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(How) Can "I" listen to the voices emerging from *Comunidad de Solentiname*? (Researcher's Locus in Approaching the Other "Other")

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Abstract

"*Comunidad de Solentiname*" was one of the main Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) that played a significant role, in both cultural-symbolic and politico-military terms, during the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua (1960-1979). In my perception and interpretation, I shall deal with the theoretical-methodological implications of the testimonies-artistic works of this revolutionary Christian community. How can a person from far away India listen to and interact with the voices from Solentiname, Nicaragua, and produce "scientific" knowledge about the same in a context where the very framework (terms, words, categories, concepts, methodologies, etc.) of the production of *that* knowledge, emanates from the processes of colonization/otherization/domination of the non-western? The point of discussion is the ambivalent tension between the "subject" and the "object" of the research, localized on the exteriority (the two "Others" are relatively different but not distinct) to the modern-colonial scientific paradigm, whose basic research framework must shape the process of research. Subsequently, it discusses a useful methodological-theoretical *praxis* of "Non-negligence"—of Buddhist soteriological origins—in interaction with the works of decolonial studies and, also with the concepts of reflexivity and epistemological vigilance debated in recent developments in social sciences, seeking to engage in a conversation by way of a pluriversal translation.

Keywords: *Comunidad de Solentiname*, Non-negligent Locus of the Researcher, The other "Other," Modern-Colonial system/episteme.

I say that who does not dance, has not enjoyed life.

Olivia Silva[1]

> There appeared a man before Buddha, who had been devoutly religious, giving away charity to the needy, observing strictly the rituals and performing rigorous religious ceremonies, following the beliefs of his time and place. However, nearing the end of his life, he was conflicted and tormented by a great doubt about the existence of God. He would constantly ask himself about the meaning and purpose of his religious duties if the unthinkable was true: God does not exist. As Buddha was passing by his town, he made it a point to go to him to get some guidance on his great doubt.
>
> He asked without mincing his words: "Dear Buddha, please tell me. Is there God?"
>
> He got an equally straightforward answer in a resounding "No."
>
> The disciples of Buddha were surprised at this event as they had never received any answer from Buddha about the (non)existence of God. Content they were, though, having got that answer.
>
> Later that day, another man came and stood before Buddha. This person had been an atheist all his life but seeing near the end of his life, he had flinched and asked himself the same question as the man who came in the morning. He asked: "Does God exist?"
>
> Replied Buddha: "Yes, my friend! God exists."[2]

Tales can say much in a few words. The relevance of the above orally communicated tale has made its way to this article because the first nodal point of the tale's interconnection to our article can be understood from the following remarks of Enrique Dussel: "'The question 'Is it possible to believe?,' is preceded by the question 'What are the historical conditions of this question itself?' ...*From what position* am I now asking this first question in fundamental theology?" (*An ethics* 140). The fact that Buddha gave two radically different answers to that "first question in fundamental theology" is directly related to the position of their interlocutors. Likewise, the position of the subject who poses the question is of fundamental importance to our objective, as expressed in the title of the paper: "(How) Can I listen to the voices emerging from the *Comunidad de Solentiname*?" We will understand this nodal point in the term proposed by Mignolo (67): Locus of Enunciation, that is, the position from which the subject enunciates or poses the question. However, the title has a double dimension to it. While I, as the researcher, propose the question that entitles this article; the question itself enquires about the possibility of me listening,

i.e., my perception, to the voices of *Comunidad de Solentiname*, which leads us to our second nodal point—complementary to the first—of the tale's interconnection with this paper: Point/Locus of Perception.

Just as we understand the Locus of Enunciation as the position from which a question, doubt, statement, etc., is expressed by the subject, the Locus of Perception can be understood as the position at which a stimulus is being impressed upon the subject by way of listening, reading or by any other sensory activity. A contextual reading of the above tale must include, along with the locus of enunciation of both the interlocutors of the fundamental question, a conscious observation of the position at which those questions are being listened to, i.e., Locus of Perception of Buddha. In the process of learning a language, oral and written expressions are the active skills that one learns (enunciation); it is vastly important to pay equal attention to the in-active skills: reading and listening comprehension (perception). While the enunciation is in most cases directed to and focused on the "Other," i.e., Outwards, a conscious observation of the Locus of Perception implies a reflection on the Self or, if you will, a return to the Self. It is by threading these two nodal points, Locus of Enunciation and Locus of Perception, and by interconnecting various textual elements woven in between them, that we shall attempt to unveil the context and weave the text of this article.[3]

My present research at the IIC-Museo evolved towards a comparative contextual study of the political-symbolic resistance that developed during the Cold War period in both Nicaragua and Iran against their respective dictators (Somoza and Pahlavi Shah regime), leading finally to their overthrow, respectively, by the Sandinistas, and Iranian Cultural Revolution in the year 1979. It is well-established that both the regimes of the two peripherical nation-states had a long and close military-economic collaboration with the United States around which modernity/coloniality discourses were centered. The present study focuses on two main points: 1) the role of religiosity in the emancipatory-revolutionary praxis and 2) the role of the subjects localized in the (periphery now understood as) global south. Nonetheless, the specific subjects of this study are not individual subjects but collective ones: *Comunidad de Solentiname* in Nicaragua and *Hosseneiyeh Ershad* Institute in Tehran, Iran. In this sense, the subject is (in) itself its context.

One of the particularities of Cultural Studies is its imagination/invention of contexts as subjects/objects of study, that is, as sites of production of scientific knowledge, with special emphasis on the cultural practices and their discursive significance in relation to the power structures that underlie and inform them (Grossberg, 28). A critical investigation of the context

revolving around the analytical horizons of power-culture implies a constant reflection by me (the researcher) on its position in relation both to the subject matter of research and to the process of the production of knowledge. In this sense, the Latin American Cultural Studies (*ECLA* for its acronym in Spanish) have made their position clear by tracing the roots of the first cultural critique raised in Latin America in the anti-imperialist/capitalist writing, like that of José Martí, or Mariátegui. Alicia Ríos writes about *ECLA* as:

> A field of study configured within the Latin American critical tradition (the essay of ideas - what Julio Ramos has called the "humanist or secular essay"- the dependency theory and liberation theology), that engages itself in a constant dialogue, many times conflictive, with the schools of European and North American thought… (306)

A persistent reflection on the researcher's position in Latin America inevitably leads to a necessity for a clear understanding of the power matrices that bind it into asymmetric relations of power with the center(s) of the modern-colonial episteme/system. In Latin America, the Dependency Theory, originating in the 1940s, pointed out the asymmetrically dependent and dominant politico-economic relations that the peripheric countries had with their Euro-American center. Since they propounded one of the first significant socio-economic theories from the peripheries, it caused a critical epistemic rupture in the dominant modern-colonial episteme insofar as its locus of enunciation. Although susceptible to the critiques on multiple grounds, the *Dependistas* began challenging and questioning not only in Latin America—where a core nucleus of the socio-political reflection of Liberation Theology was formed—but also in other newly independent countries localized on the colonial periphery, regarding their (economic-political) relations with their previous colonizers. These debates, accompanied by a critical dialogue with postcolonial and subaltern studies—which mainly focussed on the asymmetrical periphery (colonized)-center (colonizer) relations in the cultural/literary domain and the production of knowledge and history—can be seen as evolving field of Decolonial/Global South studies.

Naturally, my study in Socio-Cultural Studies at IIC-Museo subscribes to that domain of inquiry that engages in an intense and creative dialogue with the decolonial studies, first, in the radical exposition of its position (localized in the exteriority) as an integrative part of the context, and second, in its fundamental inquiry into the possibilities of the subject's revolutionary-emancipatory praxis.[4] The subject of study is the *Comunidad de Solentiname*—situated in the

