and the inadequacy of the description of the current period as post-colonial” (Scribano, 2012: 50).

Under this interpretation proposal, scientific progress has been put on an equal footing with “civilization” progress along the conquest of the world and the control of nature. It is in this sense that science starts to distinguish the visible from the invisible in terms of a rationality which delimits what *is* and what *is not*. In this way, *Paulo Enrique Martins* presents an article entitled “**Bien Vivir, a metaphor releasing sensitive experience of Health Collective Rights**” in the frame of what he defines as new contemporary capitalism. He believes it is significant to reflect on the appearance of new sensibilities, new collective human rights and good living principles as topics that allow for the analysis of liberal doctrines, of an individualistic kind, which have established a capitalism supported by unlimited consumerism and the privatization of common goods. The reflection about health allows the author to establish links between body care and individual and collective wellbeing, retaking the Bolivian experience of Good Living. In Martins’ own words: “*this change necessarily arises from the recognition of quantities related to creativity, freedom and equality which contribute to a better recognition of individuals and groups from their cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, emotional and moral characteristics. We believe that the great mobilization of local communities generates new collective utopias [...] in fact, a new perspective of body senses, the mind and ideals of life in community arises.*”

José Manuel Barreto, in his article “**Human Rights and emotions from the perspective of the colonised: Anthropophagi, Legal Surrealism and Subaltern Studies**” analyses the central categories of the European theories of Human Rights against a subordinate theory of those rights which presents them in a global context and in relation to dynamics between empires and colonies. It recovers, from its own theorizations, the voices of those whose Human Rights

have been violated. *“The language of suffering matches the victims’ common sense, but it was not admitted by the main body of the European theory of Human Rights. However, talking about emotions and suffering in the context of a Human Rights theorization should not be seen as surprising. On the contrary, a theory which deals with the social and individual effects of events such as torture, massive murders and the obliteration of whole towns, but for which suffering is not a key concept, should arise doubts about its understanding horizon and its ability to reach the main topics it is dealing with. Human rights abuses are phenomena inevitably linked to pain, distress and desperation. Therefore, it is remarkable to discover there are no antecedents in classical European theories on rights of a central reference to the suffering of victims by the State. It is not surprising that the colonial victims’ suffering has no place in the hegemonic theory on rights.”*

These authors problematize collective rights from that which is hidden, which is left out of existence, from those spaces which, when not problematized from the universal Human Rights theories, build certain tolerable matters we live daily with in the concealment community.

The article by Luis Herrera Montero *“The life story of Maria Rosario Sandovalin, an epistemic experience of physicality and emotionality for a dialogue with feminism”* problematizes, from the life story of María Rosario Sandovalin, the different practices associated to non-western medicine which recovers a comprehensive view of the body, a view which disputes the western practices as well as the practices related to the health. *“The wisdom of Mama Rosario Sandovalin is not based on the dual subject-object view, but on an interdependence explained in the whole of the kichwas peoples. She does not master terms such as coloniality and gender; however, her knowledge is an episteme of unquestionable value sustained in experience and practice [...] Possibly, it is an exception to what Mendoza (no date) upholds, going beyond her vision of great authors when in real life there can be statements by almost illiterate people who barely finished primary school, such as Rosario Sandovalin, with an episteme which is not dependent on texts; simple orality is an insufficient struggle strategy in a globalized world: that is the reason for this life story.”*

Patrick Cingolani’s article, *“The precarity concept in french Sociology”*, recovers the different understandings of precarity which have been mutating

throughout capitalism. As we have already mentioned, the imperial reason has not been other than the reason of capital which has become established as a way of defining the world, the relationships among subjects, among those that go with the reproduction parameters and those labeled under the precarity notion, as the set of particular characteristics of subjects – and not of the regime which excludes, impoverishes, flexibilizes and deprives. As the author states in the introduction *“The historical context is serious enough to make us not forget in any of our senses and concepts what the last fifty years have given us. As from the three meanings we will see below, and which are behind the word “precarity”, there is not just a descriptive category, but also an ambivalent dimension that feeds alternatives and begins to think beyond insecurity, life models and success or happiness representation types which have become established with the present configuration of capitalism.”*

Modern epistemology as a way of understanding creates and recreates a particular world image overlapping the diversity of ways to be existing and possible. It means, all in all, a narrowing of what is possible, that which stays outside the established reason, which is excluded from its condition of being and from its possibilities. Other ways to be a woman in health are beyond the line of what is considered as scientifically accepted within the western medical community, and the same happens with other ways of understanding precarity: as a condition of possibility of reproduction of the regime of accumulation which mutates alongside the mutations of capital. The colonial reason is, all in all, the expropriation mode par excellence.

The processes of capital domination condition the subjects’ views on bodies and ways of feeling and sensing the world. From this perspective, the articles by Flabián Nievas (*“Fears : What is the danger ?”*), by Mira Moshe (*“I’m on a break...” The contribution of taking a break to emotional coping”*) and by Brenda Araceli Bustos García (*“The ideal of beauty in the building of recognition marks in ocularcentric societies: the building of the body in blind women in Metropolitan Area in Monterrey”*) problematize from fear, breaks and the perceptions of the ideal of beauty through the possibility to see or not the social understanding processes which capital has imposed as absolute and unchanging.

