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DECOLONIAL THINKING AND *PLURIVERSALITY* POLITICS: THE MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT AND INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA

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Abstract: Drawing from decolonial perspectives, this paper problematizes the eurocentrism in modern politics. In the first place, it proposes to dismantle key theoretical concepts in International Relations Theories, with emphasis in the Hobbesian perspective. Subsequently, it presents other philosophical conceptions, with an emphasis on indigenous voices from Latin America. It suggests that such knowledges can be read as indigenous epistemic insubordination and lead to other possible political practices.
Keywords: Decolonial politics; Philosophy of Science; International Relations Theory.

PERSPECTIVA DECOLONIAL E POLÍTICA DA PLURIVERSALIDADE: PENSAMENTO POLÍTICO MODERNO E EXPERIÊNCIAS INDÍGENAS NA AMÉRICA LATINA

Resumo: Tomando por base as perspectivas decoloniais, este artigo problematiza o caráter eurocêntrico das modernas categorizações de conhecimento ligadas ao conceito de política. Na primeira parte, empreende-se uma desmontagem dos fundamentos teóricos modernos das teorias das Relações Internacionais, com ênfase na perspectiva hobbesiana. Posteriormente, apresentam-se outras epistemologias, com destaque para as vozes indígenas do continente latino-americano. Sugere-se que estes saberes podem ser lidos como uma desobediência epistêmica indígena que convida ao reconhecimento de outras práticas políticas.
Palavras-chave: Política Decolonial; Filosofia Política; Teoria das Relações Internacionais.

PERSPECTIVA DECOLONIAL Y POLÍTICA DE LA PLURIVERSALIDAD: PENSAMIENTO POLÍTICO MODERNO Y EXPERIENCIAS INDÍGENAS EN LATINOAMÉRICA

Resumen: Diseñado con perspectivas decoloniales, este artículo cuestiona el carácter eurocéntrico del concepto moderno de política. En el primer apartado, se realiza un

desmontaje de los fundamentos teóricos modernos de las teorías de las Relaciones Internacionales, con énfasis en la perspectiva hobbesiana. Después, se presentan otras episteme, con énfasis en las voces indígenas del continente latinoamericano. La hipótesis del artículo es que la desobediencia epistémica indígena es una invitación al reconocimiento de la pluriversalidad de las prácticas políticas.
Palabras clave: Política decolonial; Filosofía de las Ciencias; Teoría de las Relaciones Internacionales.

Introduction

According to Ashcraft (1981), all political theories constitute a system of social relations. For this reason, they cannot be reduced to universal concepts divorced from the specific contexts of collective life. In parallel, we propose that the International Relations (IR) mainstream academia can be understood as an intellectual and a social process, of which activities (re)produce power structures, semantic readings, and historical interpretations. This critical posture in the face of IR conceptual backgrounds began inspired by a diverse set of ideas, going from thinkers such as Marx, Foucault and Derrida, to non-European traditions that have emerged in Asia, Latin America and Africa. The decolonial theories are part of this movement, criticizing the intellectual inheritance of our discipline that marginalizes non-western experiences by not recognizing them as legitimate. In that sense, although plural in conceptual and philosophical filiations, decolonial strands share the criticism towards the silencing practices intrinsic to modern narratives.

In this context, the present paper debates some aspects of the field of IR (particularly those anchored in the works of classical European thinkers, such as Hobbes) and problematizes the intellectual and philosophical backgrounds in which knowledge production operates. We seek to demonstrate how an analysis of the conceptual structure that sustains the discipline's mainstream can help us perceive under a different light the historical and cultural mechanisms subscribing it. In sum, we will proceed with an interpretative exercise to grasp the decolonial argument about the Eurocentric character of the establishment of modern states and nationalized societies. Therefore, we depart from the problematic of the geo-cultural affiliation of our discipline to European traditions that limits our ability to read Non-western experiences.

Focusing on the epistemological challenges imposed by Latin American political processes to the traditional IR, we propose a second move relied on an investigation of how indigenous perspectives could help us to reallocate those disciplinary borders.

To us, any critical investigation of the colonial aspect of the discipline must analyze its foundational theoretical and philosophical structures. We focus on the principle of national sovereignty as it appears in its modern/European sense[1]. In that scope, sovereignty is understood as a cartographic exercise capable of delineating the lines that demarcate the (im)possibilities of political life, including the externalities that constitute the international (WALKER, 2010). In other words, with the help of Walker's proposition, we argue against the conventional use of "sovereignty" as it is conceived in realism and neorealism traditions. Instead of a right to be pursued, or a stable historical fact, sovereignty appears as an intellectual and ethical narrative capable of establishing specific forms of discrimination, creating statements “about temporality and history, enabling constitutive discriminations between those who belong within the world of the modern international and those who do not” (WALKER, 2010, p.100).

In philosophical terms, it is argued that this national matrix holds the political within the limits of individualism and citizenship, from which we can infer politics as a Eurocentric practice. As Dussel points out, modern thinking presents totalitarianism as a normative key that rejects all that exhausts its identity standards - “Outside its borders is non-being, nothingness, barbarism, non-sense” (DUSSEL, 1996, p. 16)[2]. In that sense, it is argued that the traditional IR political perspective (mostly influenced by modern tradition), reproduces such foundation and, not rarely, resists to all attempts of alterity.