Archipelago of Solentiname, on the largest lake in Nicaragua. The context is its historical evolution (1960-1979) as well as its articulation of the revolutionary-emancipatory movement against the Somoza regime. However, the contextual reflection of the investigation, i.e., the possibility and necessity of the revolutionary praxis, is not limited to the revolutionary subject that is being studied: *Comunidad de Solentiname*, but also the subject who is doing the study in a particular context as the locus of production of knowledge, "Not as a locus of non-critical intervention, but as an attitude of interest, from the field of thought, in contextual and situated questions that compel us to theorize politics and politicize the theory" (Rufer 175). This praxis of "theorizing politics and politicizing theory" has significant epistemological consequences that materialize in a constant vigilance throughout the research process, in the selection and use of its theoretical and methodological tools. The proper construction of my research project is characterized not by pre-determined theoretical and, thus, methodological research models but by the construction of these models being dependent on and concomitant with the development process of its research context. This, in turn, will result in the *weaving* of knowledge vis-à-vis its context (Restrepo 66) and "without guarantees" (Hall 14). Alicia Ríos (ECLA) elaborates, "Its research objective is rooted in the research process itself. Therefore, from a methodological point of view, it is an interdisciplinary field that leverages pre-established knowledge only to fail traditional academic relationships… (306) This resistance to disciplinary rigidity and apolitical intellectualism, which leads to a distinctly transdisciplinary character with emphasis on praxis, as practiced in ECLA, can also be said to be the constitutive factor of the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America. Indeed, the theoretical-methodological praxis adopted in my study reflects these key elements as its bibliographical corpus consisting, mostly, of the collective creative works of *Comunidad de Solentiname*: *Poesía en Solentiname, Evangelio en Solentiname* and *Sueño de Solentiname*. These works were mostly created during the period of resistance against the Somoza dictatorship. The first is a collection of poetry written by the members of the community, while the second is a collection of dialogues held between the attendants of the *Misa Campesina* in the Church of Solentiname. The third collection is one of visual art; bringing together the paintings made by inhabitants of Solentiname, a photographic collection of the resistance period, shot by two international photographers and a group of memorial texts by the visitors and collaborators of Solentiname. This diverse bibliographical collection facilitates the trans-disciplinary approach towards understanding the context of Solentiname, ranging from the Freirean dialogical pedagogy for the *Evangelio en Solentiname* to the visual sociology and semiotics

for the visual art collection. However, my approach to these collections, and in general to the context of the *Comunidad de Solentiname* as a revolutionary subject, can be understood through a basic methodological-theoretical tack: *Appaamada* (The Dhammapada, Appamadavago, 2:21) or *Non-negligence*, guided by *Listening as the mode of approximation towards the "Other"* and towards the research context, in general.

Listening has emerged as an appropriate mode of approximation during my interactions with the artworks mentioned above, the historical archives accessed from IHNCA, Managua and especially with testimonies collected by Dr. Ignacio Dueñas Polavieja (2011) for his doctoral dissertation about the Nicaraguan revolution through oral histories. In the process of reading the oral testimonies, I noted the curious peculiarity that the spoken word (in a given context) has as much as in its tone and sonority, as in its capability to transmit emotions (both pain and happiness), even when the word is not being heard, but read, in testimonies. This led me to conceive of *listening* as a mode of approximation towards the voices from these testimonies, the artistic collections, and their community context.

The present article thus reflects upon the process of my interaction with the voices emerging from *Comunidad de Solentiname*. This reflection involves reconfiguring the hermeneutic circle, revolving around the two interconnected nodal points mentioned in the prologue: Locus of Perception (listening-researcher) and Locus of Enunciation (voices-Solentiname). However, the conditions of this interaction are inscribed within the current modern-colonial scientific paradigm. For this exploration, we shall present briefly the two primary subjects that form integral parts of the context of this study: first, *Comunidad de Solentiname* of Nicaragua, and second, I, as the researcher, discuss later the implications that the modern-colonial scientific paradigm, as the operational framework, poses in the investigation of this context. Finally, we will end with a proposal of non-negligence as praxis and Listening as a mode of approximation towards the context of research to provide a glimpse into our own research praxis.

Liberation Theology and *Comunidad de Solentiname*

Liberation theology in Latin America should be understood in the plural (movements) that, beginning in the 1960s with a forceful critique of imperial politics, expanded its socio-political reach on an intercontinental level from Mexico to Chile with a particularly radical reinterpretation of the *evangelical message* in favor of the oppressed. Its popularity across the continent was also the reflection of the socio-economic conditions—underdevelopment as

described by the dependency theorists—of the people living there. Post the fall of the Nazis (and the British colonial empire), the world political arena had got polarized into two poles, the US and the Soviet Union; both these countries, while adhering to strikingly different ideologies, fiercely pursued their imperialist-expansionist policies all through the Cold War period. The US-backed coup d'état of the democratically elected Guatemalan President, Árbenz Guzmán, in 1954, far from being an exception, came to be a key *modus operandi* of US imperialism. Another moderate in militarism yet equally penetrative was its socio-economic program launched in 1961, inspired by Developmentalism through technology: Alliance for Progress. In most countries ruled by authoritarian regimes in Latin America, such promises of progress through modernization, such as industrial technology and modern communicational boom, turned out to be no more than mere illusions. In Nicaragua, for example:

> In the mid-1970s, most Nicaraguans lived in misery. Their nation was ruled by dictator Anastasio Somoza, whose family had firmly governed the land since the 1930s. At the core of the dictatorship was the several thousand-member National Guard, which used abduction and torture to terrify and isolate the regime's enemies. Somoza and his close supporters amassed tremendous fortunes worth nearly US$1 billion, largely through monopoly enterprises in construction and agriculture (Sherman 96).

The testimonies from Solentiname highlight two major elements constitutive of the Nicaraguan experience during the Somoza regime, corroborated above by the quote: Extreme poverty and Systemic violence. This may be true of many other contexts in Latin America of that period - Guatemala, Chile, Colombia, Argentina, and so on. It is, thus, in response to the preoccupations borne out in the experience of a violent and miserable socio-political reality of day-to-day life, that the foundational meeting of Liberation Theology, CELAM, in Medellin was held in 1968. In a clear departure from the spiritualist discourse of salvation, a mode of liberation is chosen that revolves around the dual complementary axes of peace (liberation in a spiritual sense) and justice (liberation in a socio-political sense). Although CELAM Medellin was inspired by a general preoccupation of the Catholic church manifested in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and *Populorum Progressio* (1967), the radical point of departure of the theologians of CELAM, Medellin, is foregrounded in their face-to-face and real-life experience in Latin America. The socio-economic condition of underdevelopment and practical unethical condition of violation of "*dignidad humana*" were the key elements that (in)formed the common loci of

enunciation of these Latin American theologians, and so, their somewhat common approach towards theology was termed as "Critical reflection on the historical praxis" (Gutiérrez 26).

This reflection has a dual dimension: reflecting outside and self-reflection. The latter is, in fact, the first step. Theology must be, before anything, conscious of its position, critical of its epistemological foundations, "A critical theory, given the word accepted in faith, animated, consequently, with a practical intent inextricably united to the historical praxis" (Gutiérrez 34). The critical theory is *animada* by the practical intention of reclaiming human dignity, and the condition of its production is grounded in the daily practical experience in the Latin American contexts of systemic violence and socio-economic underdevelopment. Paulo Freire provides the conceptual-practical framework for praxis: "Within the word, we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if sacrificed even in part-the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak the true word is to transform the world" (87). The need to understand the historical context is not propelled by the logic of knowledge and thus control but by the transformation of the socio-political and economic structures that perpetuate the domination of the oppressed. For Gutiérrez, who later consolidates his contributions to CELAM in his book *Teología de la Liberación, Perspectivas* (1975), it's a theology that "does not limit itself to merely thinking about the world but seeks to situate itself as a moment of the process through which the world is transformed, opening itself in protest against the violation of human dignity" (40). That is one fundamental element that they share with Marx, i.e., the point of theology is to change the world. The praxis is indubitably emancipatory-revolutionary. Their reading of Marxist social theory is mediated by dependency theory. Thus, a radical critique of imperialist policies of the US, in particular, and the world capitalist system, in general, is voiced frequently in different CEBs across Latin America, echoing the voices of the CELAM, Medellin. This revolutionary praxis had materialized by a key formulation made in the CELAM document, namely, *Comunidades Ecclesiales de Base* (CEBs). CEBs were conceptualized to be the cellular base of the Liberation theology movement across Latin America in a process called *concientización*, which vitalized the pain and anguish of the people around a collective praxis of critical reflection on the context-community in both spiritual and political planes.

It is worth discussing the idea of the community here, and for this purpose, we will interact with and try to develop, according to our context, Dussel's ingenious formulation of "Community of Life." Dussel calls it the paradigm of the "Living Corporality," which allows

him to integrate the two main spectrums that take center stage in his works and the liberation theology movement: Theology and Economy. In this paradigm of "Living Corporality," Dussel subsumes the paradigm of dialogic communication, considering the former paradigm is always *a priori* to the latter. "Before a person is part of a community of communication (and subjected to the same communicative action), he is a priori a member of a community of life". He continues: "It is this fundamental human level that we will call "the economic base", not as a "system" in Habermassian fashion, but as a practical and essential constitutive relation moment of human life…" (153). This constitutive relation is understood in its double dimension: first, "person to person and it is the economic moment par excellence. The economic is not only a question of market or money but also one of corporeality or the practical relation of bodies" (153); and second, person to nature by means of labor. Taking an anti-cartesian view, Dussel considers the subjectivity of the human being(s) to be *a priori*/interior to its linguistic and rational self. "His rationality, language, spirituality, and so on are moments of his own human life. These are life functions" (153). This conception of the face-to-face, person-to-person human experience, prior to the rational/linguistic experience, is the fundamental basis of all ethics in gnoseological traditions like Buddhism, Taoism, or Jainism. Dussel relates the sacramental (person-community-God) value of the Eucharistic bread with its real economic value (person-product-nature). "Eating (the bread) is neither an act of language… nor an act of communication" (159). Hence, the economic relations of production (class) through the way of the body is inevitably linked with the offering of bread in communion and in the community. The economic (person-bread) and theological (person-God) aspects can't be divorced from the eucharistic bread. Placing the body in the center of human experience, the Living Corporeality paradigm, in defiance of the colonial rationalist dualism, opens new horizons for understanding the multiple aspects that constitute the subjectivity of a person always localized in a/the community of life.

