

Contributions to a Latin American epistemology from the perspective of a Transmodern Amefricanity

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Abstract

Context: This article presents reflections derived from a literature review conducted as part of a graduate program in education in Brazil. **Objective:** To highlight the contributions of the works of Brazilian philosopher Lélia González and Argentine philosopher Enrique Dussel to the formulation of a Latin American epistemology that examines the sociocultural roots inherited from colonialism. **Justification:** The reflection presented here aims to continue the decolonial shift outlined by thinkers from the Modernity/Coloniality collective with the intention of enabling the construction of a distinct Latin American episteme. **Methodology:** From a methodological standpoint, the research was designed as a qualitative study, based on a bibliographic analysis of the works of González and Dussel, with a theoretical foundation in the contributions of Latin American decolonial thought, particularly in the work of the Modernity/Coloniality collective. **Results:** In developing the concept of Amefricanity, Lélia González affirms the need for an original and self-defined conceptualization of existence, not derived from the order of coloniality, but from a local historical and cultural experience. Enrique Dussel, on the other hand, proposes the category of transmodernity to designate the set of actions carried out by subjects from the South who assert their right to reason, highlighting the challenge posed by the establishment of a transmodern and symmetrical dialogue between these cultures. **General reflections:** Among the points of convergence between the thoughts of González and Dussel, it is evident that both develop proposals for liberation in the face of subordination, oppression, and epistemic exploitation, through the valorization of local cultures in Latin America and resistance to the advances of colonialism within the context of colonial difference. **Prospective:** The contributions of Dussel and González's works support the construction of a Latin American epistemology that fosters the consolidation of a liberatory praxis and the promotion of struggles and resistance against social inequality, racism, and sexism.

Keywords: Latin America, Epistemology, Racism, Eurocentrism, Decoloniality, Amefricanity.

Resumo

Contexto: Este artigo apresenta reflexões derivadas de uma pesquisa bibliográfica desenvolvida no âmbito de um Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, no Brasil. **Objetivo:** Evidenciar as contribuições das obras da filósofa brasileira Lélia González e do filósofo argentino Enrique Dussel para a formulação de uma epistemologia latino-americana, que problematiza as raízes socioculturais herdadas do colonialismo. **Justificativa:** A reflexão ora apresentada visa dar continuidade ao giro decolonial traçado por pensadoras e pensadores do coletivo Modernidade/Colonialidade com intenção de viabilizar a construção de uma episteme própria latino-americana. **Metodologia:** Do ponto de vista metodológico, a pesquisa se configurou como um estudo qualitativo, baseado em uma análise bibliográfica das obras de González e Dussel, com fundamentação teórica nas contribuições do pensamento decolonial latino-americano, em particular na produção do coletivo Modernidade/Colonialidade. **Resultados:** Ao desenvolver o conceito de amefricanidade, Lélia González afirma a necessidade de uma conceituação originária e autodenominada de existência, não advinda da ordem da colonialidade, mas derivada de uma experiência histórica e cultural local. Já Enrique Dussel propõe a categoria da transmodernidade para designar o conjunto de ações protagonizadas por sujeitos do Sul, que interpelam seu direito à razão, destacando o desafio que se coloca para o estabelecimento de um diálogo transmoderno e simétrico entre essas culturas que foram encobertas pela Modernidade. **Reflexões gerais:** Entre as convergências dos pensamentos de González e Dussel, observa-se que ambos elaboram propostas de libertação diante da subordinação, da opressão e da exploração epistêmica, por meio da valorização das culturas locais da América Latina e da resistência frente aos avanços do colonialismo no âmbito da diferença colonial. **Prospectiva:** As contribuições das obras de Dussel e González sustentam a construção de uma epistemologia latino-ame-

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ricana, que favorece a consolidação de uma práxis libertadora e a promoção de lutas e resistências contra a desigualdade social, o racismo e o sexismo.

Palavras-chave: América Latina, Epistemologia, Racismo, Eurocentrismo, Decolonialidade, Amefricanidade.

Aportes a una epistemología latinoamericana desde la perspectiva de una Amefricanidad Transmoderna

Resumen

Contexto: Este artículo presenta reflexiones derivadas de una investigación bibliográfica desarrollada en el ámbito de un Programa de Posgrado en Educación, en Brasil. **Objetivo:** Evidenciar las contribuciones de las obras de la filósofa brasileña Lélia González y del filósofo argentino Enrique Dussel a la formulación de una epistemología latinoamericana, que problematiza las raíces socioculturales heredadas del colonialismo. **Justificación:** La reflexión aquí presentada busca dar continuidad al giro decolonial trazado por pensadoras y pensadores del colectivo Modernidad/Colonialidad con la intención de viabilizar la construcción de una episteme propia latinoamericana. **Metodología:** Desde el punto de vista metodológico, la investigación se configuró como un estudio cualitativo, basado en un análisis bibliográfico de las obras de González y Dussel, con fundamentación teórica en las contribuciones del pensamiento decolonial latinoamericano, en particular en la producción del colectivo Modernidad/Colonialidad. **Resultados:** Al desarrollar el concepto de amefricanidad, Lélia González afirma la necesidad de una conceptualización originaria y autodenominada de existencia, no proveniente del orden de la colonialidad, sino derivada de una experiencia histórica y cultural local. Por su parte, Enrique Dussel propone la categoría de la transmodernidad para designar el conjunto de acciones protagonizadas por sujetos del Sur, que interpelan su derecho a la razón, destacando el desafío que se plantea para el establecimiento de un diálogo transmoderno y simétrico entre estas culturas que fueron encubiertas por la Modernidad. **Reflexiones generales:** Entre las convergencias entre los pensamientos de González y Dussel, se observa que ambos elaboran propuestas de liberación frente a la subordinación, la opresión y la explotación epistémica, mediante la valorización de las culturas locales de América Latina y la resistencia frente a los avances del colonialismo en el marco de la diferencia colonial. **Prospectiva:** Las contribuciones de las obras de Dussel y González respaldan la construcción de una epistemología latinoamericana, que favorece la consolidación de una praxis liberadora y la promoción de luchas y resistencias contra la desigualdad social, el racismo y el sexismo.

