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Mota, Thiago

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## POSTCOLONIAL MOVEMENT AND PHILOSOPHIES OF DIFFERENCE: A MINIMAL MAP

*Thiago Mota*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the relation between the philosophies of difference and the so-called postcolonial movement of thought. Our main sources are, on the side of the postcolonial studies, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha and, on the side of the philosophies of difference, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari. We show that the authors belonging to the postcolonial movement are, to large extent, heirs of a way of thought already practiced by the philosophers of difference. However, the postcolonial authors also reinforce the conceptual apparatus of the philosophies of difference with original contributions and, above all, an attentive consideration of the problem of colonial difference, which remains a big gap for critical thought. Regarding that, with no intention of approaching in depth the singularity and complexity of the ideas of each of the mentioned authors, we draw a minimal map of the points where the philosophies of difference and the postcolonial thought intercept each other. This map also shows points where the postcolonial movement complements the perspective of the philosophies of difference, precisely addressing one of its blind spots: the colonial question.

**Keywords:** Archeo-genealogy. Colonization. Inbetween. Postmodernity.

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to explore possible relations or intersections between the postcolonial movement and the philosophies of difference. To begin with, it is clear that this is a two-way relation. On the one hand, the problems posed by the postcolonial studies are largely fed by a way of thought that was put into circulation by the so-called “philosophers of difference”.

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<sup>1</sup> Docente na Universidade Estadual do Ceará (UECE), Fortaleza, CE – Brasil.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2285-5013>. E-mail: [thiago.mota@uece.br](mailto:thiago.mota@uece.br).

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On the other hand, the postcolonial movement reinforce, with original contributions, much of the analyses developed by the same philosophers of difference. That is why the conceptual apparatus and stile of problematizing made available for the humanities by the philosophers of difference is often present in the debates about colonization. What is not so frequent is the acknowledgment of the impact that this postcolonial debate has or should have on the philosophies of difference nowadays.

A number of questions is obviously implied in the discussions of the postcolonial movement. For example, what is the role of colonization in the formation and transformations of modernity? What are the differences of the colonized way of life and thought? How do they differ? What is the colonial difference? What is its becoming? The lack of answers to these questions, not only among the philosophers of difference, but overall, shows very emphatically a gap in the analyses of modernity that are conducted today. In view of this, this article tries to fill the gap in the consideration of colonial difference, examining some points of intersection where the postcolonial reflections converge with the philosophies of difference as well as some points where they tear apart from it and go further.

In order to think the overlapping of these two epistemologically compatible though diverse perspectives of analysis, this paper deals with two classics of postcolonial studies: first, *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient* (1978), by Edward Said, and second, Homi Bhabha's *The location of culture* (1994). In the midst of it, ideas of these postcolonial classics are connected with ideas of some philosophies of difference, namely Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Bearing in mind that it would be impossible to deeply analyze the specificities and the complexity of the thoughts of all these authors in a paper, we chose to try to elaborate a panoramic approach, drawing a minimal map of the possible articulations between these two different theoretical frames, which intersect each other in many aspects, although they also remain different.

However, before approaching the mentioned authors, we need to make a slight, but important detour by the Martinican psychiatrist and phenomenologist Frantz Fanon, author of, for example, *Black skin, white masks* (1952) and considered, for many reasons, one of the “founding fathers” of the postcolonial movement.

## 1 FANON AND THE BASIS OF THE POSTCOLONIAL MOVEMENT

In general, the postcolonial movement develop a global critique of modernity, which finds one of their main impulses in the “black diaspora”, that is, the involuntary migration of black people around the world, since the beginning of modernity at least. Frantz Fanon’s work clearly exemplifies it. Natural from the French colony of Martinique, in the 1940’s, he studies medicine, psychiatry and philosophy in France, when he established an important connection with phenomenology. In the 1950’s, he takes part actively, as a physician, in the Algerian War of Independence and witness the atrocities perpetrated by the French colonial power. Radical political black intellectual, among other things, Fanon was interested in the psychopathological consequences of colonization and decolonization on the colonized as well as on colonizer. In his late works, always turning around the problem of colonization, he establishes a constant dialogue with the Marxist tradition.