Here, we must add another aspect to this subjectivity analysis: the sexual. It is not fortuitous that the verb "to eat," in all the languages that I inhabit, is colloquially utilized to refer to sexual activity. Along with the economic and rational-linguistic aspects, the subject's corporeal experience is profoundly configured by its sexual aspect, which gets realized in the interaction/course with the "Other." The subject is always conformed in relation to the "Other" in all its practical corporeal relations. That is to say, when two subjects—conscious of their logical difference and analogical similarity[5]—come together in communion, they form a

community. The real formation of a community does not take place, as the modern sociologist would have us believe, in the duality of individual-structure but in a communion of two subjects that form a relation—a trans-formational inter-relation—that is more than the sum of the two subjects involved.

This view of community of life, even before Dussel's conceptual formulation, seems to me to be the foundation of the *Comunidad de Solentiname*. It is worth noting that Ernesto Cardenal—after finishing his doctorate in México and being ordained as a priest—first moved to Solentiname in 1965 (before the CELAM Medellin meeting) to form a contemplative community for his mystical and spiritual explorations inspired by his mentor, a Trappist monk: Thomas Merton. Though soon Ernesto realizes (not conceptualizes) the inseparability of spiritual contemplation (theo-logy/ry) and day-to-day practical encounter with a violent and oppressive reality:

> That union with God lead us first to a union with the island's inhabitants, so poor and abandoned, who lived dispersed on the banks of the archipelago. Contemplation also led us to a political commitment: contemplation led us to the revolution; and it had to be like that, otherwise, it would have been inauthentic. (Barra 16)

The voices of the island's inhabitants give testimony to their condition:

> Solentiname was a place, so to say, abandoned by the governments, … nobody would come there…. It was a place really… very sad due to its abandonment. And lack of basic things. Right? …but materially, there was really … a lot of scarcity of food. (Olivia Silva-Polavieja 571)
>
> Well, we were forgotten. In Solentiname, there was no education and no health services, and many children would die in labor (Rafael Chavarría-Polavieja 627).

By recognizing oneself as "the other" and sharing the suffering (com-passion) that the oppressive system inflicts on "the other," the meaning of all thinking can be understood. The Sanskrit word, *Veda* (Knowledge) and *Veda*-na (Pain), have the same etymological root, which means "to know." In this sense, compassion would simultaneously mean "suffering together" and "knowing together/getting to know each other." Compassion, so understood, is a constitutive element of a communion of the "Self" and the "Other(s):" the first "community of life."

Knowing together or Getting-to-know-each-other, already means a first level of analogical communication. The disposition of listening, fundamental for this process, concurs with the first rupture-aperture in the fixed identification of oneself with "I," thus unveiling the opening/space necessary for welcoming the "Other" for a dialogue to take place. But before the dialogue, the opening also coincides with communicating the "Other" by a corporeal/analogical (non-dialogical) signal about the readiness to listen. Tears, for example, have their way of analogical communication, *a priori* to and beyond all forms of dialogical communication. This analogic communication, as the first level of communication in the community of life, we will understand as *conversation*, as its Latin etymological root gives scope for multiple contextual meanings, such as living/dwelling/dancing together or to keep company or to have inter-action-course. The dialogue itself should be understood as the second level of communication formulated by linguistic and imagery mechanism of rational thought, preceded by the first practical condition of aperture for the disposition of listening and its recognition by the speaker in/by the act of speaking. But to be ready to listen is to cause a fracture in the "Self" for welcoming the "Other," and its analogical communication-recognition is the first practical condition of the constitution of a community of life. The first moment of the symbolic-practical constitution of *Comunidad de Solentiname* takes place when, instead of preaching by officiating a regular mass, the call to listen to the participants of "*misas campesinas*" is invoked by Ernesto, in the form of dialogues held at the Church of Solentiname. Olivia Silva opines in this respect, "Well, the mass preached by Ernesto, at first, was like regular mass, without dialogue. There, we used to pray and read the evangelical message. The beauty of it started when the dialogue…. commentary on evangelical message started. And a lot of people started attending the mass" (Olivia Silva-Polavieja 575).

The fruit of this dialogue, *Evangelio de Solentiname,* forms a key part of the bibliographical corpus of our research. In the process of such a conversation, inspired by compassion for[6] the "Other", emerges the key creative element of *confidence*, in each other's intentions and abilities, seeing the "Other" as a confidant. Confidence in each other, in my view, is fundamental for a creative, collective-revolutionary praxis, as reflected in artworks like *Poesía de Solentiname* and *Sueño de Solentiname*, created in collectivity by inhabitants of Solentiname. Moreover, due to its transnational network of collaborators, visitors, and workers, Solentiname became a cultural symbol of an anti-establishment utopian community that was artistic, creative, and revolutionary all at once. In a historic turn of events in 1977, the *chavalos* of Solentiname first took up arms

and captured the San Carlos cartel of the Nicaraguan National Guard established outside of Solentiname. This attack was followed by a series of violent measures imposed upon Solentiname by the Somoza regime, including abduction of the Church, destruction of the community, and imprisonment and torture of its inhabitants. However, the attack on the San Carlos Cartel and the subsequent persecution of *Comunidad de Solentiname* in the year 1977 set off the final phase of the armed resurrection against the regime, which would culminate in its overthrow and the Sandinista Revolution in 1979.

The Researcher

Almost halfway around the world from Solentiname, I was born and raised until the age of fourteen in Muzaffarpur, in the state of Bihar in India. Muzaffarpur is located north of the Ganga River, which crosses the state's capital on its way east to the Bay of Bengal. Later, we moved to our current house in a village called Tajpur, an hour away from Muzaffarpur.

My mother comes from the Palamu region, south of where Ganga passes Bihar. Before her marriage, she spoke a dialect of Magahi, which, like Maithili or Hindi, is one of the Indian languages. Post-marriage, my mother remembers having difficulty understanding people's dialect in Muzaffarpur, so she spoke to us children in Hindi with a particular regional touch, not losing the lexicon learned in her dialect of Magahi. The gender factor is crucial here. Therefore, the dialect of her husband's zone would normally have to be her "real" dialect. The logic of this arranged marriage dictates that the woman is not indeed sufficient on her own, and she would only be complete once she is enjoined with the man whose surroundings she is then obliged to adjust with. From the starting point of the insufficiency of the linguistic self, but in deep insufficiency of the Self itself, my mother makes a strategic and contingent choice to employ the (fractured/uncategorizable) medium of enunciation she did with her kids. If anything, this feeling of insufficiency of a fractured self is the core of my mother tongue.

My linguistic self-commences from that complex, uncategorizable (no)place whose first moment of the constitution is a coming together of the mother tongue (Magahi) and the paternal regional dialects like Maithili under the general framework of Hindi, languages that have been considerably influenced by the Mughal period and the Persian language, resulting into a curious intertwining of Hindustani languages of Indo-Iranian root. Another huge influence is English. I had my schooling in Hindi as a medium of instruction. However, for my correspondence graduation course in tourism, I chose English as the medium of instruction. After finishing my

graduation, I decided to learn a foreign language in pursuit of better career/economic opportunities and subsequently, pursued a Master's in Hispanic Philology (2012-2014) at Jawaharlal Nehru University (hereafter, JNU) and an M.Phil. in Hispanic Studies (2014-17) at Delhi University (hereafter, DU).