In his article, Flabián Nievas reflects on political order and fear and states that *“outside the electoral competition it is not the candidates, but the political*

“regime” —understood as the political system plus its agents: i.e. the ruling body as a whole, both state leaders as well as corporate leaders, and other organic intellectuals- the one which manages fear in a more efficient way, insofar as it is much less noticed. In this imposition, changes are seen as impossible since the existing order is presented as the only possible order and any other alternative is rendered outside that is thinkable or what provides security.” Fear is presented against the impossibility to conceive a change, emerging as a plug for any chance of something different.

The article by Mira Moshe analyzes breaks from different contexts. In some cases they are considered as beneficial, for example in order to improve workers’ performance. The author states that, in certain circumstances, breaks are a legitimate practice to face emotional crises. However, the question is if breaks constitute an emotional impulse, a corporate initiative or a regulated social structure. In the author’s own words, when individuals are overburdened with demands resorting to breaks is associated to a displacement of those burdens. “As a result, individuals can find themselves swamped by obligations to themselves, their families, their social milieu, and the society they live in. In such situations taking a media break appears to be a means of enabling media consumers to temporarily discontinue the stream of communication within themselves and with their surroundings. The isolation function enables them to detach themselves from their private and social environment and the delay function allows them to put off the need to act individually, professionally and politically when dealing with mental and personal overload”.

Brenda Araceli Bustos García defines the central characteristics of an oculo-centric society which penetrate the ways in which beauty is dominated by the sight as perception sense *par excellence*. “This analysis perspective, according to Paterson (2006), is characterized by: a) the existence, in the social construct, of a hierarchical notion of the senses in which the sight takes a central place. From this perspective, the access to reality, as it is, is only possible through the sight; b) when the sight is not available, the access to reality is enabled by the use of other senses, mainly the sense of touch.” Through her proposal, she analyzes not only the sight as a privileged sense of perception, but also the “ideal of beauty” as the main concern of blind women. Due to the carrying out of a series of interviews, the author states: “we have found that the construction of recognition marks shows two variants: a) one in which there is certain distrust and

even rejection of the opinions generated by means of the use of senses such as the smell, the touch, etc; b) another in which the concept of tactile aesthetics is built. The distrust or acceptance of tactile aesthetics is mainly generated by aspects such as: a) the age at which sight was lost; b) activity or job; c) how much time has gone by since sight was lost.”

Finally, in her article “**Photo and voice**” María Emilia Tijoux reviews the book by Ambiado Constanza (2014) “*De un valiente se cuenta una historia. De un cobarde, una calamidad*” and Victoria D’hers and Juan Manuel Chervero in their article “**Contra la corriente: el experimento de George Bataille y el Collège de Sociologie**” review the book by Fernando Giobellina Brumana (2014) “*El Lado Oscuro: la polaridad “sagrado/ profano” y sus avatares.*”

The first review puts forward the main aspects of the book by Ambiado (2014) which reconstructs the events of September 16th, 1973 which took place in a town called Curacaví in Chile. In Tijoux’s own words “this book mentions a place from Don Camilo’s mouth while Constanza’s hand writes and her eyes look at him in a warm encounter without getting in a flap in *Tenencia de Curacaví*, where farmers were murdered and which has been recovered by the stubborn work of a handful of people. A place that remains as it was – still timeless in the order demanded by profits when it comes to capitalizing particular sufferings. Here, it seems the event cannot be trampled because the “*animas*” are omnipresent side by side with Camilo’s story, inviting flowers and candles which arrive at any time. This is because in Curacaví dead people go shopping with the living and the relatives of the dead come across their murderers in every corner of the town.”

The second review about Giobellina Brumana’s book (2014) rebuilds the theoretical path drawn by the author about *Collège de Sociologie*. D’hers and Chervero maintain that “everything in this book is, or aims at being, tension. Tension as opposition and tension as negation of a part. Fernando Giobellina Brumana sets out to follow the path of *Collège de Sociologie*, mentioning at length the roles of George Bataille, Roger Caillois and Michel Leiris and their connections. To present it, it departs from its description as the other side, the dark side, of *L’Année Sociologique*. As starting point, the most distinctive feature is the erratic inheritance of *Collège* in relation to the school that Emile Durkheim’s journal started.”

This issue of RELACES gathers a series of articles from different countries such as Mexico, Argentina, Germany, Ecuador, Brazil, France and Israel and which

are framed in the discussions of social sciences at the service of an emancipatory knowledge worried about nominating those empty, overlapped and hidden places by a reason which, since its birth, has been developing based on expropriation.

We thank the authors and all those who have sent us their manuscripts. We would like to remind you that we are permanently receiving applications of articles for publication.

Finally, we must restate that as from the 15th issue of RELACES we are publishing up to two articles in English per issue. As we have been stating for some time, all of RELACES' editorial team and editorial council believe it is necessary to take each one of our

articles as a node that allows us to continue in the path of dialogue and scientific/academic exchange as a social and political task in order to attain a freer and more autonomous society. Therefore, we would like to thank all those who see us as a vehicle to open the aforementioned dialogue.

REFERENCES

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