Palabras clave: América Latina, Epistemología, Racismo, Eurocentrismo, Decolonialidad, Amefricanidad.

INTRODUCTION

This article presents considerations generated in a master's degree research in Education developed at a Brazilian university and aims to reveal convergences between the thoughts of Lélia González (1935-1994) and Enrique Dussel (1934-2023). The aim is to highlight contributions from the works of the Brazilian philosopher and the Argentine philosopher to propose a Latin American epistemology, with the intention of denouncing and problematizing the sociocultural and economic roots inherited from colonialism and Eurocentrism. It is argued here that the life and legacy of this Latin American author, who sought a meaning of existence beyond the dehumanization inherited from the colonization process, raise relevant reflections for understanding the modes of knowledge production realized in what has been conventionally called the Third World and, more recently, the Global South³.

³ The term Global South largely represents the category Third World, created in the mid-1950s to refer to countries considered underdeveloped and that were neither part of the First World (Western nations considered developed) nor the Second World (socialist/communist nations).

When exposing and analyzing the *myth of Modernity*, in his work *O Encobrimento do Outro*, Dussel (1993) shows that behind the modern discourse of rationality and emancipation, there lies an irrational myth of sacrificial violence, cultural invasion and concealment of the non-European, that is, of epistemologies, cultures and existences of Amerindian populations and later, of enslaved African groups. Modernity was born in 1492 with the arrival of Christopher Columbus on the American continent, when Europe defined itself as “an ‘ego’ discoverer, conqueror, colonizer of the otherness constitutive of Modernity itself. In any case, this ‘Other’ was not ‘discovered’ as ‘other’ but was ‘concealed’ as the ‘self’ that Europe had always been” (DUSSEL, 1993, p. 8).

The concealment of otherness engenders the strange sensation of double consciousness, analyzed by the sociologist and Pan-Africanist historian W. E. B. Du Bois (1999). The double consciousness consists of the “sensation of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s own soul by the measure of a world that continues to look at one with amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois, 1999, p. 54).

This movement of “creating otherness as a primitive space” (Meneses, 2014, p. 92), with knowledge, cultures and experiences perceived as inferior, was the counterpoint to the colonial demand to transport the so-called civilization, wisdom and religion to the people who, according to the Eurocentric view, lived in the darkness of ignorance. “Colonization is, above all, a state of mind, an epistemic engineering of subordination of the other and their intersubjective relations” (Oliveira, 2017, p. 108). It can be inferred, therefore, that in addition to the economic and political dimensions, colonialism also had a divisive epistemological dimension, the objective of which is to separate the world into abysmal lines (Santos, 2007) and establish a supposedly universal logic, based on a hegemonic, monoculture way and Eurocentric reading of the world (Meneses, 2014). The impact of this divisive dimension remains to this day, propagating colonial relations and interpretations that affect and limit readings about the “global South”, both at the epistemic and ontological levels, legitimizing who can think and whose lives matter. Thus, “the loss of a legitimate self-reference was not only a gnosiological loss; it was also, and above all, an ontological loss: inferior knowledge exclusive to inferior beings, of no interest to science except as raw material, data or information” (Meneses, 2014, p.92).

This divisive logic aims to define which subjects are able to think/speak and be heard, as well as which beings and groups will be objectified and silenced, culminating in epistemicide⁴, since it establishes a hierarchy regarding what will be considered scientific knowledge/objectivity/truth and what will be understood as experiences/ subjectivities/ interpretations of reality.

⁴ Epistemicide refers to the process of banning the knowledge of colonized peoples and destroying some forms of local knowledge (SANTOS; MENESES, 2009).

The restriction of the right to exist and to pronounce the world is one of the pillars of colonialism, because as Grada Kilomba (2019) explains, the mouth is configured as a metaphor for the colonizer's possession in relation to the colonized subjects, the mouth thus becomes both a place of muteness and torture, as can be seen in the shocking portrait of the enslaved Anastácia⁵. Thus, the mask of silence presents itself as a symbol of colonialism (Kilomba, 2019) and its divisive logic, whose resonance continues to silence and disqualify the knowledge production processes of racialized subjects marked by the knowledge coloniality (Lander, 2005).

However, the perception of the condition of oppression and colonial violence does not constitute an obstacle to the production of knowledge. On the contrary, from the perspective of the pedagogy of the oppressed proposed by educator Paulo Freire (2018), it is necessary to problematize reality and re-cognize history to build education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 2014) and the consolidation of a critical pedagogy (Rabelo; Almeida, 2024).. In this sense, extreme situations should not be seen as insurmountable obstacles, but as challenges that require responses developed in an emancipatory praxis.