To sum up, Hindi, Magahi, Maithili, and Urdu are my inherited mediums of enunciation, whereas, later in Delhi, I was obliged to learn and refine the language of the professional and official spheres, the language of power, the colonial language: English. Delhi also offered the opportunity/option to be instructed in another language (of my choice) that belongs to the colonial paradigm: Spanish. A language that makes for almost the entirety of my academic interaction, both perception and enunciation, since 2009. If we think of a language as the main gate of its house of culture, I have had the good fortune of first passing through the Hispanic language-culture gate and con-versing or living together (*con-versar-vivir*) in that house. It is not fortuitous then that my interest and research aspirations have been directed more towards the Latin American subject and its context due to the shared history of colonial domination from the position of the "Other:" a position in the exteriority of the modern/colonial episteme/system. By exteriority, we, with Dussel's (Encubrimiento… 21) metaphysical-geopolitical definition, understand the *liquid* position-ing of all those populations (*pueblos*) that constitute in/by themselves the limits of the modern world system, which by the historical processes of colonization based on logic of de-humanization and domination of the "Other"—all others than the European/white/patriarchal/male (*Self*)—has come to form the core nucleus of modern subjectivity and the modern-colonial world system. And if we understand the process of making/inventing the "Other(s)," *Other-ization*, as the logic of the colonial invasion and, subsequently, of the modern-colonial system, then both the people from India and Latin America are forced to recognize themselves as "Others" in relation to the Eurocentric *Self* as the center, the ego of the system.

If we see the epistemological foundations of this modern system, it materializes its Other-izing intentions, either by the destruction of the languages—with it, epistemic systems, i.e., a way of making sense of oneself and one's surroundings—as happened with most of indigenous languages in Latin America, or by a total mythologization and disparagement of the meaning systems inscribed in them, followed by the imposition of European modern-colonial languages, as in case of the people and languages of India. This phenomenon is indeed palpably present in the modern scientific research paradigm. Any knowledge derived from a paradigm

other than the dominant colonial one simply does not merit the "scientific" knowledge criteria and is relegated to a sub-plane named Myths. This is what is referred to in the decolonial studies as "Epistemicide" (Grosfoguel 39), and its continuing matrix that permeates the modern scientific research framework, even in countries like India or México, is the coloniality of knowledge which imposes itself on the interactive process of research proposed by one of its "Other" (me) about/with another of its "Other" (*Comunidad de Solentiname*).

The Subject-Object *duel*

The question of listening to the other "Other," as expressed in the title of this paper, emerges from an explicit (re)introduction of the subject-object dilemma that so underlines (and cripples) the modern scientific paradigms during the first few research methodology courses taken by me in the PhD. Course at *IIC-Museo*. The "Construction of the Research Object" is a concurring theme in our research methodology courses in the modern scientific paradigm. However, this caused me certain perplexity as the pedagogical praxis implicit in the very term "Research Object" implied a clear distance or objectivity of the researcher from the object of research. As a student of Hispanic language and literature, my general interest and admiration towards Latin American literature were indeed due to their extraordinary capacity to overwhelm the lineal narrative paradigm, be it Marquez's marvelous circular interplay of present, past, and future in his paradigmatic *Cien años de Soledad*, or the undermining of a universal omniscient narrative voice in writings of Vargas Llosa or Cortázar, among others. But more than the mere questioning, it was the wish, will, even need, to voice and enunciate what was always outside of, untamed by, and inconceivable to, a given literary paradigm—the rational, linear one—by ways of excellent props like Levitation of a Rebeca or by *Continuidad de los parques*, was what resonated in me. I read Carpentier's "*Lo real maravilloso*", or perceived Rigoberta Menchu's testimonio, with a certain sense of recognition of myself in them, and that recognition, as we will discuss later, is identified by the cry in solidarity of the people who find themselves pushed out of the domain of all possible forms of narratives and hence, from representation and production of meaning.

During my Master's program, I first came across the topic of my research now, i.e., Liberation Theology and CEBs in Latin America concerning counter-insurgency movements across Latin America during the Cold War period. This theme struck a chord in me instantly for its curious (almost unprecedented) intermingling of the prophetic Christian faith and Marxist socio-economic analysis, both in its theoretical contributions, as well as in its practical-political

articulation with other local revolutionary movements. During our hot discussions inside the university residential hostel, with the help of Sharjeel Imam[7], I was able to trace a contextual analogy between the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America and the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, which I pursued in my M. Phil research proposal —based on a contextual analysis of the texts of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Ali Shariati—to trace and comprehend the constructive comparative base of these two revolutionary socio-political movements and to gain insights into the potential revolutionary-emancipatory praxis for the subjects located on the exteriority of the modern-colonial world system. It is notable that even if the periods and perpetrators of colonization in India and Latin America were different to each other, the logic of Other-ization was the central core of the colonial enterprise at both places imposed by the colonizers upon the colonized subjects. So, if from the position of one "Other" localized in New Delhi (Delhi University), I proposed then the question to investigate the other "Other"; it was informed by my solidarity with, and, in recognition of, the pain of de-humanization by the logic of Other-ization suffered by both of us "Others."

The idea of imagining and "constructing" the other "Other" as an object of research was far from my praxis, which, in my retrospective view now, could be best described as "walking together" with one another, side-by-side. This side-by-side approach contrasts sharply with the word "object" made of the prefix *ob-* and the Latin verb *jecare* which means to throw. The prefix *ob-* also makes for words like ob-lige, ob-struct, op-posite, ob-jection. We can sense the meaning of the prefix. The word "object," seen in its etymological underpinnings, has a conflictual or at least oppositional connotation: something being thrown before/front/from the opposite. My perception of, and interaction with, the Liberation theology movement was not at all like that. Instead, it was one of accompaniment and commonality as reflected by the recognition of myself as "Other" in the other "Other." That is why the first terminology of modern scientific methodology, "Construction of the Research Object", left me a bit perplexed and reflective about my position as a researcher as the "Subject" and the researched as the "Object" and perhaps even more so, about the underlying pre-empted Subject-Object *duel* (in the triple sense of this word, first: dual or between two, second: combat or conflict and third: pain or mourning).

I don't mean to say that this fundamental *duel* is not present in the university research framework in India, but I became more conscious of it when I entered the doctorate course in socio-cultural studies at UABC, Mexicali. There are very palpable reasons for that. One: both in the School of Languages at JNU and later at the Faculty of Arts, DU; as their names suggest, my

academic courses were related to the broad term of "Humanities" or, more strictly, to the discipline of philology and, hence, to the perspective of a literary critic. As per De Sousa Santos,

> Literary criticism promises a subversion of the relation subject/object, that the emerging paradigm seeks to realize. In literary criticism, the object of investigation, as we would call it in modern scientific language, has always been, in fact, a super-subject (a poet, a novelist, a playwright) in regard to whom the critic is no more than a secondary subject or a secondary author. (75)

The point of the secondary subject or a subject standing/walking together with the other subject is like my own research experience within the field of "Humanities" in India. But even beyond the academic research aspirations, that feeling of accompaniment and commonality was derived from the shared history of the colonial experience from the position of the "Other." The Subject-Object dilemma was not pointed out explicitly, neither in my own experience nor by the discipline, as it was more in the intersubjective space (Subject-Subject) that I would situate myself as the researcher. I have become more conscious that this has not changed here at IIC-Museo. We can trace why.

As a student of *IIC-Museo, UABC*, I am a fortunate recipient of a CONACYT scholarship.[8] The point to note here is that CONACYT, being true to its name, *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, at the time of my application in pre-pandemic times, offered scholarships only to the disciplines categorized under "Science". The program I am in now, Doctorate in Socio-Cultural Studies, did come under the broad banner of "Social Sciences" and is a PNPC-approved one. Still, literary studies, or philology, didn't make the cut then. In a notification dated January 13 this year, *Comunicado* 277, the director of CONACYT Dra. María Elena Álvarez-Buylla Roces stated:

> In the neoliberal past, PNPC favored some areas of knowledge, discounting others, and the academic and scientific quality and its impact were undermined, which is why in the new National Scholarship Program of Conacyt, equality of access to studies in Masters and PhD will be encouraged, in all disciples of humanities, science, technology and innovation.

It is not very clear that this favoring of certain areas of knowledge that she critiques is entirely a product of the "neo"-liberal system; instead, a powerful case can be made that the favoring of some and marginalization of other fields of knowledge such as "humanities," is a key principle in the foundation of the political liberalist ideas of the nineteenth and twentieth century, as those

of Nation-State and Developmentalism through technology and of course, CONACYT for the Mexican state is the torch bear of that liberalist ideology in the field of production of "scientific" knowledge. At its official website, CONACYT describes its two key actions as, establishing public policies for the various academic disciplines and setting the agenda for the nationally relevant research projects. In both its actions, it builds on a liberalist view of the Nation-state as the ideal political formation, and functions as the epistemological apparatus of the State for (self)comprehension and control of the society. It is curious to observe the idea and the foundations of the modern nation-state in relation to the evolution of the modern social sciences as its epistemological mechanism. Not in the neo-liberal past, as the CONACYT director refers to, but at the heart of its liberal past in the complex entanglement between the modern nation-state and social sciences, that we will see the fundamental incision between "Humanities" and "Natural Science" in the modern-colonial episteme.