The major contribution of Fanon (1959), which can be considered as a fundamental ground for the post-colonial studies, is perhaps the critique he addresses to the phenomenological tradition and in particular against Martin Heidegger’s existential analytics. Even assimilated, regarded as white among whites or simply as equal, as a man, as a participant of a shared human nature, in short, as a skilled user of the universal discourse of modernity, he is still recognized as black, for example, by a child in the street. Thus, Fanon realizes that he speaks as a black, he has always spoken as a black and that it *has to be done*. In a sense, he discovers that he cannot be the *Dasein*, since this one is not black. Fanon’s perception of the “fact of blackness”, that is, the “lived experience of the black” (*l’expérience vécue du noir*) is phenomenologically and existentially fundamental for the definition and the construction of a non-universal place of speech where the black can talk. Therefore, referring to blackness, Fanon is showing the tension between the black-being as a result of the actual process of subjectivation and to the becoming-black as a possible differential process of singularization.

Already in Fanon, the postcolonial critique of modernity is based on a thesis that will latter become famous, mainly due to the influence of post-structuralism that all enunciation comes from somewhere. We should note that this is also a perspectivist these, in Nietzsche’s (1980, XII, 7[60]) sense. Claiming that all enunciation comes from a place of speech equals claiming that all enunciation comes from a perspective. Now, it is precisely this “provenance

of enunciation” what must be erased or omitted, in favor of the articulation of a universal, necessary, a-perspective discourse that modern philosophy and science intend to enforce. The price of universal discourse, the ontology of the modern subject, the anthropology of the being-man, the condition that must be satisfied in order for us to be able to speak of all or on behalf of all the black it is just to forget the black (and the universal subject and object finally meet each other). The black must be forgotten so that there is a universal field of enunciation, which does not break down itself into places and which cannot be occupied by the black in its difference. Moreover, by erasing the singular place from which, for example, the black speaks, the discourse intends to assume the universal point of view and erases its own records.

In this sense, postcolonialism incorporates the thesis of postmodernity, that is, the idea that we live in a condition of decentralization of discourses and subjects, at least since the narrative crisis (*Grundlagenkrise*), announced by Jean-François Lyotard (1986). In general, there is a big misunderstanding about the prefix “post” and this is the starting point for many of the critiques addressing the notion of a postmodern condition. In terms such as postmodernity or postcolonial movement, “post” does not mean “after”. It is not about saying that we are after modernity. Therefore postmodernity is not an age that succeeds modernity; it is not the “Postmodern Age” that comes after the “Modern Age”.

Postmodernity is a moment within modernity when people notice that modernity is at its end, when its end is already visible, although what comes after this end is not yet arrived, nothing has replaced it yet. Postmodernity is this interstice between modernity and what comes after modernity; postmodernity is what is in-between. Occurs that seeing the end of modernity, we can also start thinking on what comes after it. In this sense, postmodernity has also a relation with future and does not refer exclusively to our present lives.

On its turn, the postcolonial movement of thought does not locate itself after modern colonization. Nevertheless, for these authors, everything that cloud legitimate the continuity of colonization has come to an end. The modern world is still colonized, but as well as we can already see the end of this world, we can also see the end of colonization and we can try to think beyond it. This is why postcolonial thinkers does not to state that we live in a period after colonization or after modernity. Neither they search to advance the ideological-political program of a postcolonialism that would decolonize

modernity, nor defend a postmodernism that could finally modernize modernity itself. For these authors, what is at stake is the problematization of the place itself where emerge the universal discourses and especially the colonial one. In turn, “colonialism” should not be taken in the narrow sense of metropolis/colony, colonizer/colonized, oppressor/oppressed relations, but more broadly, including the full range of border oppressions of gender, race, class, and other intersectional oppressions (DAVIS, 1981), which have been intensified in the present context of crisis of modern universalism. We should not forget that the names of these oppressions also designate the struggles, which unfold on the borders between the times, on the borders of the present.

From the political point of view, the result of the crisis of universal discourses is the multiplication and dispersion of the “pragmatic valences” that, according to Lyotard, come to take the place of the foundation. Among other things, the postmodern condition is a “postcolonial condition” or, as Bhabha says, a “postcoloniality”, that is, the condition of those who live, not after, but at the very end of the colonial narrative, in the crisis of its foundation. At the same time, the postcolonial subject is witnessing the emergence of other multiple valences, other valuations arising from the strategic conditions of the struggles that take place in these spatial, temporal and human frontier regions.