Accepting oneself as a subject of transformation (Freire, 2018) or assuming the duplicity of consciousness (Du Bois, 1999) requires complex movements and does not become a merely cognitive task. According to Marcos de Oliveira (2017, p.108), it is an internal and external struggle that, in part, will depend on "the way in which the subject positions himself in the discourse and in the power relations". The consciousness of the colonized subject is always operating between coexisting choices, since it is possible to adopt different strategies and assume different identity positions. There is the possibility of identifying with the oppressive pole and using the white mask to hide the black skin (Fanon, 2008), or of identifying with the oppressed pole and assuming oneself as the radically other, denying all traces of the oppressive culture, or even the possibility of remaining on the border, assuming the tension between one pole and the other. "Inhabiting (on) the border of thought means rehearsing horizons of a policy of knowledge production and of another thought, one that is situated on the edges and beyond the instituted totality" (Oliveira, 2017, p.108).

Therefore, by weaving dialogues between the theoretical production of Lélia González and Enrique Dussel, the analytical exercise developed in this text aims to highlight how the experiences and productions of this Latin American author corroborate a border thinking, becoming acts of political and epistemic resistance to the logic of modernity and the coloniality of being, knowledge, power and gender.

⁵ The Anastácia's portrait wearing a Flanders mask was made by the Frenchman – Jacques Étienne Arago – who participated as an artist in a "scientific expedition" through Brazil, between December 1817 and January 1818. In the second half of the 20th century, the figure of Anastácia became a symbol of the brutality of slavery and racism in the African and Afro-diasporic world, representing the historical and political resistance of these peoples (Kilomba, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

From a methodological point of view, the research was configured as a qualitative study based on bibliographic analysis of the works of philosopher Lélia González and philosopher Enrique Dussel, with theoretical anchoring in the contributions of Latin American decolonial thought, notably, in the concept of decoloniality and in the production of the Modernity/Coloniality⁶ collective.

The problematization, in the academic sphere, of the concept of coloniality intensified with the productions of the Modernity/Coloniality collective, which brings together several researchers, many of whom are Latin American⁷, based in universities located in different countries around the world, whose members share notions, worldviews and concepts that have contributed to the decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2006), that is, to realize the “analytical and utopian renewal of Latin American social sciences in the 21st century” (Ballestrin, 2013, p.89).

The Modernity/Coloniality collective critically points to the need for not only political, social and economic emancipation from colonialism—understood as decolonization – but also defends the relevance of an exercise of rupture and questioning of the universal structures of Eurocentrism, which continue to generate exclusionary ways of life and perpetuate ethnic-cultural inferiorities due to the standards imposed by the civilizing mission in the emergence of modern thought, which continues to condition the social division of labor worldwide, in race/ethnicity and gender.

The M/C collective aims at an epistemic rupture with Western-centrism and its various reflections, especially with the idea of universal knowledge. It is based on a new epistemological perspective, originating from subaltern peoples, in the context of colonial difference, both pointing to the centrality of Latin America in the construction of modernity and promoting a rescue of organic, indigenous and Creole intellectuals, since the colonial period, in addition to enhancing what various components of the collective had already developed before the group's constitution, such as the South-South intercultural dialogue [...]. (Monte, 2022, p.236)

Thus, the contributions from this collective composed of Latin American intellectuals and intellectuals from other parts of the world engender the concept of decoloniality, favoring the viability and visibility of the construction of a Latin American episteme, heterogeneous, pluriversal, taking into account assumptions, interpretations, experiences and knowledge other than Eurocentric ones, seeking a (r)existence of its own detached from the power relations pre-established by coloniality (Ballestrin, 2013).

⁶ In order to understand the constitution, trajectory and thinking of the Modernity/Coloniality System, consult the article by Ballestrin (2013).

⁷ In the Portuguese version of this text, the political position is taken to avoid sexist language, and therefore, whenever possible, the inflection of the feminine and masculine genders will be used, instead of adopting the generic masculine, commonly used in the Portuguese language to refer to all human beings.

It is important to emphasize that, although the reflections in this article are based on the production of this Collective that dates to the 1990s, it is necessary to recognize the existence of works by authors who already defended this decolonial perspective, well before the 1990s, even without using the concept of decoloniality. Examples include: the Brazilian black theorist Abdias Nascimento (2004), who created the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* in 1944, articulating the fight for the rights of the black population by denouncing racial segregation in the arts with the intention of promoting the appreciation of African cultural heritage; the Martinican psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon (2008, 2022), who forcefully pointed out the symbolic and physical violence inflicted by colonial rule on the subjectivity of colonized peoples; the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (2019), who developed the premises of a liberating, critical and dialogical education; the sociologist Orlando Fals Borda (1981/2012) who defended the construction of a popular science capable of making popular knowledge visible and criticizing Eurocentric science; or the contributions of the Brazilian philosopher Lélia González, set out below, among others.

DECOLONIALITY AND (R)EXISTENCE OF LATIN AMERICA

Before proceeding to the considerations about the work and biography of Lélia González and Enrique Dussel to articulate their thoughts, it is necessary to contextualize, albeit briefly, some ideas and aspects. Therefore, Modernity chronologically in Western History refers to the period between 1453 and 1789. However, the implications of the events that occurred then, mainly through colonization, ended up redefining the entire geographic, human, and political-economic-social cartography of the world (Mignolo, 2017).