In the first section, our aim is precisely that: to elucidate the inheritance of colonial subordination existing, more generally, in the modern West, and particularly in IR *realpolitik* traditions. Considering that there is a methodological need to limit our subject, and with respect to our argument about the centrality of the concept of sovereignty, we decided to analyze the legacy of Hobbes. In that sense, according to the argument defended by Luiz Eduardo Soares, Thomas Hobbes is considered to be the interlocutor, explicitly or not, of “the great authors who have dedicated themselves to think politics since the seventeenth century” (1995, p.22). For, in his view, “the

[1] According to Robert Walker, in the book *After the Globe, Before the World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), such an undertaking on politics is associated with the three concepts or processes of subjectification considered pillars of the modern world – the modern man, the modern state and the modern international system – within which the tension between the particular and the universal in space and time is negotiated.
[2] This citation (as all others) was translated by the authors.

reactions to Hobbes, in their multiple directions, assembled the modern political-intellectual constellations", with names such as Rousseau and Kant inclusive. Thus, either by directly studying his writings or their epigones, the readings of Hobbes continue to model the contemporary political thought, including that in IR.

Besides, as Giovanni Alves and David Harvey (2012) argue, the civil manifestations against the social, economic and financial crisis that has reached the global system since 2008 unveil not only its material failure, but also a crisis of thought. This crisis, in the case of Europe, takes the form of a dramatic intellectual and moral bankruptcy (ALVES 2012, p.35). In this context, other forms of life, that were before systematically excluded by the modern world, emerge as real alternatives not only to the capitalist economic system itself but to the civilizing cultural landmark of modernity (SEGALES, 2014). In that sense, we search for a "new politics" by investigating indigenous knowledges and experiences:

> A communal politics refers to a horizon of meaning that indigenous political praxis has been implicitly insisting on throughout its irruption into the political system in force. Irruption that is no longer simple resistance but that establishes a decisive step in the resistance movements: it is a move from resistance to transformation. This step makes it possible to envisage a process of transforming the actual content of the politics (SEGALES, 2014, p.23*, our translation*).

Therefore, we argue that indigenous experiences are an epistemological rupture with the West in the extent that they oppose the western maxims of universalism, monotheism, and homogeneity (MACAS, 2005). Thus, as we shall see from the political projects underway in Latin America, Amerindian ontologies challenge Western epistemology with a pluriversal political imagination. More specifically, we explore the notion of epistemic disobedience, based on the writings of W. Mignolo (2007), for whom it is fundamental to construct political theory and political organization from the identities that were externalized and subordinated in the colonial process. According to Mignolo (2007), the decolonial option goes hand in hand with a process of letting go of modern and colonial rationality and of all knowledge and practice that was not based "on the free decision of free peoples" (QUIJANO apud MIGNOLO, 2007, p. 12); it is, therefore, an exercise of "learning how to unlearn"[3].

[3] This idea dialogues with Spivak´s proposal (1988) of a deconstructivist position which should lead us to a more ethical encounter with the Other. Among its "steps", the notion of "learning to learn from below", posed by her, seems to be in close relation with Mignolo´s reflection (2007, p.13).

Hence, throughout our article, we call attention to the notion of "communalism" that comes as an important contribution from the non-western episteme. However, we caution that the indigenous experiences are not taken in this work as *The* solution for modern problems, or as an idyllic time that could mean a reverse teleology. Our aim is to reflect on how indigenous experiences and knowledges help us acknowledge the silences produced by European theoretical discourses, which are thoughtlessly adopted in traditional IR theories. Then, by bringing indigenous experiences to this debate we are not exactly seeking for answers, but instead for pluriversal approaches in the IR scholarship.

The boundaries in modern politics

As Segales (2014) suggested, for us “to go from decolonization as rhetoric to decolonization as a methodological criterion”, it is necessary to dismantle the political, and only then to rebuild it from new bases: “the best way to teach something is not to define it, but to expose it (...) Indeed, that is a disassembly that, epistemologically, is a condition for a new assembly” (SEGALES, 2014, p.21,*our translation*). In this perspective, both stages (dismantle and rebuild) are not atomized. Instead, “they are phases of the same movement, co-determined at a transcendental locus” (SEGALES, 2014, p.22*, our translation*). Therefore, in this first section, we critically discuss what has been established by modern political theory as a closed totality, in order to expose its colonial character and only then rebuild its lines beyond the modern background.

Thus, our investigation goes back, firstly, to the narrative that is conventionally tied to the genesis of the modern period, i.e., the solipsistic principle *cogito ergo sum* (TOULMIN, 1992). This philosophical maxim established the individual as a central element to political representations and defined a new way to understand the humanity and society. As Segales (2014) explains, the process of the modern subjectivity that pervades Europe implied the construction of an ego that

> will secularize for oneself characteristics that constituted the medieval God; that is, the process of subjectification of an individual who had never possessed such power and wealth (as offered by the new world) will catapult into not only one’s superiority but also fetishization. For only the being that does not have any characteristics, external to oneself, is one who performs "the experience into one’s own consciousness" as an absolute and universal experience; and can, because one does not owe anything to anyone, constitutes the world, the

> reality, and the same gods, one's image and likeness (SEGALES, 2014, p. 85, *our translation*).

According to Luis Macas (2010), the anthropocentric process led to a civilizatory matrix sustained in the Cartesian separation between humanity and nature, the privatization and commodification of resources, and in processes of instrumentalism and technicism of subjectivities. In epistemological terms, this individual/human centeredness prevailed until the end of the twentieth century in much of the IR field research, in which intellectual debates promote a kind of theoretical monism revered by the hegemony of epistemological rationalism and positivist methodology[4].