## 2 SAID AND THE ARCHAEO-GENEALOGY OF AN INVENTION

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest merits of Palestinian literary critic and political activist Edward Said is that he has shown, in a striking and incontestable way, that the “East”, as it appears to Western consciousness, is merely an invention. An invention, which is by no means gratuitous. On the contrary, it was a key element, for example, in the strategy of power composed by the 19th-century Anglo-French neocolonialism as well as by the 20th-century North American imperialism. In general, we can say that the neocolonial strategy was built to reach a number of political targets, which were situated on the part of the globe that the West had unilaterally defines as the “East”. This is exactly what Said names *Orientalism*.

The invention of the East by the West is not only a political problem, but also an epistemological and ontological problem. Regarding the ontology assumed by Orientalism, Said (2003, p. xi) notes: “neither the term ‘East’ nor the concept of ‘West’ has ontological stability; both are constituted by human effort – part affirmation, part identification of the Other”. In other words, the

ontology presupposed by Orientalism works with categories such as “West”, “East”, “Europe”, “America”, “Islam”, etc., which do not designate anything in reality, although they fulfill a considerable political function. Such terms serve a process of strategic reduction of the colonized object, the colonial objectification. They function as “unifying rubrics”, forming “collective identities”, categories referring to “[...] multitudes of individuals who are really very different from each other.” (SAID, 2003, p. xxii). In this process of reduction and unification, the “Orientalist ontology” becomes genocidal, or even necropolitical, as Said’s work seeks to denounce.

Thus, from the analytical point of view, what is at stake is not the reference to the world that would correspond to the category “Orient”, but Orientalism, as discursive strategy, as discourse-institution, as a “regime of truth” that produces the concept of East. In this case, the use of Foucaultian terminology is not accidental. Said’s work can be largely understood as a critique of what Foucault (1966, p. IX) called “our millennial practice of the Same and the Other”, meaning that West is the “Same” and East is “the Other”. The archeo-genealogical demarche developed by Foucault was conceived to show the other in the Same, that is, the difference in the Westerns themselves. The question would be: is it possible to use the archeo-genealogical apparatus to think also the other in the Other, that is, the difference in the so-called Orientals?

Said’s works allow us to answer this question affirmatively. The author himself understands it, at least in part, as an application of Foucault’s archaeo-genealogy in the study of problems such as colonization and decolonization, relations West and East, Islam, migration, refugees, terrorism, colonial and postcolonial differences etc. Here is something that Said (2003, p. iii) says about it in the first pages of the introduction to *Orientalism*:

Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short. Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault’s notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism.

In this context, the allusion to Foucault's concept of discourse, which is not simple at all, is fundamental. On the contrary, in the writings of the French thinker the notion of discourse undergoes several modifications, each time the axis of inquiry moves from the formations of knowledge (which are the object of archeology) to the power relations (which are the object of genealogy) and from this to the relation with oneself (which is the object of ethics). Two aspects, however, remain constant although the modifications of Foucault's concept of discourse. First, its pragmatic character: the notion of discourse is articulated in a way that avoids, from the outset, the theory/practice dichotomy. From the point of view of archeology – but it is not different in genealogy or in ethics – discourse is a practice, a use, which may be theoretical or not, but, more importantly, theory is always a discursive practice. Not much different than it is for the second Wittgenstein or Richard Rorty, for Foucault, statements are actions or acts, speech acts (*Sprechakte*, *actes de parole*). This does not imply that there is nothing but speech. On the contrary, genealogical analysis does not cease to show how discursive elements combine with non-discursive elements in order to compose the strategic configurations we call institutions and to perform both disciplinary, biopolitical, and ethical-aesthetic subjectivation processes. Foucault's aim is not, once again, to understand the relation between the discursive (the words) and the non-discursive (the things), language and world, but, in a manner which is increasingly clear from *The order of discourse* on, the way these elements interact to produce the truth effects that govern the subjects.

Secondly, in Foucault, the concept of discourse is tailored to explicitly avoid the use of the notion of ideology, that is, a false representation of reality. The notion of ideology is not equivalent to the Foucaultian notion of discourse (nor *episteme* nor *dispositif*) that Said appropriates, because ideology belongs to a binary register. "Ideology" stands for "science" just as "falsity" stands for "truth". Ideology supposes a true, correct, scientific representation of reality, which classical Marxism calls "scientific socialism" and Louis Althusser practices under the form of the structuralist critique of the ideological state apparatuses. From the archaeo-genealogical point of view, science is, by the same title as ideology, a kind of discourse. For discursive analysis, it does not matter to distinguish ideology from science, as it is not to distinguish falsity from truth. This is simply not the question of an archaeo-genealogy, for which what is at stake is to describe, by means of a discourse, the way in which various discourses operate in and with reality, producing the effects of power.