During this period, the theocentric thinking that dominated the entire Middle Ages was gradually replaced, due to the Enlightenment, by the centrality of Man as the subject capable of transforming nature and, therefore, insubordinate and independent of a superior force, with reason/rationality guiding the way of thinking and as one of the pillars of the progress that would be undertaken from then on. As Kant (1985, p. 100) observed: “The Enlightenment represents the emergence of human beings from a self-imposed minority. (...) *Sapere aude!* [Dare to know!] Have the courage to use your own reason!”

The Maritime Expansion and the great voyages, a pioneering process led by the Portuguese, favored the exploration of the Atlantic Ocean, culminating in the so-called “discoveries” and, above all, in the colonization of America and Africa. This established the self-proclaimed supremacy of Europe and, consequently, the inferiorization, violence and dehumanization of the colonized. Munanga (2003) observes that “the discoveries of the 15th century cast doubt on the concept of humanity hitherto known within the limits of Western civilization. Who are these newly discovered people (Amerindians, blacks, Melanesians, etc.)? Are they beasts or are they human beings like ‘us’, Europeans?” (Munanga, 2003, p. 59).

In this sense, colonial power was configured as a global hegemonic matrix, which made racialization the universal model of social classification (Nascimento, 2009).

In this way, colonialism can be defined as the period between the 15th and 19th centuries, in which, through the expansion of the Iberian Peninsula following the Great Navigations, the economic exploitation of the lands discovered began, as well as of the beings that were found there or that were forcibly brought to them. In these lands, based on asymmetrical power relations and guided by violence, a civilizing, spiritual and cultural invasion mission was advanced with the imposition of European culture, which was considered superior, and overriding other Amerindian and African cultures. Thus, a universal centrality of European epistemology and culture was imposed, beginning the internalization of a powerful ideological system in invaded lands.

According to Munanga and Gomes (2016), between the lines of the salvationist discourse of the Civilizing Mission, the true intention of political domination was hidden, perpetrated by the invasion of its territory, by the economic exploitation of its natural resources and by the cultural subjection of beings that were apprehended as “others”, who were forced to replace their cultures, religion and worldview with other valuable ones categorized as better and superior.

Given the difficulty in organizing an indigenous⁸ workforce, African American slavery played a fundamental role in the economic and social development of the colonies, allowing the former metropolises to reach a level of wealth that later ended up boosting the capitalist system. Portuguese expansion in Africa in the 15th and 16th centuries showed Europe that the value of the African continent was not limited to gold extraction, the spice trade, or the possibility of expanding Christianity, but above all, in the possibility of offering slaves for the exploration of the Americas (Visentini; Ribeiro; Pereira, 2020).

Also in this area, we can add the thought of Aimé Césaire (2020), who opposes the discourse of “civilizing mission” that the colonizers used to justify their actions, arguing that colonialism did not bring progress or civilization, but rather barbarity, oppression, and cultural destruction. For him, colonialism not only destroyed the colonized, but also corrupted the colonizers, by accustoming them to violence and the denial of the humanity of others.

And even with the end of colonialism, it was possible to observe the maintenance of the structure of the power relationship of colonial domination and colonality. This manifests itself in the emergence of Nation-States, through submissive dependence, the continuity of economic exploitation and the internalization of a feeling of inferiority, which engendered

⁸ In Brazil, due to the intervention of the Jesuit priests, who were against the enslavement of catechized indigenous people, the Portuguese Crown only allowed enslavement through just war, which was configured as a conflict provoked by the indigenous people against the Portuguese without the latter's provocation. Another factor to be mentioned was the high mortality rate that the indigenous people were victims of due to the diseases caused by the presence of European colonizers.

the permanent prohibition of knowledge and corroborated the process of subjection of bodies, which remain categorized by markers of race/ethnicity and gender.

The conquered peoples were dominated and placed in a natural situation of inferiority on the universal social classification scale of the world population. “In this way, race became the first fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population in the levels, places and roles in the power structure of the new society” (Quijano, 2005, p. 107-108).

Thus, coloniality unfolds in three areas: 1) the coloniality of power that is organized in the hierarchical and racialized structure of domination in the international division of labor between Europeans and non-Europeans, whites and non-whites; 2) the coloniality of knowledge, which imposes the disqualification of knowledge other than Western or Eurocentric in a clear epistemicide inflicted on subjugated populations; and 3) the coloniality of being, which refers to the construction of interpersonal relations, thus reproducing subjectivities of colonial origin and which, according to Maldonado-Torres (2008, p. 96): “The coloniality of Being refers to the process by which common sense and tradition are marked by power dynamics of a preferential nature: they discriminate against people and target certain communities.”

Furthermore, expanding on these bases, as an integral part of the power system to which Latin America was subjected, gender coloniality manifests itself as a structural component of colonized societies. According to Argentine philosopher María Lugones (2014), in the context of colonization, women belonging to colonized peoples were not recognized as part of the category of “woman”, as they were considered outside the condition of humanity. In this scenario, they were seen as a human subgroup, while only white European men were fully recognized as human in the early Modern period. As a result, the image of animality, savagery and hypersexualization began to be attributed to indigenous and African peoples. In turn, the European man “was constructed as the modern subject: bourgeois, Christian, heterosexual, rational and civilized — able to govern and occupy public space (Lugones, 2014, p. 936).