In an ontological context, such legacy is highlighted by the philosophical liberal tradition, bounded by a theory of social action centered on individualism and rational interest. This movement of constituting an instrumental rationality relates to the dominant political philosophy in the seventeenth century, and incorporates the perspective about the process of subjectivation expressed by a series of authors, such as Hobbes and Adam Smith (CARVALHO, 2006). For them, the individual, while experiencing an uncontrollable craving of desires in a context of scarcity, adopts a posture of seeking personal satisfaction through rational calculation of the consequences of each action for his particular benefit. In IR, much of the traditional theory (neorealism and neoliberalism) will make use of this understanding of reason as a cognitive faculty, with a focus on the instrumental calculation of costs and benefits involved in the decision-making process or policy formulation.

The use of instrumental rationality in IR also responds to the demand of the behaviorist movement that reached the field in the 1950s, representing the introduction of a model of mathematical abstraction and a predictive determinism. Thus, the quest for scientific rigor implied a theorization of a particular kind of subjectivity to the political actor, referring to processes of individualization under a competitive social teleology. Therefore, the theory of action that unfolds from this context is based on competition

[4] According to studies by Steve Smith, such positivist scientific criteria are particularized by the methodical naturalist commitment – geared towards social regularities –, although they do not deny the explanatory component of the theory. This posture approaches the review conducted by theorists such as Ernest Nagel, Carl Hempel and Karl Popper, who eased the extreme tone of the logical positivists, becoming, in the words of Smith, the influences of larger scope in the IR literature since the 1950s. For more, see Steve Smith, 1996.

as essential to interaction, translating, philosophically, an opportunistic notion of man, and a Hobbesian worldview.

Given what has been discussed, we highlight the contributions of the Hobbesian thought to the orthodox IR notions of politics, and whose main concepts will be utilized in the concept of state domination. By analyzing the contract, from which the *Civitas* is born, we verify an invention capable of exterminating its constituent exclusions, since the distinction between us (inside) and the Other (outside) became a main political exercise. Therefore, it is argued that *Leviathan* exposes a conceptual framework of which further interpretation will be responsible for simultaneously defining time, otherness and modern subjectivities in the modern imagination (WALKER, 2010).

As pointed out by Luiz Eduardo Soares (1995), the reflections proposed in that work translate an effort of ethical and political inspiration that responds directly to the historical context of its emergence. In it, Hobbes seeks to answer the question of the legitimacy of political institutionality, by seeking meaning for new ways of life under that social context. It would have been as a result of those questionings that Hobbes created "the conceptual myth that will reinvent politics for us, that will give meaning to the political adventure of the modern man; or yet, that will make politics a significant adventure for the modern man" (SOARES, 1995, p. 24, *our translation*).

For that, Hobbes articulates three fundamental stratagems: the isolated and apolitical individual; the people, constituted as a political body; and the society (*societas*), setting of private life and therefore distinct from participation in public arenas (LÉBRUN, 1984). Those assumptions exert a central role in understanding the modern state, which, as Clastres explains, "is not the ministries, the Elysées, the White House, the Kremlin. [...] The state is the *exercise* of political power" (2003, p. 166, emphasis added). And how is that power exercised? Through the ideas of the individual and the society who operate as a subjectivity and sociality specific to the state functioning.

Thus, firstly we operate with the intrinsic link between the rise of individual men[5] as the basic element of state politics, and the emergence of centralized power as a tool for order in the *Civitas* (BARBOSA, 2004). According to Soares (1995), the

[5] Considering Hobbesian terms, we decided to maintain the notion of "men" as the signifier for human, but, of course, it is necessary to point out, critically, the male stance implicated in such expression.

contract configuration arises from the invention of the universal subject, given the notion of individuality as an expression of human universality:

> In the Enlightenment perspective, as well as for Hobbes, the individual represents a topical realization of the essence that characterizes human nature, short of historical changes, cultural differences and psychological or moral specificities [...] They identify themselves as men because they are beings endowed with reason and attributes that flow from it (SOARES, 1995, p.38-39,*our translation*).

Thus, contemporary to Descartes, Hobbesian thought will dialogue with the Cartesian system, setting the basis for thinking about the state, moral, society and politics in modern reason and in contrast with the naturalistic tradition. Elevated to the status of human spirit, the reason unifies and aggregates, converting "the chaotic and fragmentary flow of the experience into the cosmos, that is, into a comprehensible, predictable and controllable universe" (SOARES, 1995, p.39, *our translation*). In other words, endowed with reason[6], and free from passions, "mankind" finally walks towards the civil state.

In those terms, citizenship presupposes the condition that men are equal, and forms a universalistic political ontology. In a Hobbesian perspective, the universality is realized in the particular, and creates a world where identity is prior to otherness, the terms superior to relation, and form superior to inner transformation. In this sense, we note that in "Leviathan", the study of the atomized units does not consist in an end, but in a starting point. That is, Hobbes updates a uni-verse (despite of a multiverse) without appealing to a multitude of intersecting agents. Hence, the Hobbesian narrative of a universal subjectivity creates a border that produces its context at the expense of openness to the Other.