The fact that Comte named his investigations on human society as "Social Physics" indicates its core philosophical underpinning of Cartesian rationalism and Baconian experimental method. For this positivist vision of social research based on the underlying assumption of objectivity of the observer, later expanded by Durkheim, the social phenomena are like "natural facts" that are observable and cognoscible by the methods of mathematical reason and empirical experimentation. Since the individual subjectivity of human beings could not be subject to observation and knowledge based on these rationalist empirical criteria, they were discarded to be unfit as objects of scientific research. In place of humanities, a new discipline inside the pre-existing modern scientific paradigm is introduced in the name of "Sociology," —which would turn into "Social Science" with the incorporation of later disciplines such as Anthropology, Psychology, etc.—and Durkheim and Comte are claimed to be its first proponents or its "founding fathers."

> What a discipline does is make a cut in the field of knowledge and draws lines that border it with other fields of knowledge. This is done by crafty techniques. One of them is the invention of the "origins" of the discipline. The disciplines construct their origins and portray their birth from their founding fathers… the disciplines construct their own mythology: Marx, Weber and Durkheim as the fathers of sociology. (Castro-Gómez 81)

The line that separated the general area of knowledge, "Humanities," from the discipline "Sociology" was the latter's unquestioned application of experimental methods of physical

sciences, which contributed to the marginalization of the former inside the modern-colonial episteme. This *disciplinary* action (of separation) taken in the Nineteenth century localized at the then center (France) of the modern-colonial episteme/system has made its way into the practices of production of scientific knowledge even at places that are located on the exteriority of that episteme/system, by way of national/public education policy such as those of CONACYT in Mexico. This is a material and palpable representation of the influence of the colonial power matrix that, in its complex intertwining of the spheres of the political and the epistemological, keeps underlining and undermining the national institutions of the global south and, thus, their policies, discourses, and agendas, both in the public and private sphere.

While I agree with the reform for more inclusive policies of CONACYT and the director's critique on the neoliberal agenda of privatization of education, as we have seen, the ignoring of humanities as unfit, in favor of social sciences, for the production of scientific knowledge, is a legacy of the liberal political (colonial) past that, in its renewed transnational systematic form of neo-liberal capitalism, has exacerbated into a hyper-mercantilization of the practices of scientific knowledge production. Aligned with the now neo-liberal capitalist system (modernity/coloniality), this seems contrary to the director's view of it as *pasado* and engulfs and conditions our forms of perception, thought, feelings, and action, i.e., our Being in the world. Still, the separation between humanities and social sciences is an incision located inside the modern-colonial episteme/system. The question of exteriority becomes ineludible if we shift the locus of enunciation from the nucleus of the nation-state ideal to that of an "*Indio-a*". That is to say, if we ask ourselves what the agendas and policies for "scientific" research will be, should the rights and possibilities of its con/in-struction be in the hands of an *India* belonging to the Cucapá people, native to the now Mexicali, or an *Indio* from the Zapatista community in Chiapas? For these communities, just as for the other "Others" of the Mexican nation-state, the liberal history and the construction of national image have been but a simple perpetuation of the colonial power matrix based on annihilation and domination of the "Other." Segato highlights the continuity (of the colonial power matrix) of the colonial and national contexts:

> When the system (context) is constituted, first colonial and later national (I place these two moments in continuity; for the purposes of this analysis, their difference is irrelevant), the system creates its significant others within itself. In the very act of its emergence and idiosyncratic instalment, as an effect of its own

> emergence, all states—colonial or national—are Other-izing, alter-folic, and alter-phobic at the same time (*Nación* 138).

Hence, the problem of the *Indio-a*, *race as a sign* of the "Other", is not that of inclusion of the discourses of the "Other" in the national (political-scientific) framework under its nationalist agenda via reformist policies like CONACYT's notice; instead, imbued in the historical colonial experience of Otherization, this "Other" takes a critical view on the process of construction of the colonial/national framework itself and raises the question of participation in the process of its construction and in the setting of its agenda and discourses, instead of its mere inclusion in them. This impossibility and unwillingness to accommodate my theoretical-methodological praxis in a discipline framed in the modern-colonial scientific framework urged in me questions that echoed the voices such as those of Aura Cumes: "¿Can we *really* have a radical method if we don't question the basic worldview that the method comes from"? (Cumes 06:14-06:25) Soon, I realized that the source of this profound questioning was indeed my fractured locus (perception-enunciation): that of "*Indio-a,*" of the "Other," other than the Self, localized on the exteriority of the modern-colonial episteme/system.

So, the question "(How) Can I listen to the voices emerging from Solentiname?" as the title of this paper, is indeed a reflective one. It emerges as an effect of the consideration of the research context which reveals the relation/interaction between the locus of perception of the researcher—localized at the exteriority of an *Indio-a* ("Other")—and the locus of enunciation of the voices from *Comunidad de Solentiname*-—also localized on the exteriority, the other "Other" in relation to the researcher—is inevitably mediated by the modern-colonial scientific framework (Self) and, *in reality*, shaped by its colonial matrix of power and knowledge imposed on its "Others," starting from the colonial era to the liberal national state and in the present neo-liberal planetary capitalism.

To denounce this discursive domination present in the modern university framework, materially, is to say that even when *ECLA* and *IIC-Museo* are indeed sites of production of critical research on the modern-colonial paradigm, from the point of view/locus of an *Indio-a* like me, they cannot but function inside it; in this case, inside the agenda, discourse, and criteria established by CONACYT. If Castro-Gomez's thesis that "both the arboreal and disciplinary structure of knowledge as well as the role of the universities as the regulatory body of knowledge, reproduce a modern/colonial epistemic model" (81) is true, then the question implicit in the interrogative, "Can," as proposed in the title, indicates to a possible impossibility of a real

listening by the "Other" (me) of the voices of other "Other" (Solentiname); however, another question "(How)," though in parenthesis, hints to its affirmative possibility. "How" presupposes an affirmative answer to the question "what is or is there." The emergence of this question lies in my experience of perception (listening) of the testimonies and visual artworks of Solentiname up until now in my research and in the realization that the imposition of a dominating colonial power matrix, as it gives emergence to its "Others," also simultaneously creates the conditions for the emergence of the critical locus of exteriority, incarnated by the "Others." The critical locus of exteriority does not and cannot get subsumed in, and by the totality of, the system, and so, may become sites of creative and fruitful interaction between the "Others," leading to the exploration and research of new complex, out-of-the-box/framework ways (how's) for the construction of its revolutionary-emancipatory praxis. Me, just like an *Indio-a* in México who sees the insufficiency of one's own fractured linguistic/epistemic locus and suffers in the pain of the fracture, can then—*by dwelling in those insufficiencies*—avail of an outstanding possibility to access those knowledges dismissed by the modern-colonial episteme, while also maintaining a critical attitude towards both these epistemes. That is indeed a fundamental criterion of critical border thinking: to think critically from both the epistemes (the dominant/colonial and the Other/colonized) that conform to its locus of perception and enunciation. We, in this research, propose this urgent task, i.e., to make possible trans-epistemic and trans-cultural conversation between the two "Others" although different in their geographic locations, not so much in their geopolitical position of exteriority, while maintaining a critical (neither essentialist nor antagonistic) attitude towards modernity as a system/episteme. Conversation is a pluriversal translation, so to speak.

Radical Doubt and the Modern-Colonial Logic

My own questioning of the modern scientific paradigm as a whole, in search of a critical-border locus resonates with many thinkers of the global south, as seen above with Cumes, or Restrepo's formulation *El pensamiento propio* (66), Sarah Corona's *La Autonomía de la propia mirada* (91), Enrique Dussel's *Método para la filosofía de liberación (Método 183)* , Walter Mignolo's *Border Thinking/Gnosis* (67), or in Gloria Anzaldúa's marvelous work, *Borderlands* (105). A sharp distinction can be made between the above-mentioned works—for example, Dussel's philosophical pedagogy of listening to the "Other" with disciple-like obedience or Corona's horizontal methodologies—and the pedagogical works of Bourdieu, one of the canonical figures

in modern sociology *now*. The French sociologist, after his transformative experience in Algeria early in his career, makes *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (1992) by persistently dwelling on the epistemological percepts that affect *The Craft of Sociology* (1991) and, in turn, the practice of this craft. In collaboration with other investigators, like Chamberdon, Passerson, and Wacquant, Bourdieu discusses, at length, the perils of a tried-and-tested model of sociological research by borrowing a theoretical tradition, many times at a pre-reflexive level, in the construction of their research object. To present the Paris workshop (*Invitation*…), he cites Leibniz's quote about Descartes's rule of radical doubt, summed in, "Do not admit of anything that is not truly obvious" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 217). Throughout the workshop, the French sociologist—while admitting the difficulties of the pedagogical undertaking of *handing down a trade*—attempts to delineate and dissect one by one the epistemological baggage that the sociological research, in the process of construction of its object, is vulnerable of falling under; especially when the formulation, selection and use of the manifold steps involved in the construction, namely, research hypothesis, model, methodology, methods, techniques, etc. are not performed with utmost epistemological vigilance, and hence, are pre-conceived (automatized). "There is no risk of overestimating difficulty and dangers when it comes to thinking the social world" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 251). This theme is treated in a more complex and academic language, though with the same rigor, especially in the first two parts of his book (Craft…), "The Break" and "Constructing the Object." The true break or rupture, then, "demands a *conversion of one's gaze."* The task, Bourdieu claims, is "if not to produce a "new person," then at least a "new gaze," a sociological eye" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 251). This is a returning to oneself, which is *conceptualized* in the idea of "reflexivity," which contemplates, along with a reflection on the object, a constant reflection/vigilance on the Subject/researcher. Thus, his invitation to reflexive sociology, a practice also termed "Sociology of Sociology."