Furthermore, in line with the decolonial turn, Lélia Gonzalez’s (2020) thought had already anticipated this criticism, when analyzing the experience of black Brazilian women, the ways in which racism and sexism, inherited from the colonial process, structure Brazilian society. According to this author, the black woman’s body has historically been subjected to multiple forms of exploitation, acting both as a labor force and as an object of hypersexualization.

Although the decolonial turn is understood as a recent project of analytical-academic formulation that gained momentum, starting in 1998, with the debates and production of the Modernity/Coloniality system, this turn is first realized as a practical and cognitive project that is seen “in the long tradition of resistance and an attempt to resignify humanity

articulated by black and indigenous populations” (Bernardino-Costa, 2018, p.121), by the “wretched of the Earth” (Fanon, 2022) and by oppressed subjects (Freire, 2018).

In this understanding, alongside the work of Enrique Dussel – representative of a prolific Latin American production that is recognized as decolonial – there is also the work of black intellectuals who, at times, remain marginalized by hegemonic production. As an example, the classic work *Quarto de despejo* (Jesus, 2014) by Brazilian author Carolina Maria de Jesus stands out, with its powerful denunciation of hunger and social ills in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s. The book’s launch was marked by controversy over whether the book was actually written by the author Carolina, a black woman from the favelas who collected recyclable materials, or whether it was written by its editor, Audálio Dantas, which highlighted racial prejudice, since it was surprising to see that a black woman at the time could express herself through writing (Costa, 2016).

In this regard, Bernardino-Costa (2018) warns that the challenge for black researchers has been to make visible not only the oral and artistic accounts produced by the black Brazilian population, but also to map and revisit the themes addressed in the production of black intellectuals. And, here, the life and work of Lélia González can be taken as another example of the process of covering up the production of black authorship, since only recently has her production emerged from epistemic and academic invisibility in Brazil.

In this sense, Bernardino-Costa (2018, p.132) highlights the relevance of a theoretical perspective called the body-geopolitics of knowledge, that is, an “intellectual production that brings to the analysis the lived experiences of the black intellectual”. As manifestations of interventions of the body-geopolitics of black intellectuals and activists in Brazil, the *Teatro Experimental Negro*⁹ of Abdias do Nascimento and his thesis of *Quilombismo* (Bernardino-Costa, 2018) stand out. *Quilombismo* can be understood as a revolutionary organizational proposal for society, anchored in principles such as communalism, the awareness of the black population about their history, their struggles and their political agency with a view to their self-determination (Oliveira, 2019).

In addition, the Brazilian decolonial production includes the proposal for liberating education by Paulo Freire (2018) – a Brazilian philosopher and educator committed to practices of popular education and political literacy for young people and adults; as well as the work of Ailton Krenak (2019) – an environmentalist and indigenous activist who has dedicated himself to disseminating the episteme of indigenous peoples, denouncing the destruction wrought by the Western way of life; among others.

⁹ The *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (TEN) was founded on October 13, 1944, in Rio de Janeiro, on the initiative of economist and actor Abdias do Nascimento (1914-2011). In addition to training the first generation of black actors and actresses in Brazilian drama, its proposal included literacy activities and awareness of the situation of the black population in Brazil, which contributed to the consolidation of citizenship among actors and actresses (Oliveira, 2019).

RESULTS

Lélia Gonzalez and Amefricanity

Lélia Gonzalez (1935-1994) was a Brazilian philosopher, anthropologist, and activist in the black movement and black feminism. Her work focuses on the issue of racism and its branches. Although she did not participate in the Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) group, she already envisioned an originality that could represent thought from Latin America, recognizing the existence and otherness of indigenous peoples who were massacred, physically and epistemologically, by Eurocentrism, and of African peoples, forcibly transplanted here, and who ended up building their own syncretic culture.

Angela Davis (2019), a black American intellectual who visited Brazil in 2019¹⁰, cites Lélia Gonzalez as one of the sources of her learning about black feminism. Davis's perspective is decolonial, suggesting that Brazilians seek to appropriate the work of a black Brazilian intellectual like González, instead of being guided only by external references that are alien to the reality of our country.

Angela Davis (2019) wisely alludes to the coloniality that produces a blindness whose historical consequence is the invalidation of the work of many black intellectuals, especially in universities, where their work remains banned or little studied. Reversing this coloniality of knowledge is a challenge that has been built in order to highlight contributions that, historically, have remained invisible due to racism. The so-called *Lei de Cotas*¹¹ as a Brazilian public policy, has played a fundamental role in decolonizing knowledge as a Western domain, by allowing access to people who were previously discriminated against and excluded from this educational environment, such as black people, indigenous people and low-income students from public schools and, more recently, with the amendments of Law 14.723 of 2023, it also includes people with disabilities.

In 1988, Lélia González (2020) published "*A categoria político-cultural de Amefricanidade*" in which she coined the category Amefricanity in allusion to an original Latin American existence detached from US supremacy in its self-determination as "America", which intentionally excludes the other countries that also make up the American continent. Inspired by Asante's (2016) concept of Afrocentricity¹², Lélia Gonzalez proposes Amefricanity with

¹⁰ For the launch event of his autobiography "*A liberdade é uma luta constante*" (Freedom is a constant struggle), published by Boitempo (Davis, 2019).

