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Two Theoretical Approaches to Power: Coloniality and Cosmopolitism

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Summary - **The article compares two approaches that attempt to explain the socio-economic events and policy within states and global society: the Coloniality of Power and Cosmopolitanism. The article reconstructs the discourse of both of these theoretical perspectives to continue next with an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. In a third stage, the article compares the commonalities and disagreements between the two. We conclude that the two paradigms make significant contributions, and that the social researcher has the important challenge of articulating both of them coherentlyin order to account for a concrete reality.**

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I. Introduction

This article compares two theoretical perspectives. One has its origins in the "South", specifically in Latin America, and it is called "the Coloniality of the Power" (Anibal Quijano and other authors). The other one has European/American origins, and it is called the Cosmopolitism (Ulrich Bech Martha Nussbaum, Jurgen Haberman, among others).

Is global society inevitably heading towards the heartless realm of the savage capitalism, guided by an uncontrolled power machine? Or towards a world where this (or any other economic system) will be ruled by the recognition of the "other's otherness"?

Are the world dynamics characterized by the Coloniality of Power or, on the contrary, are international regimes, regional integration processes and International Law taking us, gradually, to a sense of cosmopolitism based on the right and respect of "the other"?

Are these two perspectives contradictory or is it possible to articulate them?

II. The Paradigm of the Coloniality of Power: Lights and Shadows in its Explicative Capacity

1.1. What Does The Paradigm State?

I will try to summarize this theory's position based on its most important axes:

a) Power as a Social Pivot

The core idea in social relations is power; power is an omnipresence element:

> "...the phenomenon of power is characterized as a type of social relation constituted by the permanent co-presence of three elements: domination, exploitation and conflict, which affect the four basic areas of social existence,and which is the result and expression of the fight over their control: 1)labour, its resources and its products; 2) sex, its resources and its products; 3) collective (or public) authority, its resources and its products; 4) the subjectivity/inter-subjectivity, its resources and its products" (Quijano, 2000 b:1).

According to this approach, power is understood as a "...world pattern of global domination inherent to the modern/capitalist world-system originated from the European colonialism" (Quintero, 2010 b: 3)

b) It All Began with the Colonization of America

This world pattern of domination arises and becomes global with the European colonization of Latin America in the XVI century. It operates on all social existence's dimensions, permeating the daily life (Quijano, 2000 a.:342).

c) The Coloniality Emerged After The Colonization

Latin American countries went through a process of decolonization but not through one of decoloniality:

> "Coloniality refers to the continuity of domination and exploitation forms after the end of the colonial administrations, produced by the structures and the hegemonic cultures of the capitalist-patriarchal/colonial/ modern world- system" (Grosfoguel, s.f.:14).

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d) Eurocentrism as a (Racial) Ideology of Perceiving Reality

Its core idea is the notion of superiority: Europeans are racially superior to the colonized peoples and have a thinking structure equally superior. Coloniality nurtures from the ideology of Eurocentrism which is "...characterized by a social imaginary, a historical memory and a knowledge perspective, subject to not only the demands of capitalism but also to the colonizers' need to perpetuate and naturalize their domination (Quintero, 2010: 10).

Within this perspective, not only those who dominate are a part of it but also the group of those who are being socialized under this hegemony.

Eurocentrism is a cognitive perspective that was moulded by the hegemonic powers (not only the Europeans, the United States of America is also included in this group). This perspective makes non-Europeans or the dominated groups perceive the asymmetric power relations that began with the colonizing processes as natural; and therefore, today, numerous decades after formal independency, the domination continues in the economic and commercial areas.

e) Articulation of the Social Whole Over Power and Domination

The Coloniality'sdiscourse presents the social as a complete architectonic construction based on power and domination:

> "....the current world pattern of power consists in the articulation of: 1) Coloniality of power, this refers to the idea of "race" as basisof the universal pattern of basic social classification and social domination; 2) Capitalism, as the universal pattern of social exploitation; 3) the state as the universal central form of collective authority control, and the modern nation-state as its hegemonic variant); 4) Eurocentrism as an hegemonic form of control of subjectivity/intersubjectivity, particularly in the mode of producing knowledge" (Quijano, 2000 b:1).