The critique of the analysis centered on the notion of ideology implies not only abandoning the true/false epistemological dichotomy, “de-ideologizing” the analysis, but the good/bad moral dichotomy, “demoralizing” the analysis. Therefore, it is about assuming an perspective, which is, at the same time, extra-moral and extra-ideological. Indeed, one of the greatest dangers to the analysis is to believe that all subjection is by nature evil and that all singularization is by nature good. This means that the judgment cannot be based on an ideological *a priori*, but have to derive from a contextual perception of reality, that is, a perspective, which results from the researcher’s concrete analysis and engagement in a given correlation of forces.

Epistemologically, it is not a question for either Foucault nor Said to operate in a binary way. Of course, it is important to discern the true and the false, this is, the truth is an issue. But the point is that the truth is simply not the issue that matters. It is a problem, but it is not the problem that archaeo-genealogy deals with. For archaeo-genealogy, what is at stake is to analyze how these truths work as truths for the subjects who are convinced of them, and what are the effects such truths have on their behaviors. In a word, discourse is not ideology because archaeo-genealogy is perspectivist.

As far as Said is concerned, it must be said that orientalism is not an ideology, but a discourse. It is in this sense that the East is an invention. Orientalism is a discursive strategy of domination of some other that is objectified (or subjectivated) as the East. This also explains the meaning in which Said employs the term West. This is the form of subjectivation of a Western “us” (subject of power), which opposes and overlaps a “them”, the Orientals (subjected to power). In this respect, the Iraq war, begun in 2003 by the George W. Bush administration, is a prime example of how, for Said, the discursive connects with the non-discursive, within a strategy of power and subjectivation. He writes that

[...] were Iraq to have been the world’s largest exporter of bananas or oranges, surely there would have been no war, no hysteria over mysteriously vanished weapons of mass destruction, no transporting of an enormous army, navy and air force 7000 miles away to destroy a country scarcely known even to the educated American, all in the name of “freedom”. Without a well-organized sense that these people over there were not like “us” and didn’t appreciate “our” values – the very core of traditional Orientalist dogma as I describe its creation and circulation in this book – there would have been no war. (SAID, 2003, p. xv).

The Washington DC-based power would not have invented, in the name of freedom, “democratic wars”, with their “human rights loaded missiles”, if the polarity between “us who live here” (*chez nous*) and “those people who live there” (*chez eux*) had not been discursively organized long ago and in the smallest details.

Other authors who are part of the postcolonial movement read the problematization of the West/East dichotomy introduced by Said even more broadly. This is the case of the Jamaican sociologist and anthropologist Stuart Hall (1996), who, from a methodological point of view, opts for the use of the archaeo-genealogical analytic operator of discourse, instead of the notion of ideology. In doing so, he recodes the West/East opposition in terms of the West/Rest opposition, where “Rest” stands for the entire world except the West, all the rest of the world. Thus, the civilized, developed, and modern West is opposed to the wild, underdeveloped, or in the process of modernization “rest”. In Hall’s perspective, this broader dichotomy is what enables the “quest of the rest” to be perceived as the same for all humanity.

It should be noted that the West presupposes a modernity that is already in action, already exists. The East (“the rest”) tries to think, on the contrary, a modernity that is not yet present, but only possible, and may or may not come to existence (“the country of the future”). For the rest of the world, modernity is viewed, from the perspective of modernization, as a destiny, an ideal, a goal to be achieved. The question here is how to reach the level already reached by developed countries? How to modernize? How to get their level? Regarding this attempt, Homi Bhabha (1994, p. 7) says that it is about of “touching the future from this side”. However, here we are dealing with a very restricted interpretation of Bhabha’s beautiful expression, namely, the modern one. In this context, whether it concerns the problems of modernity or the problems of modernization, the future is not grasped as radical difference, but is always already codified in modern terms and for modern use. Therefore, although the dichotomy remains, the ideal, conscious or not, of the East, according to Orientalism, is the same ideal of the West. In both cases, modernity is the same.