Identity and difference arise as effects of the political game established by the contract, and act, at once, as the basis of social life, and permanent source of tension and conflict. The myth of the Leviathan, so important to the European political imagination, proposes the birth of a politics that has the goal of putting an end to

[6] "For Hobbes, reason is a calculated operation, with which we extract consequences of the names chosen to express and record our thoughts. It does not have substantial value, only formal; it does not reveal the essences, but puts in positions to draw the consequences from certain principles; is not the faculty by which we learn the evident truth of the first principles, but the faculty of reasoning". (BOBBIO, 1991, p. 105, *our translation*).

uncertainty, and establishing sociability by exterminating diversity. To this end, the reason connects and integrates the individual to civil society, and projects alterity (synthesized in the state of nature) abroad.

Meanwhile, the original political act is responsible for creating an impenetrable limit between the internal and external rules, between Us and Them, between stability and conflict. Consequently, alterity is understood as enmity, and politics as the exercise of control and coercion, of mediation of hierarchical dichotomies (friend/enemy, citizen/alien, etc.). It is clear, therefore, that the metaphysics implied in Hobbes work develops opposing and hierarchical pairs (reason being superior to emotion, the self to the other, sovereignty to anarchy, order to chaos, domestic to international, etc.), which require the exclusion of the supposedly inferior element, even though it is constituent of the dyad itself.

As pointed out, the repressed Other works as a possibility and a destabilizer of the dichotomy. As a result, the Cartesian division is expressed in the universal/particular binarism, from which arise other related pairs, such as body and mind, nature and culture, objective and subjective, physical and moral, among others. Within those separations, Walker (2010) highlights Hobbes' explanation that slips over an abstract consideration of time and space, related to the definition of a here and a now [inside/today]; that unfolds in an also fluid construction of externality: a there and a then [outside/before]. Thus, the concept of Leviathan spatializes time in order to control its deviant ways, and, thereby, legitimize the authority of the *Civitas*.

The idea of timing and spatial distribution of difference as central to modern thinking has been widely discussed by authors of postcolonial inspiration. As Chakrabarty (2008) explains, the state ontology projected in time invents a past (exemplified in dualistic symbology such as despotic/constitutional; medieval/modern, feudal/capitalist), and creates a gap between the civilized world and the savages of the new world. Such separation revolves around historical transition, so that the invention of the myth of origin (the contract/state of nature) will serve as a foundation for the hypothetical passage of nature (pre-modern) to the modern.

Such perspective is completely alien to the unlimited manifestations of otherness, in a way that the contractualist speeches and their epigones on the international field ended up continuing the colonial venture spurred since 1492 and the

myths about savages in the New World, extracted from the imagination of Renaissance travelers (BEIER, 2002, p. 82; MCCLINTOCK 2010, p. 44). According to Beier,

> The origins of these conceptual predispositions and of the neglect of Indigenous peoples can be traced to the travelogues of the first Europeans in the Americas, the enduring influence of which in social contractarian thought recommends their treatment as foundational texts of the social sciences. This view highlights the relevance for international relations of challenges raised against the veracity of these formative ethnographical accounts inasmuch as such re-evaluations simultaneously call into serious question some of the most fundamental ontological commitments of orthodox international theory – commitments which have their conceptual origins in the travelogues (BEIER, 2002, p. 82).

Meanwhile, as Segales (2014) argues, the modern political theory emerges as an intellectual contribution to a cultural legitimation of Europe's imperial action on the *New World.*The ideas about the natural right of the individual are justified by the characterization of the world outside Europe as inferior or backward. That supposed inferiority is based on the European colonial experience portrayed in "travelogues". Violence gains, therefore, legitimacy in a civilizatory function attributed to the European; in other words, "the concealment of the victim and its consequent subsumption under the idea of object available, as object available, would only be possible due to the naturalization of their "inferiority", that is, their racialization" (SEGALES, 2014, p.90, *our translation*).

The subordination of the *inferior* to the *superior* by violence is linked to the epistemic tendencies that were described above. Besides, it is also related to an understanding of power as of private nature, therefore, something to be owned by excluding others. Thus, to modern political theory, power assumes a negative meaning, since it is conceived as the will-to-dominate, then, to perform it would depend on denying others will: "the realization of its own self is the un-realization of the other" (SEGALES, 2014, p.75, *our translation*).

Such annihilation of others political agency is linked to the assembling of the economic order and the State. Modernity and capitalism walk together (QUIJANO, 2005). The exploitation of the *New World* gave conditions for the West to build modernity, as it promoted Europe's venturing into the Atlantic, and consequently the creation of the colonial system, the origin of capitalism (mercantile at first, of primary accumulation), and the development of the World-System (DUSSEL, 2005). From that

simultaneous (mutually constituted) reality emerged peripheral cultures that stand in an unequal place. Thus the State being a mechanism for legitimating asymmetries, derived from an erroneous interpretation of Latin America by Europe: the Occidentalism (DUSSEL, 2005). Therefore, there is an intersection between power and the symbolic fields, which can be measured both in terms of legitimate *domination* and in economic terms.

As discussed by Segales (2014, p.64, *our translation*), for hegemonic political authors, such as Weber, politics involves a type of legitimated domination, so dominance relations are naturalized. This process characterizes the fetishization of politics in modernity as subjects legitimize domination by giving up their own will and subjectivity, becoming passive obedient beings: “their will belongs to another”. In Hobbes, we see that harmonization between freedom and obedience being developed through the status of citizenship, which will legitimize the transference of the right to self-rule to an external entity (Leviathan). This movement segregates men from public affairs; and thus, the state (governor of public affairs) inaugurates the divide between the private (societas) and the public life (civitas) of the citizen. In those terms, the individual and his collective reflection lose the potential for political action beyond institutional boundaries, or beyond the boundaries of modern citizenship. In other words, all (real or possible) forms of power that escape the hierarchical relationship terms within the State would be short of the political.