¹¹ Law No. 12,711/2012, known as the *Lei de Cotas*, determines that half of the places in public higher education institutions must be reserved for candidates who studied the three years of high school in the public system (BRASIL, 2012). In 2023, after suffering attacks from conservative groups that sought to deny the racial marker of this law, this legislation was updated by Law 14.723/2023 (Brasil, 2013).

¹² Feeling the need for an Afrocentric orientation of information, in 1980, the black American intellectual Molefi Kete Asante published the book, *Afrocentricity: the theory of social change*, in which he conceptualized: "Afrocentricity revolves around cooperation, collectivity, communion, the oppressed masses, cultural continuity, restorative justice, values and memory as terms for the exploration and advancement of the human community. These values are based on a full understanding of African cultural ideas and are based on the study and reflection of specific African societies, in a transgenerational and trans-

the intention of drawing attention to the execution of a cultural production that is unique and original in its specificities, since it is no longer possible to return to African origins, as a cultural syncretization of resistance in the diaspora, *América Ladina*, has been constructed in a claim for this plural heritage, beyond Iberian and American domination. *Ladinos* were the name given to Africans who had recently arrived from the African continent but had already adapted to the routines of slave labor and to Portuguese (Carneiro, 2019). Through this linguistic inversion, Lélia González (2020) seeks to demonstrate that Latin America is a Eurocentric invention that takes Iberian culture and epistemology as the central matrix, thus perpetuating the concealment of African and indigenous epistemologies.

Another linguistic inversion commonly used by Lélia González is the concept of *pretuguês* used to highlight the process of Africanization of the Portuguese language.

In other words, what I call “*pretuguês*” and which is nothing more than a mark of the Africanization of the Portuguese spoken in Brazil (never forgetting that the colonizer called African slaves “*pretos*” (blacks) and those born in Brazil “*crioulos*”) is easily seen, especially in the Spanish of the Caribbean region. The tonal and rhythmic character of African languages brought s to the New World, and also the absence of certain consonants (such as L or R, for example), point to a little-explored aspect of black influence in the historical-cultural formation of the continent as a whole (and that’s without mentioning the “creole” dialects of the Caribbean). Even more evident similarities are evident if we look at music, dances, belief systems, etc. Needless to say, all of this is covered up by the ideological veil of whitening and is repressed by Eurocentric classifications such as “popular culture,” “national folklore,” etc., which minimize the importance of black contributions. (González, 2020, p.115-116)

The neologism *Pretuguês* therefore denotes the influence of the Bantu people in Brazil, resulting in a Portuguese language spoken differently from the original, in the phonetics and even in the phonology of some words, bringing up a pertinent discussion about orality and the processes of hierarchy that resulted in linguistic prejudice, as well as in the classification between the right or wrong way of speaking the Portuguese language, by not taking into account the peculiarities of African cultural contributions in the formation of the Brazilian people and in the linguistic constructions of the country.

Thus, Lélia González (2020) brings to light the racism present in Brazilian sociocultural structures, which disqualifies and marginalizes its own cultural formation:

Suddenly it is overwhelming to realize that the discourse of consciousness, the discourse of the dominant power, wants to make us believe that we are all Brazilian, and of European descent, very civilized, etc. and so on. But when it comes to showing what they call “our things”, they talk about *samba*, *tutu*, *maracatu*, *candomblé*, *umbanda*, *escola de samba* and so on (González, 2020, p. 91).

In addition, González (2020) points out an intersection between sexism and racism that use biological differences to establish themselves as instruments of domination and

continental way”. (Asante, 2016, p. 12).

discusses the ideology of whitening that reproduces the belief in white Western values as the only true and universal values. Another important point in Lélia González's (2020) work is the definition of racism by segregation, more specifically in Anglo-Saxon, Dutch or Germanic colonized societies, in which the solution to maintaining the purity and superiority of the white group is the segregation of non-white groups, where miscegenation is not a possibility; however, it is a fact that rape and exploitation of black women have always occurred.

The author also presents the existence of another type of racism, that of denial, in a denial of one's own responsibility in the face of colonial violence, leveraged by the myth of racial democracy, miscegenation and assimilation, which is configured in the type existing in Latin America, which ends up constituting a naturalization of the situation of black people, of black women, which is expressed in the social stratification of these countries.

The first thing we notice in this racism talk is that everyone thinks it's natural. Black people should live in poverty. Why? Well, because they have some qualities that are not right: irresponsibility, intellectual incapacity, childishness, etc. So it's natural that they're persecuted by the police, because they don't like work, you know? If they don't work, they're a crook, and if they're a crook, they're a thief. So, naturally, they have to be arrested. Black minors can only be street kids or pickpockets, because like father, like son. Black women, naturally, are cooks, cleaners, servants, bus conductors or prostitutes. All we have to do is read the newspaper, listen to the radio and watch television. They don't want anything. So they should be living in the *favelas* (González, 2020, p. 78).

Finally, seeking recognition of this existence that manifests itself in the most varied aspects, covered by the Eurocentric civilizing ideology, the work of Lélia González (2020) demands and provides tools for the construction of a decolonial production, of resistance that has been present on the continent since the 1980s, expressing complaints and pointing out possibilities for subverting the current political-social and economic *status quo*.

Enrique Dussel and transmodernity

Enrique Dussel (1934-2023) was an Argentine philosopher who lived in Mexico since 1975, after becoming a target of military repression during the dictatorship in Argentina. He was an active member of the Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) network. His studies focus on denouncing the myth of Modernity (Dussel, 1993) and the developmentalist fallacy, since Europe only became the center of the world due to the exploitation of Latin America's wealth, at the cost of the extermination and epistemicide of entire populations.