One of the most relevant points of Said’s book is his critique of marxist humanism. According to him, not even Marx was able to escape the modernist and orientalist reductionist trap:

Karl Marx identified the notion of an Asiatic economic system in his 1853 analyses of British rule in India, and then put beside that immediately the human depredation introduced into this system by English colonial interference, rapacity, and outright cruelty. In article after article he returned with increasing conviction to the idea that even in destroying Asia, Britain was making possible there a real social revolution. [...] Marx's economic analyses are perfectly fitted thus to a standard Orientalist undertaking, even though Marx's humanity, his sympathy for the misery of people, are clearly engaged. Yet in the end it is the Romantic Orientalist vision that wins out, as Marx's theoretical socio-economic views become submerged in this classically standard image: England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating – the annihilation of the Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia. [...] Similarly, the age-old distinction between “Europe” and “Asia” or “Occident” and “Orient” herds beneath very wide labels every possible variety of human plurality, reducing it in the process to one or two terminal, collective abstractions. Marx is no exception. (SAID, 2003, p. 153-155).

It is largely known that Marx's reasoning is based on a dialectics that opposes the bourgeois rule of law to the proletarian revolution, ideology to science, falsity to truth. The unexpected side effect of this dialectics is the nullification of human plurality and difference, reducing it to two abstractions – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat – and, at the limit, in the plan of the ideal, to only one – the classless communist society. In Marxist utopia, by internationalizing itself, the Revolution would eliminate all inequalities – and differences – in both the West and the East. Indeed, as Said shows, for Marx, the very dialectics of neocolonial capitalism was already setting this process in motion. Said's analysis thus reveals how much the “flat” image of the East is worth to Western thought, even to the humanist left which, in postmodern times, stands on the side of difference.

Instead of the dialectical (binary) antagonism between “ideologies” or “classes”, which always tends to a synthesis, the philosophies of difference operate with agonistic struggles, which are never synthesized. On the contrary, they tend to multiply, replicate, and complexify, internally and externally, like rhizomes. Moreover, the cross-cutting way in which archeo-genealogy pursues power relations in the intimacy of discourse is at work in the whole Said's dissection of the overwhelming abstractions of Orientalism. In this sense, the philosophies of difference find proofs for their hypothesis in Said's deconstruction of Western ontology of East.

Said's work shows, strikingly, that the East is an invention of the West, that a colony is an invention of a metropolis and that, even more generally, the Other is an invention of the Same. Thinking from the analytical matrix of power-knowledge archeo-genealogy, he finds the appropriate conditions to a critique of Orientalist discourse, which emphasizes the difference of human multiplicities, which is irreducible to the Same, no matter what it could be. It is around this difference that emerge the various forms of resistance practiced by the so-called Orientals, which are often incomprehensible to Westerners. Only by paying attention to their difference can we understand them. On its turn, understanding the Orientals practices of resistance is a necessary condition to analyze the full range of the aspects of racism in contemporaneity.

### 3 BHABHA AND THE POSTCOLONIAL ASSEMBLAGE

Another member of the postcolonial movement that develops an argument that is close to the philosophies of difference is the Indian literary critic and philosopher Homi Bhabha. In his book *The location of culture*, which is considered a classic of postcolonial studies, he starts from Lyotard's (1986) diagnosis of the postmodern condition, that is, the crises of the foundations (*Grundlagenkrise*). Bhabha notices a general destabilization and decentralization of discourses, subjects and even objects. The loss of the founding narrative that creates a sensation of disorientation and vertigo, a nausea, a seasickness that is obviously not a cause of celebration for either Lyotard or his postcolonial readers. According to Bhabha (1994, p. 1 - 2):

Our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the 'present', for which there seems to be no proper name other than the current and controversial shiftiness of the prefix 'post': postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism... The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past... Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement [...].

To be sure, we live in the time of "post" (postmodernism, postfeminism, postcolonialism etc.), but that does not mean that we live "after" modernity

and its “isms”. On the contrary, the mere proliferation of “isms” proves that modernity, strictly speaking, has not been surpassed. Indeed, we struggle against the borders of the present, in the permanent perception that modernity has come to an end. What characterizes our *Zeitgeist* is a deep sensation of disorientation, a disorder of direction, a drift. However, this disturbance is of modernity itself, or even of modern discourse. The thread of the modern narrative, the progressive myth of Man, has not been diverted or reversed, but has lost its way, due to an event, an interruption, a stoppage or, more rigorously, a “disruption” within the modern narrative itself, the short circuit of modernity.