As stated by the anthropologist Pierre Clastres (2003), modern cultures usually read contexts where the command-obedience relation is absent as a vacuum of political power. Hence, the construction of Europe as a sovereign subject involves the limitation of politics within State boundaries, as well as the configuration of society through atomized terms. Therefore, while the political experiences in the European geography become a reference and benchmark for all other narratives, deviant characters begin to be taken as a picture of inadequacy, lack or failure (CHAKRABARTY, 2008). In other words, the ideal of Citizenship and the Nation-State are portrayed by Eurocentric culture as the teleological end to which all people should submit. As pointed out by Chakrabarty “even today the Anglo-Indian term "communalism" refers to those who allegedly fail to live up to the secular ideals of

citizenship" (2008, p.64). In IR, discourses inspired by realism highlight this theoretical and social legacy in the concept of the state of nature. As Beier points out:

> The ontological commitments of the theoretical orthodoxy of the field, chief among which is an abiding faith in a Hobbesian state of nature, foreclose the possibility of political community in the absence of state authority. Hence, not only are the Indigenous peoples of the Americas rendered invisible to the international relations orthodoxy, but it also becomes possible to characterize the settler states resident on their territories as former colonies, thereby mystifying the contemporary workings of advanced colonialism. In this sense, the undifferentiated idea of the state, making no distinction with respect to settler states, obscures even the obscurity that it creates. This construction turns principally on a prior acceptance of the Westphalian state as the only possible – or at least the only legitimate – expression of political order (2002, p. 84).

Such structures expose the limitations of the intellectual and sociological imagination from the West in understanding the political experiences of the "Rest" without colonizing them. As Segales (2014, p.30, *our translation*) also suggests, we must think of a new politics "from the horizon containing the novelty itself"; in other words, we must think of another politics from an 'externality' that transcends the modern-West totality, which is represented, in this article, by the indigenous communities experiences.

Indigenous epistemic disobedience: Pluriversal Politics

> "I'm not Indian, dammit, I'm Aymara. But you made me Indian
> and as Indian I will fight for liberation"
> Fausto Reinaga[7]

In this section, we focus on Latin America to illustrate the epistemic disobedience of the indigenous regarding the modern matrix. Such a choice is derived from our commitment to our place of enunciation, as well as the trajectory of the Latin-American social thought and its marginality in IR. Here, experiences and wisdom in the continent are presented diffusely, as we also engage native references from other parts of the world, to indicate that there is an ample context of resounding initiatives that are in the opposite direction from advanced capitalism (RIBEIRO, 2000). Latin America started being discussed among state-centered IR theories after the Spanish and Portuguese colonies became independent in the 19th century. Before it, the entire

[7]Extracted from Walter Mignolo (2007, p. 13).

process of founding modernity and capitalism that was developed in the contact between the *old* and *new* continents was – and is – silenced/ignored by the traditional approaches of the field. The Eurocentric perspective of knowledge, bearing a dual and evolutionist history, has carried out the tragedy of the sovereign state as a practical and normative destiny to all societies of the postcolonial regions.

As seen in the first topic, the theorization of the modern state and the nationalized society follows the European experience. In the colonized continent, the Leviathan enterprise of centralization and individuation of political power was fulfilled with distortions. The turn of the people into citizens and the democratization of the political institutions was attached to the diverse matrix of control over work and productive resources (QUIJANO, 2000). However, even though the traditional scientific discourse takes the Nation as a universally valid totality, the countries of this portion of the world live, each in their own way, the mismatch with this classification (ZAVALETA, 1990).

Composed of multi-social[8] countries, the strategies of construction of the European matrix entity are materialized by means of the genocide of social diversity, of the imposition of dominant culture, of the ethnic and cultural mix and the forced assimilation (TAPIA, 2002). The debility of these processes in effectuating the formula "One State, one nation" can be seen in the attempt to govern multiplicity without incorporating political institutions from Other cultures and ethnicities[9]. Therefore, the political and state unity in Latin American countries remains monocultural, being organized in monoethnic patterns (DIAZ-POLANCO, 1999).

Mignolo discusses that there is no identification between nations and the state, so the people cannot recognize itself in the power of their representatives[10] – both

[8]The notion of multi-social society is derived from the idea of *abigarramiento* proposed by René Zavaleta. This term refers to the ill-composed heterogeneity forged by colonial domination. The concept of multi-social differs from the previous when it declares that a major part, though not a totality, of co-presence of social relation matrices are disarticulated and gestated by colonial domination. See Luis Tapia (2002).

[9] The silencing of the other is revealed in the exclusion of fact and law, that the Indians suffered in the representation systems of the modern state: "the Indians, for the Power, were outside politics, outside the state, outside the republic, outside the present and history" (DAVALOS, 2005, p. 25, *our translation*).