1.2. What are some of this Paradigm's Strengths?

The valuable characteristics of this approach are:

a) Its Holistic Aim

This paradigm encloses five basic aspects of social existence, such as:labour, nature, sex, collective authority and the subjective/intersubjective relations, which include, according to this approach's aim, all areas in which social relations develop (Quijano, 2000 a:345).

b) It Undresses The Subjective/Partial Character From Which Things Are Looked At

This theoretical approach reveals the "epistemology of the North": it notes that both the "world view", which is perceived as real or true and valid, and the theoretical perspective of many of the studies on globalization and political economy are made from the perspective of hegemonic countries.

c) Continuity, Under Other Formats, of the Domination Relations

It is important to highlight the fact that "the postcolonial world" is, to a great extent a myth as it considers that with the elimination of colonial administrations a legal and political decolonization came about. However, a) trade and political power relations continue under the given formal independence and b) mental domination (coloniality) continues as well.

d) New Dimensions of Social Reality

The paradigm highlights gender conflict and ethnic domination, two dimensions forgotten even in the original Marxism (Marxism itself is an Eurocentric thinking according to this paradigm)

III. Weaknesses of the Paradigm

Just as any theory, the "coloniality of power" has limitations:

a) Loss of Specificity of The Social Dimensions

This paradigm, as it was already mentioned, encloses five basic aspects of social existence (labour, sex, nature, collective authority and subjective/ intersubjective relations); thus, it includes all areas in which social relations develop.

This holistic aim is a virtue but, at the same time, it constitutes a weakness as it subsumes in a single unity aspects that have their own specificity and relative autonomy, despite being interrelated. The author tries to grant autonomy to each area but in a hierarchal way.

> "...the power relations that are constituted in the fight over the control of these areas or spheres of social existence do not emerge or derive from each other, but they cannot exist,except in an untimely and precarious way, one without the others. In other words, they form a structural complex which is always historical and specific. It is always about a determined historical pattern of power" (Quijano, 2000 b: 1).

However, the mixture between the different dimensions of the social lies beneath:

Throughout the colonial world, the norms and the ideal-formal patterns of genders' sexual behaviour, and consequently, the "Europeans" ' family organization patterns were directly founded in the "racial" classification. (Quijano, 2000 a:.377)

b) Social Reality is Exclusively Reduced to Relations of Domination, Exploitation and Conflict

This paradigm suggests that the five basic elements of social existence (labour, sex, nature, collective authority and subjective/intersubjective relations) are affected by the domination/ exploitation/ conflict triad that shape the power.

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Everything is reduced to the conflict, and it does not allow to capture the coexistence between conflictive logics and cooperative logics in the capitalism itself, nor in any other dimensions (sexuality/gender, etc.).

This approach states that domination, exploitation and conflict are a constant rule of social existence. But where is the slow but constant progress on Human Rights and the power of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and the States' role to protect those rights and, particularly, the non-discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or gender?

c) The World-System Characterized Exclusively by the Same Logic of Exploitation Which Characterizes the "National" Societies

According to this approach, in the decolonization/ coloniality, the capitalist system allows the hegemonic powers to have an accumulation of wealth through commercial relations based on the domination/ exploitation/conflict. But, where are, at the internal level, the Unions, and, at a global scale, the alliances between "poor" countries that fight for a fairer international trade? Where are some nongovernmental organizations from the developed countries themselves that put pressure to their governments for trade rules that protect the labour and environmental rights of poor countries?

d) The States' Autonomy is Not Stated

The planet is shown in the form of a world-system (capitalist) with a motor that moves everything and everyone: Capitalism. But it does not explain how that kind of Global Central Autonomy (capitalism) fits with the (multiple) existent States. Do the States blindly obey the orders of capitalism? Or, in some cases, can the States themselves, being immersed in the capitalism, respect (against some companies' and international corporations' will) human, labour, and environmental rights? States are often pressured to respect these rights, an initiative that does not even come from the States themselves, but from the pressure civil societies and NGOs put on them.

e) The Omnipresence Capitalist Logic

It does not explain how the capitalist global system relates to other productive and property logics: cooperativism, property of the commons, indigenous property, unless it can be said that these other logics, in the end, obey the rules of capitalism.