According to Bhabha, this disruptive event had as its counterpart the shift of the human sciences demarche from the substantial, essentialist and *a priori* conception of the subject to the idea of subjectivation, that is, the idea that subjects do not precede, but are rather results, effects or consequences of a production.

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘inbetween’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (BHABHA, 1994, p. 2).

The epistemological shift toward subjectivation strategies gives rise to the question of the history of modes of subjectivation (how someone is subjectivated?), which is thoroughly studied at both the micropolitical and biopolitical levels by Foucault (1976). Nevertheless, it gives also rise – and it is from this perspective, that Bhabha follows – to the question of the modes of resistance (how to subjective oneself, or rather do I subjective myself, how do we subjective ourselves?) In terms of this second kind of questions, the strategies of subjectivation become strategies of empowerment or acquisition of power. This is the passage from the “know-how” (*savoir-faire*) to a “know-power” (*savoir-pouvoir*), which is acquired by the subjects.

This discussion relates to the poststructuralist question of the place of provenance of the enunciation. Bhabha’s proposal is not exactly to investigate the provenance of modern discourse, although this remains in question in the background. However, he proposes to think about the conditions of possibility

of a postcolonial discourse in which a differential collective experience of the “nationness”, that is, a “postcolonial nationalism” can be narrated. The basic condition for this is what Bhabha calls “inbetween”. Hence the question: “How are subjects formed ‘inbetween’, or in excess of, the sum of the ‘parts’ of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)?” (BHABHA, 1994, p. 2) Therefore, we can say that the central problem in Bhabha is how is a postcolonial nationality possible?

These places inbetween already exist. They are the interstitial perspectives that settle between the conventional places of class, race, gender, nationality. They are also trans-historical places, where the various historical lines of classes, genres, races and nationalities intersect. They are the crossroads in which radical change takes place. These places are constituted by border struggles and cultural hybridisms, that is, by a constant movement of miscegenation, which destabilizes modern conceptual schemes. Indeed, a trans-historical place is a transition zone, an area of modification, in which the “between” takes the form of the “trans”, that is, of the relation as transformation. In turn, the subjects who inhabit these places are themselves crossroads, mestizos, nomads, impure, mixed, unclassifiable types, subjects who would be foreigners everywhere and remain refugees even in their own homelands.

The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. [...] The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress. (BHABHA, 1994, p. 3).

Therefore, the inbetweens are performative situations that, in principle, can be both consensual and conflictual. In Heideggerian terms (HEIDEGGER, 1967), we could say that, while being-possible, the hybrid being-with (*Mit-Dasein*) entails both the possibility of integration and possibility of dissent (*agon*). The point to be emphasized here is that the strategies of empowerment of minor becomings imply tactics of struggle not in the sense of a dialectics, but in the strict one of an agonistics, which uses war as analytical operator of power relations.

In this respect, a prime example for Bhabha (1994, p. 236) is Fanon's "phenomenological performance", the lived experience of the black (*expérience vécue du noir*), whose meaning is manifested in the gesture "It is a Negro!", made by an innocent child, who situates a certain discourse in a certain place, or even in the "no place" that is the place of the black. By giving phenomenological consciousness a determination both aprioristic and entirely contingent – the fact of blackness –, Fanon collapses the dialectical idea of a late character of the black (*Spät-Schwarz*). In Fanon, a postcolonial phenomenology is articulated, which starts from the perception that the black is not, that is, the black is non-being (*Nicht-Sein*) and continues to be not there (*Nicht-Dasein*). The black is not only a moment to be overcome, but also a "late" moment that should have already been surpassed, within the ontology of Man as negation of white as negation of black. In short, the problem is that although they should no longer be, blacks are still, they exist, there they are. Thus, by claiming that there are blacks, Fanon introduces a profound caesura into the teleology of modern narrative (which includes not only dialectics, from Hegel to Marx, but also even Heideggerian phenomenology).

The project carried out by Bhabha (1994, p. 6) is a critique of modernity formulated as "counter-modernity". Just as postmodernity does not come after modernity, postcoloniality does not come after colonialism. In this sense, it is a critical attitude against modernity, within modernity, that is, within the "institution" where resistance makes the "guerrilla". It is precisely a matter of criticizing modernity by taking a perspective "outside" modernity (*dehors de la pensée*), but which installs itself "within" modernity, as a disruptive stop or inter-time.