However, in my perception of the French sociologist's works, this Self is entirely *disciplinary*. In so far as the critique of the sociological practice, Bourdieu takes the route of radical doubt or questioning of its constitutive frameworks; his locus of enunciation seems decisively marked or *fixed* in the position of a sociologist-self placed in the structure of the academic field. It is startling to see him assign an epistemological-ontological totality to the sociologist-self. The specificity of the *eye* that is *sociological* indicates his emphasis on the disciplinary separation of his (corporeal) self. Reproducing the cartesian body/mind duality and in sharp contrast with our discussion above of an analogical-corporeal self, Bourdieu seems to identify with his

rational/socio-logical self totally. This is done by a two-fold process that he lays out in the section "Double Bind" of *Invitation*…: a rupture first, from the doxa or common sense and then from the scientific sense. When he comments on his realization of epistemocentrism (Bourdieu and Wacquant 254) of scientific practices during his stay in Algeria, it does not lead him to a simultaneous understanding of epistemicide of the "Other(s)" caused by such practices, even in a context like Algeria, fighting for its liberation in the 1950s. Any sensible knowledge coming from the day-to-day corporeal experience is then considered to be the "Other" than/to the scientific episteme and is discarded in the beginning itself as not being "Self."

For Bourdieu, as for Descartes, "Smell, taste, colors, basically, everything that was directly related with corporeal experience, constitutes, for Descartes, an "epistemological obstacle," and so, must be removed from the paradise of science and be condemned to reside in the hell of the doxa" (Castro-Gómez 81). In the fundamental duel/division created by the cartesian "ego cogito," the duality of body-mind takes an essentialist color where the *cogito* is manifested as the "Subject" of knowledge, the body (res extensa) is converted/constructed into the first "object" of knowledge/domination. As it is only the logical reason (the thinking substance) that can create true knowledge by having a "clear and distinct idea" of the "Object" and classifying that idea in a category. Lugones states about this logocentrism: "The categorial logic, dichotomous and hierarchical, is central for the capitalist and colonial modern thought about race, gender and sexuality" (106), which, in my view, is a direct consequence of the cartesian rationalist paradigm Bourdieu assumes, his position in. We suggest that an absolute identification as a sociologist with a fixed locus of enunciation is indeed the epistemological baggage of the modern-colonial rational paradigm that undermines Bourdieu's concept of vigilance in his pedagogical works. Similarly, as Dussel ("Motivaciones" 408), and Maldonado-Torres (34) state, the cartesian "ego cogito" is not as much a product of his method of radical doubt as it is a pre-reflexive inheritance of the colonial logic of "*Ego conquiro,*" the logic of the theology of Christendom.

Descartes was a practicing monk at the College of La Fleche. He bestows immense gratitude to his teachers there in his paradigmatic book. The idea of duality, which he reaches in his meditations, has been present in traditions around the world, for example, in Hinduism, Taoism or "Complementary Duality" in Popol Vuh discussed in "Entrevista con Cumes (2021)". What Descartes inaugurates and essentializes is an antagonistic-conflictual relation between the

duality of mind-body, instead of one of complementarity or collaboration. It is not simply fortuitous but consequential; not a "mental revolution," but instead, a reproduction of the foundational myth of Christendom. Let us question, a la Cumes, that foundational myth.

The constitutive moment of the Abrahamic religions is the Covenant with God. "God said to him (Abraham *listens*): my covenant is with you" (Genesis, 17 v. 3-4). The duality of the Creator and Creation is inevitably present in creationist religions. The word "religion", coming from the Latin root, *Religare*, means to relate/connect/join; that is also the meaning of the Sanskrit word *Yoga*. This idea of joining with the covenant presupposes the ontological existence of two entities (Abraham and God, here). This joining is a dialectical movement, and it may be between two ontologically different beings but not between two *ontically different beings*. This is the argument of Heidegger in his "*Tiempo y Ser*" when he embarks upon the investigation of Being and not *beings*. After all, God made human beings in its image. The formulation of the covenant is the moment of analectic communication, thereby creating a commun-ion/ity between God and its Creation. However, this sense of analectic community is deviated by the introduction of the Greek rhetorical "*Logos*" or now English "Word" for the Hebrew "Dabar." Dussel unveils the meaning of Dabar: "…The word logos translates to Greek the Hebrew term debar, which, quite different from the former, means to say, to speak, to dialogue, reveal, and at the same time: thing, something, entity. The logos are univocal; debar is analogical" (*Método* 185). *Dabar* is a non-duality between the noun and the verb or between things and processes. This sense of non-duality is intuited by John when he starts his mystical gospel: In the beginning, was the *Dabar* (Word), and the *Dabar* was with God, and the *Dabar* was God. The logic of the ontic being, ontology, is, at once, coterminous-coexistent with the existence (beingness) of the ontic being, and at the same time, it is not. On the one hand, *Dabar was* God (one-ness) and/but, also, *Dabar was with* God (*duel*, the preposition "with" indicates two entities). The sole insistence on *logos* and the logical self as the base of one's own being creates the conditions for the development of a more rigid and un-bridgeable duality/distance between the "Self (Rational-Male-Godlike)" and the "Other (body-female-nature)", emphasizing merely on their ontological difference/duality and not (almost never) on their ontic unity or analogical similarity/non-duality. *Logos*, as rhetoric, sets out to win the "Other(s)" over with the logical argument, to make them listen, to convince, or even to conquer them. A key part of rhetoric is the absolute certitude of one's logic, a seemingly fixed locus. When this logic of logos is implied in the Judeo-Christian framework after the acceptance of Christianity as an official religion in the Roman Empire, the result is a theology

of domination and conquest (*ego conquiro*). A conquest of the "Other(s)" by causing a fracture/rupture *by force* in their subjectivity for them to listen to the evangelical word. This is demonstrated well in the historical evolution of the logic of Christendom, first in the Crusades, then the Inquisition by the Catholic Monarchs of Spain, and consequently in their colonial conquest of the Americas. Bartolomé de Las Casas, from experience first of a colonizer and then an anti-colonial theologian-philosopher in the Americas, had already questioned the claim of the universal validity of Christendom theology, which perpetrated the colonial dehumanizing violence on the *Indio-a*. Descartes, almost a century after the Casas-Sepúlveda debate, from the seat of the colonial wealth accumulation (the Habsburg Kingdom), makes a claim to truth that demands to be universal as for him, the (mathematical) method is absolute, and so is his certitude of it; where the subject (the thinking substance) that produces knowledge is *assumed* to be a sort of God-Substance/Image as the source of all mathematical abstractions while everything "Other" than it is its container (*res extensa*) which must be converted into "Object" of knowledge and control. His absolute identification with the rational/logical self "*eg0o cogito*" may be reflective of his locus of perception (in)formed by the existing "*ego conquiro*" logic of Christendom.

A Pluriversal Translation as a Way of Conclusion: Non-negligence and Listening

We have discussed two specific logics of domination and Other-ization of the theology of Christendom, which inaugurates and still underlines the modern-colonial enterprise: *la lógica categorial* and the claim to its universal validity. These were the main epistemological justifications for the violent *ego conquiro*, a precedent that provides practical-conceptual conditions for the foundation of the rationalist scientific paradigm of *ego cogito*, which continues to function as and reproduce the colonial matrix as demonstrated in the case of Bourdieu's works. Both these logics are in stark contradiction to an epistemological path that commences south of the Ganga River in my native region around 2500 years ago. Mahavir, the twenty-fourth tirthankara of the Jain tradition, proposed and named it "*Anekantvad*"[9] that, conscious of its epistemological position (limitation), advocated a radically pluri-versal approach to knowledge. His is an important epistemological rupture of the Vedic Brahminic gnoseology or *Darshan,* which, along with its own parallel evolution, will also make way for the Buddhist praxis to emerge in that society.