IV. The Paradigm of Cosmopolitism

a) What Does this Paradigm State?

Unlike the previous paradigm that has a central exponent (Aníbal Quijano), cosmopolitanism is a theoretical approach "diluted" in a series of authors, mainly Europeans and Americans, that--I warn the reader—probably would not like to be classified together under a single category or theoretical approach.

Therefore, explaining this paradigm's main stipulations becomes a daring task, and italso demands the reconstruction of its discourse.

Having explained that situation, I can summarize this paradigm on the following points:

b) The Existence of a World Society and the Weakening of the Nation-States

Ulrick Beck uses the term "globalism" to refer to the ideology that advocates neoliberal globalization as an inevitable and convenient path for humanity. Then, he makes a distinction between "globality" and "globalization".

c) In His Words

Globality reminds us the fact that from now on nothing that happens on our planet may be considered as an isolated event, on the contrary, every discovery, victory and catastrophe affect the entire world and we all should reorient and reorganize our lives and tasks, as well as our organizations and institutions along the "local-global"axis (Beck; 1988 a: 30).

d) Globality Manifested in Eight Palpable Phenomena

- The growth of international trade and diverse exchanges at a planetary scale, the global network of financial markets and the constantly growing power of multinational corporations
- The Information technology and communication, constantly changing
- The claim to respect human rightswhich become universal heritage and are no longer just a national affair matter
- The establishment of cultural patterns at a global level
- A global policy that exceeds States, characterized by a variety of sources of power, where countries co-exist with a number of international, sub-national, supranational and transnational actors, public and private ones, as well as with member of civil societies.
- The phenomenon of global poverty, linked to the planetary scale production and the casualization of the workforce.
- The ecological damages and threats operating on a global scale, not confined to one or more countries (extreme events do not know States' boundaries)
- The cross-cultural conflicts that occur in specific spaces (global-localism) such as migration, ethnic strife, among others (Beck, 1988 a: 29-30).

Having clarified what constitutes Globality, "... globalization means the processes in which sovereign states mix together and overlap with transnational actors and their respective power possibilities, orientations, identities and networks" (Beck, 1988 to 29).

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e) What Characterizes Today's Society are the Risks

The benefits of the industrial society are substituted by evil or damage:

"With the emergence of the risk society, conflicts over the distribution of 'evils' are superposed to the conflicts over the distribution of 'goods' (rent, labour, industrial safety) which constituted the basic conflict of the industrial society and that there was an attempt to solve them within the relevant institutions. These conflicts over the distribution of evils can be interpreted as conflicts over distributive responsibility. They arise around the distribution, prevention, control and legitimization of the risks associated with the production of goods (nuclear and chemical mega-technology, genetic investigation, environmental threats, super-militarization and increasing impoverishment outside Western industrial society).In the context of social theory and cultural diagnosis, the risk society concept designates a phase of modernity in which the threats that the development of industrial society has been producing begin to predominate" (Beck, 2008: 19).