Dussel's analysis also stands out for its criticism of Eurocentrism as a universal thought, in which Cartesian¹³ philosophy ended up establishing new principles and methods, still in force, as the exclusive criterion for recognizing what is or is not science or truth. This

¹³ The philosophy of René Descartes (1596-1650) and the Cartesian cogito expressed by the maxim—"I think; therefore, I am"—dates back to the beginning of modern philosophy. In his work "Discourse on the Method (1637), Descartes laid the foundations of rationalism as the only possibility of knowledge.

perspective reflects an ideology of control and domination, since, although it is relevant to the natural sciences, Cartesianism fails to account for the complexity of research in the human sciences (Martínez Miguélez, 2015). Enrique Dussel (1993) criticizes this argument and contextualizes that Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" is preceded by 150 years of "I conquer, therefore I am". The *Ego conquiro* is the condition of existence of Descartes' *Ego cogito*, where only after conquering the world did Europe assume the privileged monopoly of its episteme, so it is impossible to speak of Modernity without considering the colonality of power, being and knowledge.

To reveal other epistemes that were covered by the process of colonization and colonality, Dussel (1995) proposes the Philosophy of Liberation as a way of detaching from this universality and yoke, starting from the peoples subalternized by colonialism.

This is the theme of the philosophy prevailing in the world of the periphery, that is, in the "South"; This is the theme of the Philosophy of Liberation, liberation from exclusion, misery, and oppression: this is the foundation (*Grund*), "the reason (*Vernunft*) of the Other," which has the right to present its reasons. There is no liberation without critical rationality, without accepting the "interpellation" of the excluded, because otherwise, it would be, albeit inadvertently, just a rationality of *domination* (Dussel, 1995 p. 78).

This Other encompasses subjects located in countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, peoples who have been subjugated and classified as non-beings, in a denied otherness, inferiorized in their culture and knowledge, and forced to fulfill their role determined by the dominant countries. However, this Other has its reason outside the dominating axis and, therefore, has the right to inquire into its existence in a liberating praxis, in a culture that is truly its own and that, despised by colonial power, must be reborn.

In this sense, Enrique Dussel (1977), in his philosophical thought, proposes overcoming through *analética*, an intercultural dialogue in which the quality of the other, different from the self, is recognized, in which the other is recognized as he or she is himself or herself. For Dussel (2016), the dialectic between Europe (more recently the United States) and Latin America is not realized because there is an unequal, asymmetrical relation between colonizer and colonized, thus configuring itself as a relation of domination.

It is impossible not to consider that modern science, by projecting rational scientific knowledge, supposedly universal and anchored in Enlightenment ideals, ends up propagating the objectification of these beings perceived as Other, who are objectified and dehumanized due to a project of economic exploitation. Dussel (1993, 2016) shows that there is no Center without a periphery, that is, for Europe to project itself as the center of the world-system, a project was needed that consciously intended to drain the peripheries – Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean – of their wealth and exploit the labor force, mainly of enslaved Africans. Therefore, it would be necessary to overcome this culture built on these oppressive and universalizing terms and promote a return to an original Latin, autochtho-

nous thought, prior to the geographic and economic invasion and contamination of the way of being and expressing themselves of these colonized peripheral populations, which would be given by the concept of *transmodernity*.

“Transmodernity” indicates all the aspects that are situated “beyond” (and also, chronologically “before”) the structures valued by modern Euro-American culture, and that are currently in force in the great non-European universal cultures and have been moving towards a pluriversal utopia (Dussel, 2016, p. 63).

Thus, one can summarize the basis of Enrique Dussel’s thought (2016, 1995, 1993) that is based on the project of liberation from the oppression, extermination and erasure imposed by Eurocentric hegemony. In turn, this project is anchored in a transmodern emancipatory praxis, the implementation of which demands strategies, namely: 1st) a stage of valorization of epistemologies, ways of life and cultural moments denied by Modernity/coloniality; 2nd) this knowledge and values despised and covered up by Modernity must be taken as a starting point for an internal critique and considering the hermeneutic possibilities of these denied cultures; 3rd) the implementation of this internal critique requires the experience of the biculturalism of borders by critical subjects and 4th) the construction of a truly critical thought demands, therefore, a long period of resistance, maturation and union of forces in search of the realization of the transmodern utopia (Dussel, 2016).

Thus, it is understood that Modernity can be configured as a critical catalyst for intercultural dialogue, no longer from a naïve perspective that envisions interactions between critics from the center and critics from the cultural periphery, but rather in a transmodern project that intends communication between critics from the periphery and the promotion of a South-South intercultural dialogue, instead of a South-North movement (Dussel, 2016).

South-South Dialogues: convergences between the thought of González and Dussel

In this text, we sought to exercise South-South dialogue, weaving a communication between the thoughts of Lélia González and Enrique Dussel. A constituent and, therefore, inseparable part of this author’s production concerns racism as a founding and ideological part, since the pre-colonial period, of the primitive accumulation that allowed the consolidation of Capitalism as a global system, perpetrating social inequalities and violence perpetrated on the periphery.