Mahavir's epistemological/gnoseological[10] praxis—as registered in Acharya Samantabhadra's *Aptamimansa,* accessed through a text interpreted-translated and published by

Vijay K. Jain in 2016 — "*Kevala Jñana*" is not precisely religious but an *a-yogi* or *non-religare* one. This is a radical overcoming of the duality between "Self" and "Other" (or God as the absolute Other), as *Kevala* means "the one and only." All beings have *it* as their most intrinsic quality, and thus are *it*. As the existence of God as creator is denied, the question of joining oneself to it is out of the window. There is only that joining, that being-ness of relation or relationality that is the base of all beings and is the "Be-ing." Appreciating the Vedic onto-logical duality, "Jeeva-Atman (The Living-Self)" and "Brahman (God, the Absolute Other)," Mahavir ventures beyond it by emphasizing their analogical similarity and uses the concept "Jeeva" to denote the *only Being*. Jeeva, as *the* intrinsically conscious Be-ing, also transcends the duality between be-ing(ontic) and know-ing(ontology). Mahavir's gnoseological praxis is vertebrated by radical doubt, but at its highest culmination, this praxis doubts its rational capacity of radical doubt. It is often referred to as *Anekantvada*—loosely translatable to non-absolutism or pluri-versalism—offering the view that reality is a complex and layered phenomenon. While its *Jñana* (gnosis) is possible in the corporeal/analogical experience, it cannot be expressed in its totality in rational-linguistic terms. Thus, the preferable option is extreme carefulness in expressing one's views as truth instead of absolute certitude. The text *Aptamimansa* (19) propounds in Verse 14 the view of conditioned predication called *Syadvada*, offering seven ways to qualify (not categorize) reality by employing the combinations of three premises: *Syat-Asti* (In some ways, it is), *Syat-Nasti* (In some ways, it is not) and *Syat-Avaktavyam* (In some ways, it is inexpressible). This is a praxis of knowledge production—without guarantee or claim to universal validity— that in its utmost epistemic humility, looks forward to listening to the "Other" to co-create pluri-versal ways of knowing the multifold and complex reality.

Contrary to the *ego conquiro* subject, Mahavir advocates as the first percept of his *Kevala Jnana*, the praxis of *Ahimsa*. This is translatable to non-violence, but its meaning goes beyond what we now understand from the Gandhian idea of non-violence. First, Mahavir incarnates/practices his reflection of Ahimsa through a total vigilance of his day-to-day corporeal practices like eating, drinking, clothing, etc. The centrality of the body as the locus of all knowledge is practiced by its total uncovering (non-negligence). In this community of life, the relations between human-to-human and human-to-nature are not distinguished as even the category "human" is, after all, a *logical category* conceptualized in duel/contraposition with all that is "not-human." This is a radical dismemberment of fetichism of the logical self, even more so than Dussel's "Living corporeality" paradigm, as the duality between "Humans" and "Nature"

is overcome by overarching-underpinning analectic, one and only *(Kevala)* Being-ness or Relationality. For Mahavir, the meaning of the word *Dharma*, commonly translated in English to religion, would be not to join two entities but simply: nature and/or function i.e., to be of one's own nature and/or perform one's own function. It constitutes, along with *Vedanta*, a marked rupture of/from the Vedic Brahminic creationist and complementary-dualistic *Darshan*. This rupture is the end (in the Heideggerian sense of culmination followed by the necessary renovation) of Vedic *Darshan*, manifested in rejection of God as (a different) entity and renovation of the fundamental terms like *Jeeva* and *Dharma*; a renovation that will reach its culmination in one of Mahavir's contemporary Siddhartha, with the emergence of his extra-ordinarily original, and thus revolutionary-emancipatory, gnoseological praxis.

It is important to note that both Siddhartha and Vardhamana (Buddha and Mahavir, their respective titles given later) were princes and belonged to the kingly classes inside the Vedic-Brahminic society of the time. Both left their palaces and walked into the forest, seeking the "path of enlightenment". Siddhartha-Buddha, at the climax of his meditative state, experiences (perceives)—and later expresses (enunciates)—a gnoseological praxis: *Shunyata*. When conceptualized mathematically as "0," it will turn out to be, among other things, the most important mathematical formulation for the exponential growth of algebra, algorithms, and, in turn, modern technological sciences. At the same time, for its context, it will be a true anti-dote for the dominant Vedic-Brahminic gnoseological and socio-political model.

"Brahman" or God, in the Vedic-Brahminic model, by its root verb *Brih*, means to be, expand, and enlarge. With no *fin,* God is absolute in-fin-ity-in-ex-pansion. It is primarily a cataphatic description of God as absolute and eternal (also impersonal and ungendered). The invocation from the Isho-Upanishad (11) about the Absolute Cosmic Being goes:

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

The first statement about God, denoted here as *Purna* (The Absolute), is that it is eternal and omnipresent. The other two statements can be put as "∞/1=∞" and "1*∞=∞" if we represent in mathematical terms *Purna* (The Absolute Other) as a metaphysical-mathematical infinity "∞" and this physical world of (Our)*One*self as "1." That is to say, the metaphysical and mathematical supreme alterity that is God, the infinite and the eternal, is all-encompassing, and even as all (our physical world) emanates (/) from *it*, *it* still remains infinite. When all returns back (*) to *it*, *it* remains infinite. If we look at the description of God in Judeo-Christian scriptures, it is indeed very similar (cataphatic). Omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, of radiant light, with

overwhelming love. This conception, if translated to mathematics, would be something like positive infinity (+∞). So, the assumed process of elevating oneself to a God (+∞) like view of truth, followed by the European/Christian/White/Male Colonizer and later Descartes inscribed in the theology of Christendom, is simultaneous with the invention of their own (-∞). In other words, if "One (+1)" self was to become positively (super)human or God-like (+∞), then it would need to invent a method to make the "Other" non-human (-1)". The "*conquista*" of the first *Indio/a* is the moment of material constitution of the "Other" as (-1) or non-human. "The colonized people were converted in males and females. The males were converted into non-humans-for-not-being-men, and the colonized females were converted into non-humans-for-not-being-non-men" (Lugones, 107). The "Other (-1)" as *Indio* was a non-human, for being a non-man, and as *India*, for being a negative non-man. I agree, to a great extent, with Lugones's idea of the Coloniality of Gender—in so far as an imposition of a strictly binary categorization of gender with the modern-colonial invasion—as fundamental to understanding the Coloniality of Being (Maldonado-Torres 130). In Spanish (the language of the early colonial enterprise), the verb "conquistar", besides its regular meaning of conquest, is commonly referred to, in everyday lingo, as a girl who is to be dated and charmed (into having sex). The coloniality of knowledge materialized when (+1) episteme—Epistemocentrism, that Bourdieu refers to—falls into the fetichism of God-like omniscience (+∞); it does so only use violent destruction of the (-1) "Other" episteme, i.e., by an epistemicide. In a paradigm of domination such as Christendom of the medieval ages and its secularized version throughout the colonial-modern era, the movement of the method is *infinitely* and *solely* dialectical: a *duel* between the colonizers/masters (+∞) and the colonized/slaves (-∞).

For the Vedic-Brahminic society, its "Others (-∞)" were/are mainly its women and so-called *Dalits*. The emergence of a critical consciousness for Siddhartha happens in his first *real* encounter with the pain of the "Other" as he sees a dying man (death as the fundamental source of all pain) on the street. Not strangely, *Karuna,* meaning Compassion, as *Ahimsa* for Mahavir, is the first expression of Buddha's critical-conscious-locus. However, even more radical and ingenious is the realization of the location of his critical locus in a fracture, in a vacuity or *Shunyata*. *Shunya* can be translated to zero (0), and the adverbial suffix *-ta* means being. Buddha arrives at this experience/state, *Shunyata*, of his being by a praxis that he later proposes as Non-negligence. It is the same idea as epistemological vigilance but approached via negativity. As we know etymologically, both vigilance and reflexivity are related to the optic (seeing) perception,

whereas Buddha's preferred mode of perception (approximation to reality) is otic (listening). Instead of having to keep an eye (vigil) at what one is perceiving/thinking/doing, the praxis is about listening to oneself, that is to recognize the self—by unveiling one by one the epistemological layers imposed on it by the socio-cultural identification and classification process[11]—at its irreducible point of perception, which is invariably its point of enunciation too. As Buddha will suggest, this point or locus is indeed a no-point/locus/being or a vacuity: *Shunyata*.