But what is a risk? It is an interplay between an event that is taking place, and a potential outcome that causes concern or fright:

"...risks are somewhat unreal. In a core sense, they are at the same time real and unreal. On the one hand, numerous dangers and destructions are already real: polluted and dying water, forest destruction, new diseases, etc. On the other hand, the real social power of the argument of risk is the projection of threats for the future" (Beck, 1998 b: 39)

In this position, the ecological risks have a significant role.

f) " World Society" does not Mean an Integrated Society

i. *According to this Paradigm*

"The world society is not a national megasociety that contains –and solves in itself—all the national societies, instead, it means a world horizon characterized by the multiplicity and the lack of integrability, that only opens when it is produced and kept in activity and communication" (Beck, 1988 a.: 32)

Thus, globalization is an enormous building with a significant construction flaw: the absence of a world government-State (Beck, 1988 a.:32) to control the damages and environmental and social risks generated by the capitalist productionthat escapes nation-States and now operates worldwide.

g) The Cosmopolitan Project

In Beck's work is clearly stated the idea that globalization is inevitable. However, the idea that globalization is a fact, a reality, does not mean we need to sit down quietly to contemplate its damagesand its ecological and social risks: it is necessary to oppose neoliberal globalization or actually existing cosmopolitism, the cosmopolitan project. The neoliberal globalization whose value and ultimate goal is to profit (even if to obtain that profit,nature is destroyed and human beings are exploited) needs to be opposed with a cosmopolitan project which, according to Beck, should be based on the others' otherness, that is, respect towards different cultures, environment, present and future generations, and respect towards other rationalities and ways of thinking (2004: 373)

This cosmopolitan project has two vectors:

(a) The other. Indeed, the cosmopolitism has an otherness ethic

"What characterizes the cosmopolitan virtue is the reflexive distance of the own specificity that allows to consider the others. Therefore, it is a series of practices and moral dispositions that affirm, from a distance, an identity and value its otherness. This is an inclusive concept of the identities as opposed to the fact that these can justify exclusions. One of the main arguments of the cosmopolitan virtue is the development of the otherness's ethic..." (Pérez, 2006: 82).

(b) Proposing a form of globalization that, unlike globalism which considers profits as the only motor, this one is characterized by being integral because "...the cosmopilitism it is a response to globalization and to the normative implications of the international order, and it works in places where alternatives to exclusively economic or security matters are explored. For instance, cosmopolitism, unlike globalization, can be expressed through movements whose purpose is to put global forces under the control of cosmopolitan publics and cosmopolitan states (Delanty, 2008: 38).

h) Civil Society as the Subject of Change

Since there is not a world government-State, who will carry out the cosmopolitan project? Isn't it a utopia, a beautiful idea, but impossible to put into practice, impossible to make it operational? Beck's answer to these questions is based on the idea that this project does not belong to the classical figure of nation-states; instead, it is fostered by "new" international actors such as non- governmental organizations (2004: 391).

This project may be implemented by allNGOs, individuals, community groups and associations, and the States themselves that even thought they are weakened because ofglobalization; they still have an important role and certain power of decision (Beck, 2004: 399).

i) The Cosmopolitan State and the Breakdown Of Identitarian Excesses

The idea of a "Cosmopolitan State" proposed by Beck is based on the "national indifference" principle:

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"Just as how the peace of Westphalia put an end to the religious civil wars in the XVI century by separating state and religion, my thesis is that it is possible to face national (civil) world wars of the XX century by separating state and nation. The same as a non-religious State allows the worship of different religions, the Cosmopolitan State should guarantee, through the constitutional tolerance principle, the coexistence of national identities" (Beck, 2004: 141).

This leads to breaking the identitarian excesses, since"...they can lead to racism, religious or cultural fundamentalism because they build an essentialist and distorted image of the otherness, turning difference into a stigma." (Pérez, 2006: 71).

j) Citizenship Based on The Fulfilment of Human Rights, And Not on the Sense of Belonging to a Certain State

This leads us to examine and re-dimension the concept of citizenship. A citizen is not an inhabitant of a country or State, a citizen is, as stated by Habermas, a man or woman entitled to Human Rights. As a matter a fact, "...the citizens of the nation do not findtheir identity in the ethnical-cultural community but in the practice of citizens who actively exercise their democratic rights of participation and communication." (Habermas, 1998: 12).