But the most notable of Bhabha's contribution lies in his use of the concept of "inbetween" (*entre-deux*, *Inzwischen*). An entire epistemology unfolds from here. The whole conception of the subject/object relation changes and differs from that which marks modern epistemology (especially in what concerns the human sciences). As Deleuze and Guattari says, it is a matter of thinking things as multiplicities or according to the logic of the "rhizome". It is not a matter of thinking from the point (one-dimensional infinity), but from the lines (dimensionless infinity). The idea is to suppress the point, the atom, the monad, the substantial unity to deal directly with the difference: "To subtract the one from the multiplicity to be constituted; write to n-1. Such a system could be called a rhizome." (DELEUZE; GUATTARI 1980, p. 13).

A rhizomatic thought, which works at n-1, that is, by exclusion of pure unity or identity, does not seek an ultimate foundation, but neither does it stop at its nihilistic negation. Instead, the concept of rhizome allows to split up any pretended unity to which the search for an ultimate foundation can reach, pluralizing the points of problematization and affirming the multiplicity. In other words, when we think we have gotten to the root of a problem, the thought of the difference shows that this so-called “root” is still a bifurcation. Indeed, it is nothing more than a rhizome. By the way, the concept of rhizome applies, in a very interesting way, to the problem of coloniality, since it makes possible to think of the multiplicity found in the birth of each people. For example, traditionally, it is said that the Brazilian people have three sources: white, Indian and black. Therefore, what is found in the birth of the Brazilian people is not a root (a single origin), but a rhizome (multiple provenances).

Besides, to a philosopher of difference like Deleuze (1977, p. 151), “[i]ndividuals or groups, we are made of lines.” It means that we are pure movement. We are never at the begging or the end of things, but always in its middle. The middle is the whole thing. Explicitly stated: “A rhizome neither begins nor concludes, it is always in the midst, between things, inter-being, *intermezzo*.” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI 1980, p. 36). In other words, for the philosophy of difference, relations take precedence. We must think the relation at first: it is not about thinking the relation from its terms, but, on the contrary, thinking the terms from their relations. In other words, it is a matter of starting from the lines, which only has middle, the curve, the fold. Therefore, the subjects/objects of the human sciences, as the philosophies of difference show, and as the postcolonial studies ratify, are relations, lines, middles. Moreover, they are tensions, since they contain in themselves a certain agonism, must be generally thought of as processes of subjectivation, that is, as processes that are both of subjection (*assujettissement*) and singularization.

From this ontology of lines stems a politics of resistance, which tries to break effectively the modern speech. In this sense, Bhabha (1994, p. 241) speaks of a “postcolonial writing”, that is, the narrative of a postcolonial nationalism, the future community, as a kind of “agency”. In general, agency is understood as the human capacity to act in a certain social environment, with a greater or lesser degree of reflexivity and freedom. For Bhabha, in its maximum degrees of freedom and reflexivity, the post-colonial agency takes the form of writing. This notion of writing agency brings us very close to the concept of collective assemblage of enunciation developed by Deleuze and



Guattari, although we should not confuse agency and assemblage. Indeed, they are different concepts. In order to clarify this distinction, let us look at the following quote:

The important thing is not that the flows produce the “One or multiple”, we are no longer in this: there is a collective assemblage of enunciation, a machinic assemblage of desire, one in the other, and linked in a prodigious outside that makes multiplicity of all way. (DELEUZE; GUATTARI 1980, p. 34-35).

In the sense of Deleuze and Guattari, an assemblage (*agencement*) is a grouping of heterogeneous elements, which can be convergent or divergent. From the grouping between these different components, certain properties emerge, which none of the elements has in isolation and which are attributes of the assemblage between them. On the one hand, the elements, which constitute an assemblage, are also smaller assemblages, that is, they are composed of other heterogeneous particles. On the other hand, each assemblage is also part of a larger assemblage, that is, of compounds from other heterogeneous assemblages, and so on. In these terms, from an ontological point of view, the difference crosses, from one end to the other, the reality, which is basically constituted of assemblages.