[10] In this framework, the state is based on and maintained by the silent exclusion and systemic and persistent violence. As the Bolivian-Aymará declares: "Public speeches became ways of not saying. And this universe of not spoken meanings and notions, belief in racial hierarchy and in the inherent inequality of human beings, are incubated in common sense, and occasionally burst, cathartically and irrationally" (RIVERA CUSICANQUI, 2010. p. 20, *our translation*).

subjected to the same cosmology: the "Western political theory" (2007, p.32). There are practices, values, projects and instruments violently excluded from the political sphere, a reality that exists "in the margins of language formations that organize the collective field of experience" (KEHL, 2009, p.26, *our translation*). However, such systematically denied realities have revitalized their forces and claimed the political and epistemic space back:

> There is today a strong Indigenous intellectual community that, among many other aspects of life and politics, has something very clear: their epistemic rights and not just their right to make economic, political and cultural claims. [...] Epistemic fractures are taking place around the world and not only among the Indigenous communities in the Americas, Australia or New Zealand; it is happening also among Afro-Andean and Afro-Caribbean activists and intellectuals [...] And as far as that epistemic breakage is concerned, the consequence is the retreat of "nationalism", that is, the ideology of the bourgeois State that managed to identify the State with one ethnicity and, therefore, was able to succeed in the fetishization of power […]" (MIGNOLO, 2007, p. 31-32).

In this process, one should note that this move by indigenous peoples would not be a rejection of the modernity legacy, but the proposition of a dialogue between knowledges (DÁVALOS, 2005; MACAS, 2005). After all, when another knowledge exists, space is created for other conceptual visions within an epistemological field. The indigenous epistemic disobedience emerges from forms of being political not confined to modern epigones – as the notions of *Ayllu*, *Ch'ixi*, *Pachamama*, *Tekohá* among others that will be interpreted ahead.

But, before that, we should stay a little longer on the indigenous phenomenon, existing in various parts of the contemporary world. Over centuries of colonization, many people were racialized[11] and therefore indigenized. This process of identifying a social group as indigenous is violent, in that it consists in the imposition of an exogamous, generic and racialized identity: exogamous as it is imposed by external subjects to the group so defined; generic, because it comprises many peoples who were not previously identified with each other or do not identify themselves as equal, but now constitute an umbrella group (Indians); and racialized, because it refers to

[11]The idea of race "was built as referencing alleged differential biological structures" and "social relations referred to this idea produced historically new social identities, including that of the Indian." See Anibal Quijano (2000/2005, p.202, *our translation*).

differential biological characteristics, socially transformed into markers of inferiority (PRATT, 2007, p.398-399; see also URT, 2016, p. 879).

However, with the increased number of international organizations that have made the "indigenous" their specific concern, especially since the end of the twentieth century, peoples who were indigenized throughout colonization have formed a global collectivity that includes groups previously defined as natives, aboriginal, autochthonous, indigenous and other denominations: “Indigenous peoples have promoted a transnational process of ethnogenesis in the late twentieth century, thereby constituting a global Indigenous identity” (URT, 2019, p. 458).

Having made these remarks about the use of the term "Indian movement" and recognizing its decisive presence in Latin American social movements in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we can return to our debate on indigenous disobedience in the Latin American context. In this sense, the Plurinational States in Bolivia and Ecuador, for instance, are important inasmuch as they include a cultural and identitarian perspective in the political struggle, in order to reshape democracy under a participatory and communitarian perspective, based on dialogue and consensus. In this model, diversity is important to guarantee the recognition of the Other, as opposed to the current standard of the colonial state, vertical and uninational (MACAS, 2005).

> De-colonial thinking is the road to pluri-versality as a universal project. The pluri-national State that Indigenous and Afros claim in the Andes, is a particular manifestation of the larger horizon of pluri-versality and the collapse of any abstract universality that is presented as good for the entire humanity, its very sameness. This means that the defense of the human *sameness* above human differences is a claim made always from the privileged position of identity politics in power (MIGNOLO, 2007, p.20).

Most indigenous communities have their economy based on collective work, “based on the community, on solidarity, respect for nature, respect for human beings, respect for future generations” (MACAS, 2005, p.38, *our translation*). Accordingly, for Nina Pacari, from Ecuador, the growing indigenous political agency in the 1990s/2000s in Latin America alludes to the following principles: proportionality, solidarity, complementarity, reciprocity and correspondence (*apud* MIGNOLO, 2007). Some examples can be mentioned, such as when observing the Yanomami Shamanic politics, from which can be inferred a model of collective political action in which the core value is the respect for the land, which is perceived as complementarity and

reciprocity. Protecting the forest, for the leader and shaman Davi Kopenawa Yanomami, is not only "ensuring the continuity of an essential physical space for the physical existence of the Yanomami" (ALBERT, 2002, p.249, *our translation*), but also "preserving from destruction a web of social coordinates and cosmological exchanges that constitute and ensure their cultural existence as 'human beings'" (ALBERT, 2002, p.249, *our translation*).

The principles of this politics originate from a traditional rationality that is community based. These knowledges are "the contingent result, filtered through collective memorization, of the shamanic creativity" (ALBERT, 2002, p. 248-251, *our translation*). The authority of the leader, in this political and religious case, rests on the correspondence between his speech and the memory of the community. The economy does not emerge from the accumulation, but from solidarity and complementarity.

> Omamë found gold and other ores unknown to me and then hid them under the ground so that nobody would mess with them. They are not things that could be eaten. He only left above the ground the things we eat (...). Nobody eats ores, they are dangerous things. They only cause diseases that spread and kill everyone, not only the Yanomami, but the whites too (KOPENAWA apud ALBERT, 2002, p. 250, *our translation*).

Community is also a key word to understanding the political practice of the indigenous at the Andean region (SEGALES, 2014). Living in community is living the *Ayllu*, the mode of being of that particular (Andean) world pre-existent to the arrival of colonizers. As Segales explains, "this set of reciprocal and solidary relationships, which makes existence a place of merit and responsibility; is what comes closest, semantically, to the original meaning of *Ayllu*: community" (2014, p.136, *our translation*). It is noteworthy that community is not the absence of conflict, feature learned from the Aymara notion *"Ch'ixi"*. It describes a reality of "multiple cultural differences, which do not melt together, antagonize or complement themselves, but coexist in parallel" (RIVERA CUSICANQUI, 2010, p. 70, *our translation*).