Specifically, the "world citizen" is a) a cosmopolitan person, capable of recognising (and, above all, capable of respecting) the otherness of those who are not the same as them, even to the extent of learning and enriching themselves from those who are different; b) a personthat because of their human condition (not their nationality or particular ethnicity) is entitled to the fulfilment of Human Rights.

k) World Citizenship: the Sense of Belonging to Multiple Circles Without Denying the Primary Habitat

i. *As Martha Nussbaum states*

"The Stoics do not stop repeating that in order to be a world citizen a person should not give up their local identifications which can be a large source of vital wealth. On the contrary, what it is suggested is that we should think about ourselves not as being devoid of localaffiliations but as beings surrounded by a series of concentric circles. The first of these circles surrounds the self, the second one the immediate family, and this latter is followed by the extended family. Then, and according to the order, the neighbourhood or local groups; the concitizens and the fellow citizens (and we can easily add to this list other groups based on ethnic, linguistics, historical, professional, gender, and sexual identities). Around all these circles, we find the largest of all of them: the entire humanity" (Nussbaum, 1999).

l) Solidarity Exercised Beyond Our Primary Circle, Applied to the "Others"

Corollary to the above, if we belong to a series of joined circles, if we are world citizens; solidarity cannot be limited to just those included in our primary circle. It should be exercised among all of them:

"If solidarity is related to the community, it is necessary to broaden the community's limits...or to considerer that the community should be working in solidarity with its otherness, the othernesses. It is not reasonable to expect an unlimited and unconditional solidarity, but in a global world is not justifiable to define the boundaries of solidarity exclusively based on a particular identity. New initiatives and new expressions should combine the moral grammar of concrete forms of solidarity beyond boundaries" (Pérez, 2006: 99).

2.2 What Are Some of the Strengths of this Paradigm?

The cosmopolitism presents some strong elements, the most relevant ones are:

l) Presenting a Proposal for the Neoliberal Globalization

In the same way the Coloniality power paradigm believes possible an alternative to the European-American vision presented as the hegemonicview, Cosmopolitism opposes and proposes globalism-s project of globalization centred on "the other's otherness".

m) The Importance of the Possibility of Change

While in the other theoretical approach almost everything tends to the reproduction of conflict and inequality relations, which can lead to infer that the overcome of these situations would be possible only due to radical change, a revolution, in the cosmopolitism changing the order of things starts within the individual and associations of people (NGOs): respect to the "other's otherness" can be implemented in a daily basis, with small, individual and collective actions that can cause a multiplier effect.

n) The Emphasis On Human Rights From Different Generations

While in the Coloniality of power the individual suffers from domination, in this paradigm individuals are entitled to Human Rights.

o) Human Beings Are No Longerthe Sole Focus and the Environment Starts Being Taken into Account

In the Coloniality of power, just as in many other sociological theories, the environmentis conceived as something given, as the setting (not changeable, but permanent) where social relationstakes place. It is assumedthat the environment will always constitute the setting for the social.

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Within the cosmopolitism, mainly in the Global Risk Society theory, environment is being deadly threatened and; consequently, the social is being threatened as well. Social class, ethnic, and gender conflicts may come to an end, but not due to the fact that they can be solved positively but because their setting, their habitat might become extinct.

V. Weaknesses of the Paradigm

Along with its strengths, this approach also has weaknesses which include the following:

a) Lack of a Concrete Strategy to Articulate Individual and Group Actions

Although in this approach, NGOs play an important role as actors of the cosmopiltan project, there is a void on how to link the single, daily actions whose objective is to implement the "other's otherness" with more macro efforts, in the same sense these organizations do.

b) The European Context of the Theory

Even though Beck states that class differences do not disappear in the risk society, and that the lower you are in the social pyramid, the higher are the negative effects of the risks (for instance, a poor person is more vulnerable to extreme climate events) (Beck, 1998 b: 40-41), it is hard to support the idea that in Latin America the fight over the appropriation of goods, which characterizes the industrial society has been substituted by the fight over the non-appropriation of the evils and risks of the post-industrial society or the risk society (Beck, 2008: 19).

In other words, class, ethnic, and gender conflicts constitute the motor of societies such as Latin America where inequality prevails, and contrary to the European societies, for example, where the social gap has been reduced.