Assemblages can be of various types. In the passage quoted, Deleuze and Guattari refer to two: the assemblage of desire and the assemblage of enunciation. An assemblage of desire is a grouping of affective elements, drives, wishes, dreams, imagination, ambitions, which articulate with each other, searching for the satisfaction. An enunciation agency is a grouping of linguistic elements, words, concepts, theses, arguments, speeches, which are linked to each other having as objective an enunciation. An assemblage of desire can be organic, if it is only reproductive, or machinic, if it is, above all, productive. An enunciation assemblage can be individual, if it is articulated by an individual (ethical micro-assemblage), or collective, if it is articulated by a group (political macro-assemblage). It is also worth mentioning that there are several other types of assemblage.

From a political point of view, what is at stake, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is the assemblage between the two types of assemblage just described. It is a matter of linking the machinic assemblage of desire to the collective assemblage of enunciation, thus making a powerful connection between the political and the affective dimensions of the human praxis. In

other words, it is a matter of enunciating the productive desire by means of collective human machines. It is at this point that the concept of agency crosses that of assemblage. The maximum degrees of freedom and reflexivity, that is, the effective agency can only be achieved by a collective assemblage, both of enunciation and desire. Consequently, the grouping of the different, the disjunctive, rhizomatic union, is the only viable strategy for an effective post-colonial agency.

On the other hand, Bhabha's contributions make possible to specify an important aspect of the discussion about the collective assemblage of enunciation in Deleuze and Guattari. This type of assemblage needs to be formulated in a place that is in permanent becoming. Based on Bhabha, we can say that this place in becoming, that is, the place of enunciation of this type of assemblage, is the disrupting inbetween. Post-colonial territories are privileged examples of these places of tense union, conflictive cooperation, and problematization. It is in these places that resistance movements can emerge, with all their power, at the same time, as experimental collective assemblages and desiring machines. It is there that post-colonial resistance can effectively become action and enunciation.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The influence of the philosophies of difference on postcolonial thinking is very clear. There is, however, a big gap in the philosophers of difference, and not just in them, in relation to the colonial question. We can say about them the same that Said (1978, p. 155) says about Marx: the philosophers of difference are no exception. This gap does not result from the impossibility of using the conceptual apparatus of philosophies of difference to think of problems such as colonization and decolonization. As we have argued, this is perfectly possible. Rather, this gap is due to the impossibility of a same author to address all issues and to the framing options that every author is obliged to do. To be sure, there is a lack here, but there is no mystery. We cannot find the colonial question in Foucault or Deleuze because they, while acknowledging its existence, chose not to address it. Nevertheless, nothing obliges us to simply repeat them. In fact, just repeating their questions would be the worst way of not following precisely their lessons.

If we want to find the colonial question, we have to resort to the writings of the thinkers who are part of the so-called postcolonial movement.

It is in them that this question arises most acutely. This is the merit of authors such as Fanon, Said and Bhabha, among others. Nevertheless, in addressing this issue, these authors make maybe the most significant contribution that is being made nowadays to the philosophies of difference. To synthesize, we can say that postcolonial thought makes a major contribution to the development of the philosophies of difference, as long as it puts on its agenda the problem of colonial difference.

MOTA, T. Movimento pós-colonial e filosofias da diferença: um mapa mínimo. *Trans/formação*, Marília, v. 45, n. 1, p. 223-242, Jan./Mar., 2022.

**Resumo:** Este artigo discute a relação entre as filosofias da diferença e o chamado movimento de pensamento pós-colonial. Suas fontes principais são, do lado dos estudos pós-coloniais, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said e Homi Bhabha, e, do lado das filosofias da diferença, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze e Félix Guattari. Mostra-se que os autores do movimento pós-colonial são, em grande medida, herdeiros de um pensamento já praticado pelos filósofos da diferença. No entanto, os autores pós-coloniais também reforçam o aparato conceitual das filosofias da diferença com contribuições originais e, sobretudo, uma consideração atenta do problema da diferença colonial, que permanece uma grande lacuna para o pensamento crítico. Tendo isso em vista, sem pretender abordar, de maneira aprofundada, a singularidade e a complexidade das ideias de cada um dos autores mencionados, traça-se um mapa mínimo dos pontos onde as filosofias da diferença e o pensamento pós-colonial se interceptam. Esse mapa também mostra pontos onde o movimento pós-colonial complementa a perspectiva das filosofias da diferença, abordando justamente um de seus pontos cegos: a questão colonial.

**Palavras-chave:** Arqueo-genealogia. Colonização. Entre. Pós-modernidade.

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