For her part, Lélia González (2020) argues that racism as a form of domination affects all the different societies in Latin America. The Brazilian author will also intersect racism with sexism, drawing attention to the multiracial and multicultural nature of the sexual division of labor, going further, in a critique of its abstraction. On the other hand, Enrique Dussel (1995, 1993), when listing the challenges of the oppressed people, present in his Philosophy of Liberation, includes in this list the exclusion imposed on people of other races, non-whi-

tes, speaks of the racism of Apartheid in South Africa, of the discrimination of blacks, immigrants and indigenous people, demanding social justice and rights for these beings.

Reflecting about some of the convergences in the thinking of Lélia González and Enrique Dussel, it can be inferred that both formulate proposals for liberation from subordination, oppression and exploitation through the local cultures of Latin America, which ended up resisting the advances of colonialism within what Mignolo (2003) defined as colonial difference. "The colonial difference is, ultimately, the place that is both physical and imaginary where the coloniality of power acts, in the confrontation of two types of local histories visible in different spaces and times on the planet." (Mignolo, 2003, p. 10)

Thus, when developing the concept of Amefricanity, Lélia González (2020) affirms the need for an original and self-named conceptualization of existence, which does not come from the order of coloniality, but rather derives from a particular and local historical and cultural experience, glimpsed, for example, in the category of *pretuguês* used to designate the process of Africanization of the language spoken in Brazil.

Enrique Dussel (1977, 2016) proposes the category of transmodernity to allude to a project and set of actions led by subjects from the South, who question their right to reason, from and for Latin America. This points to the challenge of establishing a transmodern and symmetrical dialogue between these cultures that were covered up by Modernity and treated as externalities, in order to respond from other places and indicate viable new approaches (FREIRE, 2018) to the problems and violence generated by European Modernity and post-modernity. These conceptualizations bring, at their core, an implicit denial of the colonyality in its entire spectrum, aiming at the construction of a new society, in a new emancipatory existence.

Continuing in this prism, Enrique Dussel (1977, 1980) is aware of sexism (epistemic and racial) as a constitutive part of this system of domination, bringing in his philosophy the need for female liberation in the face of their role in the system of reproduction of capital, sexualization and inferiorization by the patriarchy constituted by the phallic male monopoly:

The popular woman, the woman of the peripheral culture, ends up suffering a double impact, a double violation: violated for being an oppressed culture and nation, for being a member of a dominated class, for being the mother of a violated sex. A poor woman of the world's poor. An Indian, African, Asian woman. Victims of imperialism, of the class struggle, of the chauvinist ideology (Dussel, 1977, p. 90).

Dussel's thinking is consistent with that of Lélia González (2020), who undertook a resistance movement by intersecting feminism, class and racism, exposing the exclusionary situation of popular black women in Brazil, denouncing this patriarchal, classist and racist system that delegates black women the lowest place in the social hierarchy, imposing their invisibility and silencing.

Also in the sense of an approximation between the decolonial thoughts of Lélia González and Enrique Dussel, the influence exerted on both thinkers by the work of Martinican Frantz Fanon¹⁴ stands out, highlighting the confluence that will culminate in the denunciation of racism as the driving force of Modernity and, therefore, of colonization and coloniality, which introjects a feeling of inferiority in the colonized, pushing them into the zone of non-being.

From this perspective, Lélia González (2020) and Enrique Dussel (1977, 1993, 1995, 2016) point out as a crucial element in the search for a liberating existence of one's own, the awareness of the alienation suffered by the colonized, who ends up identifying with the colonizer. Through the path of Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Latin American Liberation or Lélia González's *América Ladina*, contributions are revealed for the construction of a society in which Eurocentrism and the economic and social inequalities imposed by this model are overcome, in which, inspired by the flagrant influence of Fanon (2008, p.191), "My final prayer: O my body, make me a man who questions", is revealed as one of the founding principles of decolonial thought.

CONCLUSIONS

By way of conclusion, it is worth considering that Lélia González and Enrique Dussel wove South-South dialogues. She, a black woman, felt first-hand the hardships imposed by the oppressive and racist system in Brazil. He, a man, not black, but Latino, Argentine, also experienced the horrors produced in Latin America, when he was persecuted by a brutal dictatorship that decimated so many in the repression of bodies that rebelled against the authoritarianism of the years of lead. González and Dussel, since the 1970s, have been moving towards an American and transmodern project, creating gaps of liberation for the construction of another society. González and Dussel started from their existences and the colonial difference, which allowed them to produce an original, decolonial and emancipatory thought.

Thus, it was possible to observe that despite the alleged distancing of Brazil from the Hispanic-American context, the productions undertaken by both Brazilians, such as Lélia González, and also by the Modernity/Coloniality collective, under the sign of the decolonial turn, such as Enrique Dussel, ended up proving to be congruent, whose decolonial background is manifested by the need for a new existence of Latin America. The contributions of Lélia González and Enrique Dussel provide anchors for the proposition of a Latin American epistemology capable of problematizing the sociocultural and economic roots inherited

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) was involved in the struggle for the decolonization of Africa by getting involved in the liberation process of Algeria. His intellectual work focused on the psychological effects caused by colonization, and the author was interested in discussing the internalization of inferiority imposed by racialization; for this reason, he appears as one of the most important influences on Latin American decolonial thought and the anti-racist struggle in Brazil. (Faustino, 2021, 2022)

from colonialism and Eurocentrism, favoring the consolidation of a liberating praxis and the promotion of struggles and resistance against social inequality, racism and sexism.

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