These notions of community do not have an individualistic matrix, as those described in the section above, but represent an extensive congregation of kin – potential relatives; where the established relations involve fellowship, identification and openness to all beings in the relationship. Accordingly, the "relatives" are not just men and women, but the land, the plants: objects are subjects, since "in the production I set

the mode of relation that defines me as a part of a presupposed community" (SEGALES, 2014, p.143, *our translation*).

As mentioned, the community not only involves human belonging, but interaction with the *Pachamama* – a representation of a mother earth that gives life, nourishes, protects and calls for death. To Andean indigenous epistemology, the separation between man and nature, god and man, individual and collectivity is unthinkable. Politics exists and is made in the community. A different ontology from the western is at play. In this interaction, the Earth is central. As Grimaldo Rengifo explains,

> All being members of my Pacha or house of my Ayllu, all who dwell in it are experienced as my family. The same activity of regeneration in the *runas* is not only experienced as a result of the union of beings of the same species, but also as an expression of the creative activity of the Pachamama (*apud* SEGALES., 2014, p.146, *our translation*).

This notion of an existence associated with the territory is expressed in different indigenous philosophies. For the Guarani the sacred space or living space is called *Tekohá* - "tekó is the way to be, the system, the culture, the law and the habits; the Tekoha is the place and the environment in which the conditions of the Guarani way of being are possible" (BRIGHENTI, 2005, p. 42, *our translation*; see also URT, 2016). For the Anishinaabe ethnicity in Ojibwa, *Nishnabeakin* means "the land that belongs to the people" and *dinawaymaaganinaadog* "all our relatives", referring to plants, animals and other beings that inhabit the land (LADUKE, 2005, p.23, *our translation*).

In this view, the relationship with the land implicitly involves responsibilities. Language, culture, history and teachings acquire meaning in their relationship with the land: "When 'property rights' of our communities are discussed, it is necessary to signal in what serious way our traditional system of land tenure, particularly our system of collective property, has been violated" (LADUKE, 2005, p.24, *our translation*). This assertion from Winona LaDuke justifies the conflicts undertaken by indigenous mobilizations in different parts of the globe for land (DIAZ-POLANCO, 1999). The mark of the Indian fight is for the territory, that is foundational of the communal status quo. The importance of the community, the land, the distribution and reciprocity in relation to the Other are synthesized in the utopia of "Living Well" of the people that dwell in the Andean region:

> Living Well points to a simple life that reduces our consumption addiction and maintains a balanced production without ruining the environment. In this sense, Living Well is to live in community, in brotherhood and especially in

> complementarity. It is a communal, harmonious and self-sufficient life. Living Well means sharing and complementing without competing, living in harmony between people and nature. It is the basis for the defense of nature, of life itself and of all of humanity (CHOQUEHUANCA apud GIRALDO, 2014, p.114, *our translation*).

As Giraldo (2014) mentions, the use of words that have networks of transcendental meanings in relation to the modern grammar, as is the Living Well, is essential to stimulate new political practices. Hence the importance of incorporating bi/plurilingualism in nation-building projects anchored on the principles of interculturalism, plurinationality and multi-ethnicity. By associating welfare to the state, it ceases to act in the context of a representative authority and assumes authority as a service – this premise brought by the Zapatista National Liberation Movement (EZLN) in the slogan "We are all Marcos Now"[12]. In this process, power is shared and performed in community and is not characterized in a negative, oppressive and dominating sense, as in modern perspectives.

The tale below, called *A strange dream about the future*, describes a dialogue between a Munduruku man who lives in the city and his young cousin who lives in the Brazilian Amazon.

> After lunching the delicious Tucunaré stew, we decided to rest. I laid on my net and I was thinking about everything that we were living. (...) I thought about the future.
> - Future? What is this? - asked little Tawé.
> - It's what we will be tomorrow - I replied.
> - But what is the future? - stubbornly insisted the boy.
> - It's what we'll be when we grow up – I tried to be didactic.
> - I still haven't got it. Probably because I am a child – the boy concluded.
> - That's not it, Tawé. The future is really difficult for anyone to understand.
> - But, cousin – he stared at me –, if the future is what I'll be when I grow up, then you, who has already grown, aren't you the future? Isn't my future you? For me, it is very difficult to understand those words because our grandfather [shaman] always says that th*ere is only the present, the now, that it is good to live one day at a time*.
> - Our grandfather is right, Tawé. You are also right. I am your future. The people who live in the city always forget that. (...)
> - When I'm an adult - thought Tawé from the height of his nine years – I will *continue defending our present*. *Our children will have a future*: *Me*. (MUNDURUKU, 2004, p.76 e 77, our emphasis)

[12] A milestone for indigenous mobilizations in Latin America and the World is the uprising of the EZLN in 1994, which gave visibility to the project of the plural nation. Indigenous peasants took the capital of Chiapas, St. Kitts, demanding reforms in the Mexican political system, seeking autonomy and respect for diversity (DIAS; MILLAN, 2005).

In this passage, the existence that takes place in the 'present' is notable, the communal responsibility of the young Indian who declares his commitment with and solidarity towards future generations, so that they can enjoy the well-being experienced in the present. Reciprocity is taken as a fundamental social bond. Such a narrative differs from the developmental idea of the modern subject, who distances himself from the reality of the here and now, and interweaves himself in the logic of a destructive creation (BERMAN, 1987), a departure from the other and nature, reaching absolute solitude, in the name of progress.