In this context of inequality, risks (such as the environmental ones for example) do not do anything more but to increase that condition.

c) Partial Respect for Human Rights

Closely linked to what was mentioned above, it is the respect for Human Rights as a guarantor of the "other's otherness". Even though the European Union has made considerable progress in this area, the Latin American reality is very different, even to a point in which in various countries of the region, life itself is simply not guaranteed by the States.

d) Perverse Effect of Applying the Theory Out of Context

Corollary to the two ideas above, suggesting the respect of the "other's otherness" in situations of inequality could lead to the perpetuation and even legitimization of inequality and social injustice. This, in the sense that it could be assumed that respecting othersis to accept their socio-economic situation (we need to respect the rich's wealth and the poor's poverty), considering it as something natural, and even more dangerous, as something that should not be changed.

e) The Limitations of World Citizenship

Although the world citizenship is a sound project to control the dreadful consequences of extreme nationalism, it is not clear how to make it feasible for people to break with the exaggerated idealization of their country and adopt a sense of belonging to a larger country: the world.

In addition, even though the European Union has been partially able to diminish the local loyalties of the citizens of its member States and to create an European identity, this situation has become a new source of exclusion towards non-Europeans, just as it is evident in the immigration controls (often in violation of Human Rights, the same ones Europe boasts so much about) imposed to immigrants coming from Africa, Latin America, and from certain other latitudes (and even against ethnicities that live in their own land, such as gypsies).

Perhaps the mainchallenge in the construction of a world citizenship is that we all walk together in that direction simultaneously because, otherwise, some would end up losing. As a matter a fact, if people from Latin America feel they are world citizens, if they take that step, relativizing their nationalist sense of belonging, but the Europeans continue perceiving themselves not as world citizens but just as Europeans, and US citizens increasingly strengthen their patriotism instead of considering themselves cosmopolitans, we run the risk of weakening the Latin America identity.

VI. Closure Comment: Coincidences and Differences

To conclude, it is important to consider possible encounters and clashes between these two theoretical positions.

a) Common Elements

First of all, the two positions break the "nationalist-state narrow view": criticism towards the coloniality of power derives from the world-system, and the cosmopolitism from the global society, although their conclusions are different.

A second common element is that both paradigms are based on the existent asymmetries: Coloniality presents clear power and domination relations and Cosmopolitism, regarding inequality, calls for the recognition of the "other" as equal as "the self". This recognition involves a component of solidarity towards those who are "different" ("other" communities).

The "other's otherness" is based on the "recognition of other nationalities' otherness" (Beck,

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2004: 373), not only the European one, and with this, we find a third coincidence with the coloniality paradigm.

b) Opposing Aspects

However, there are also opposing elements in both paradigms, which have already been clarified in this article but that will be summarized briefly.

The first one is that in the coloniality the world is seen as a system characterized by socioeconomic, racial, and gender inequality. In the cosmopolitism,even though the global society is not an integrated society, the universality of Human Rights of all the generations of these rights may lead to reduce inequalities (Beck, 2004:143).

A second difference has to do with the ability of moving in the direction of overcoming inequalities. In the coloniality, the individual is considered a passive subject who suffers from exploitation and inequality. In the cosmopolitism, neoliberal globalization can be stopped by individuals who recognize the otherness of other individuals, individuals who unite with other people through NGOs and work together to promote the cosmopolitan project.

Finally, while in the Coloniality paradigm the origin of the current inequality condition is attributed to the European colonization, in the cosmopolitism the current construction model of the European Union is perceived as a way to overcome inequalities, make Human rights prevail above all and ensure public participation (Beck, 2004: 146, 147; Habermas, 1998; Rojo, 2010:137).

Even though there are limitations as well as opposing elements in each of these paradigms, it is important to recognize that they both make very valuable contributions to understanding current events. It will depend on the theoretical-methodological ability of the social researcher to articulate both approaches coherently in order to visualize a concrete reality.

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