Final Considerations

This article was organized in two moments. Firstly, we proposed a metatheoretical analysis focused on interpretative lenses of authors such as R. B. J. Walker and J. Marshall Beier. That conceptual base was mobilized in order to read the limits and possibilities of Modern and Colonial attitudes regarding the notion of Politics, in which lies the political imagination of International Relations classical theories. Then, we went back to Rafael Bautista Segales writings in order to reflect on communitarian politics as a concept that integrates diverse Indigenous experiences. Therefore, in the second part, we proposed a Sociological analysis, briefly presenting some examples of Indigenous political imaginary in Latin America. As announced in the Introduction, our dialogue with indigenous experiences does not target a sort of search for solutions to modern problems. On the contrary, such an encounter where silences can be exposed, and questions raised. In that sense, after that course of reflections, we should ask, after all, what is politics? Is it an institutionalized practice restricted to public spheres? Can we think about agency beyond individualized or solipsistic vocabularies? Does the body speak? Is such a body only human? Can nature or non-living things speak? If they can, how can we listen to them?

As mentioned, those are some of the important questions posed by our contact with non-western experiences, but we hope that the reader can add to those a role set of other questionings. Undoubtedly, reality has proved its complexity in the late twentieth century, with the end of the Cold War, the flexibility of capital and the advent of information age, and is still challenging us in the present, when migration waves,

natural catastrophes, resurgence of non-democratic forces and so on have been pushing us to a re-evaluation of our political abilities. Hence, among so many changes, this article sought to highlight the emergence of marginalized mobilizations that presented new demands and meanings to politics. However, this expansion of reality reaches IR diffusely. After all, in spite of the many criticisms directed at hegemonic perspectives, they continue dictating the study programs and research in Latin America (TICKNER; CEPEDA; BERNAL, 2013).

Moreover, the notions from modern politics still guide foreign policy and decision making. Among the crimes of the modern political discourse are the: denial of political agency to stateless societies; exclusion of collective subjectivity; invention of the inferiority of indigenous peoples; sacralization of the colonial situation; legitimation of citizenship as the only alternative for the performance of a right to democracy; and non-recognition of multi-verse sociopolitical interactions, those that are not constituted from the structural dualisms of Eurocentric symbolization.

Therefore, in this final consideration, we reinforce the idea that indigenous political activism in its infinite diversity represents a disobedience towards epistemic and disciplinary canons adopted in IR. Nevertheless, when the notion of politics is centered on state sovereignty, the coetaneity of these indigenous histories and their forms of organization and political subjectivity are rejected. Then, when taken as primitive, those peoples are considered pre-modern, uncivilized and, therefore, unable to act in *contemporary* global politics – a space for the modern man, white, heterosexual, bourgeois, and his liberal institutions. However, as Munduruku clarifies: “Time is a very relative thing because it passes differently for each society. (...) For capitalism, time is money; for an indigenous society, time is a treat, a blessing, a way of being in the world” (MUNDURUKU, 2004, p 98, *our translation*).

We emphasize the insulation of contemporary politics in modern/colonial culture since it reinforces the tendency of our scientific discourse (and of our political practices) to denying any communication with the Other. The ethnocentrism of European science still proves itself a political, intellectual, and cultural tragedy as we can see in their contemporary experiences with migration, refugees’ movements, and indigenous contestation. Hence, complex societies of the New World were disqualified in the atomistic synthesis of the invention of race and acquired the blurred face of the self-encapsulated European.

To the extent that the co-presence of multiple societies, cultures, languages and ethnicities is suppressed, the notion of modern politics hinders the construction of alternatives to existing power structures (ZEMELMAN, 2005). The disciplinarianization of knowledge, the creation of general concepts and their own grammars within the academy and official politics, fulfills the colonizing function as they create words that do not cover colonial dimensions, but instead cover them up.

Therefore, for the recognition of this undisciplined indigenous alterity, "the couch researcher, looking at the world from his screen as a divine creature capable of simultaneously seeing all facets of the world, must disappear" (BIGO, 2013, p.183). If there is an interest in understanding the scope of political life in Latin America, it is essential to expand – and, to some extent, subvert – the prism of symbolization of the reality prescribed by traditional theories. As mentioned by Maria Rita Kehl, "the true civilizatory 'advances', when they occur, are not necessarily technical advances, but advances in the possibilities of symbolizing the Real" (2009, p. 29, *our translation*)[13]

We expect that the design of IR, as a classical representative of the Eurocentric political culture, does not continue to reproduce, in the middle of the twenty-first century, "ethnic and racial exclusion as a non-declared guiding principle of morality and sociability" (RIBEIRO, 2000, p.7, *our translation*). To overcome the silences of the area, as well as to go beyond the limits of its modern political imagination, the suggestion is to access non-studied realities and critically incorporate possibilities of semantically expanding the idea of politics.

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[13] According to the psychoanalyst, "From the discursive practices that characterize the society, we can think that what remains 'unconscious' in social life are not symbolized fragments of the Real, marginalized from language formations that organize the collective field of experience. (...) The silent social transformations usually produce ruptures in normality that are not more than the expression *in action* of new phenomena or emerging social groups, not yet integrated to the discursive order". See: Maria Rita Kehl. (2009, p. 26-29, *our translation*).

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