The difference between our optic and otic modes of perception is considerable. While the former is a positive movement that "captures" an image and thus, unavoidably, categorizes it into a thing/think(thought), listening as an activity is almost entirely contrary—and so complementary—to seeing. To listen is to create a fracture in oneself, unveiling the opening necessary for welcoming (voice of) the other. At the highest profundity of the fracture, Siddhartha, as a being, experiences the *other* side of Being: *Anatta* (non-being). Non-being is not simply a negative being since Being (∞) itself is a duality—be it complementary or antagonistic—constituted by its positive (+∞) and negative (-∞) aspects. To take the example from modern mathematical terminology, Whole numbers or integers include natural numbers (1, 2, ∞) *with* their negative inverses (-1, -2, -∞) *and* the "number" zero (0). The point to note here is that 0 is not positioned in the number scale, only between -1 and +1. However, its position is that of the fracture/border between all positive numbers (from +1 to +∞) and all negative numbers (from -1 to -∞). 0 is not a number in the sense that it does not have either a positive or negative value. Instead, it is what assigns value (or enumerates). The only thing that changes is its position in regard to the (+/-) value of the number (for negatives, -1 or -10; for positives, 1 or 01). Moreover, in all whole numbers from "-∞" to "+∞", "0" is always present. This is the first premise of the Upanishad's Sutra cited above that ∞ is omnipresent. Surprisingly, zero (0) also fulfils the conditions for the other two premises mentioned in the cataphatic description of Infinity (∞) in the Sutra. These two premises/equations ("∞/1= ∞" and "1*∞=∞") are equally correct if we replace "∞" with "0". Our new equation is: (0=∞). In the infinite presence of Being (negative and positive), an absence (non-being) of Being is always present. Reality (Being and non-being) is then a sphere whose center is no-every-where and whose circumference is every-no-where.

Shunyata also understood as *Anatta* (non-be-ing or non-entity-ness), is, therefore, not a denying of the ontic existence of Being but of an essentialist onto-logical difference between

beings. The (id)entities are not ontically different, and even though they appear so in our ontological perception, the emergence of *one* entity happens *only* in relation to *other* entities. "Being-in-con-versation is not becoming the other, but becoming in the relation with the other, in the flow of that conversation" (Haber 18). Just like the flow of the Heraclitan river, the person who steps in it is never the same and is/has *never a fixed* id-entity/locus but is simply a flow, a liquidity/vacuity of Being. In this way, a context is a continuously evolving flow/interrelation of two or more subjects that are continuously evolving.

This consciousness of one's fractured locus in vacuity, in *Shunyata*, attributes a state of contingency to the ontological "Self" and the "Other". That is, if an exteriority constitutes the limit/border of the system, in so being, a major part of it is invariably shaped by the system too. So even when my position of an *Indio-a* as a researcher can be seen as located at the exteriority of the modern system/episteme, the very fact that the possibility of production of "scientific" knowledge about Solentiname is at my disposal places me at the (+) positive end of the (number) power scale. All scientific research projects are interventions initiated from this position of power and, thus, are moments of "foundational conflict," as coined by Sarah Corona (Corona and Kaltmeier 93). However, in the exercise of this privilege (positive position in the power scale containing potentiality of oppression), I find myself questioning it—its modern-colonial scientific framework and its intent of *constructing the "Other" as a research object*—from and due to my fractured locus of *Indio-a* located at an epistemological/geopolitical exteriority. Though this fractured locus realized first in the fractured dialogic self of mine, is also inherited and inhabited by my mother's decision to employ a particular medium of expression in a position of contingency (at my paternal family), a decision taken in the framework of arranged marriage based on the Brahminic model which, in its context, entangles the caste system, regional rivalry, gender roles, etc. Given the fact that the Brahminic model of perception, thought and action may have evolved and modified over time both with the Mughal rule and British colonization, there is very little doubt that the logic of "Otherization" of women inherent in a patriarchal system was and still is, present and prevalent in the socio-cultural institutions established by it. Since the current Indian society and its socio-cultural institutions (Brahminic/Buddhist/Jain/Secular) are not rid of its greatest injustices against its "Others"—women and Dalits being the major two—, injustices inherited from a system/episteme prior to foundation of the modern-colonial one; it would be negligent on my part to overlook the privileged positions of power that these socio-cultural structures assign me as a male born in a

family considered in society to be an upper caste; even more criminal would be, *a la* fundamentalist, relegate undue liability to another (Modern-colonial) episteme/system rather than the one (Vedic-Brahminic) primarily responsible.

My research interest in the *Comunidad de Solentiname* is indeed a relationship, as I initiated, with the interest of knowing (*with)* the "Other". Non-negligence as research praxis does not mean to assume a God-like view that claims to be universal truth by obscuring its locus of perception-enunciation, but strictly it is contrary; it advocates a total revelation of the interrelation(context), mainly constituted by the relation between the locus of the researcher and the researched, but also mediated by a variety of intersectional factors: primarily, by the modern-colonial system/episteme that provides the basic institutional framework for this relationship, and on whose epistemological/geopolitical exteriority, both the researcher and the researched are localized. Non-negligence as praxis and Listening as modes of approximation play out in day-to-day interactions (not only in sociological/scientific practice) in the community of life as one's research interest and practice cannot be divorced from one's self as a whole. Praxis implies a true *in-corporation* of theory in daily practice *and vice-versa*. Non-negligence is a praxis of *being-knowing-acting decolonial*. It does not seek mere theoretical knowledge production but a being-knowing-acting, borne out of and for the day-to-day reality experienced in and through our corporeality in the community of life. This praxis, as Dussel's analectic method, is "Intrinsically ethical and not merely theoretical*"* (*Método* 183).

To listen is to invoke an interrelation-community-context "From the position of the other and to <<serve-the other>>creatively" (177). Conscious of its fractured locus of enunciation in the exteriority, it leads to creative action/interpretation *rooted* in the pursuit of justice and liberation. The critical locus is animated by continuous mobility, an in-betweenness, not as something solid but a flow: a vacui-liquid-ity of being in solida-rity. In Listening, this research approaches the "Other" in disciple-like obedience; and instead of constructing the "Other" as the research object, in and by an act of rupture/aperture of Self, intends to weave together a conversation—with compassion and confidence realized in the pain and recognition of oneself as and in the "Other"—that may go beyond the limitations, imposed by the dominating framework of coloniality, on the conditions of the production of this conversation. Listening as a mode of approximation to the context allows an aperture for multiple voices (Poetry, Painting, Dialogues and Testimonies from Solentiname)—both pure-vocality and trans-disciplinarity—that may facilitate an explicit explication and understanding of the innumerous

and continuously evolving web of relations between the constellation of subjects/entities involved, the identificatory and classificatory processes inherited by the socio-political and cultural structures that model and conditions their perceptions/enunciation, their epistemological foundations/baggage; both in terms of the subjectivity of a particular subject/context (Solentiname, me, IIC-Museo) and, in the objective conditions/structures of the (local, national, global) modern-colonial system.

In conclusion, Non-negligence of the liquid locus requires consciousness of one's position, be it in a positive or negative position of power, and a critical reflection on the source of that positionality contingent on the ever-evolving context. Thus, even when this research context relates (to) the subjects located in the exteriority of the modern-colonial system/episteme, the trans-epistemic and intersubjective conversation it seeks to engage in, should not only have the epistemic humility to listen to the voices (of Solentiname) of the other "Other" but also the necessary compassion to engage in a critical dialogue with modernity as a system/episteme. This coming together (in conversation) of critical consciousness, instead of being a method or way to produce knowledge, is already *a site of being-knowing-acting decolonial*.[12] Hope this has been one such exercise.

Notes

[1] My Translation of the voice of Olivia Silva, expressed originally in Spanish and registered and collected as testimony by Dr. Polavieja (574) for his doctoral dissertation entitled, "Historia de la Teología de la Liberación en América Latina: Pervivencias y Realidades del Espíritu de Solentiname (Nicaragua) a través de los testimonios orales". To cite this quote from her, I mention her name with Dr. Polavieja. Same strategy in other testimony quotes cited from the said dissertation. All quotes from Spanish have also been translated by me.

[2] This tale has been heard by me by numerous oral sources. I have reproduced a part of it by memory.

[3] This article is part of my doctoral thesis in socio-cultural studies, titled, "Contexts and Subjects in way of liberation: religiosity and revolution in Nicaragua and Iran (1960-79)," submitted at the *Instituto de Investigaciones Culturales-Museo (IIC-Museo)*, in *Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, (UABC)* at Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico.

[4] We understand by praxis, from Freire's (66) definition, a non-duality of reflection and action, that is, theory and practice combined as one whole.

[5] For a more detailed review of this topic, please refer to Dussel's *Método para una filosofía de la liberación*.

[6] We don´t use the usual preposition "for" Compassion, as it gives a sense of distance between the Self and the Other. Instead we employ the preposition "with" that is more in tandem with our intended meaning of the word Compassion: Suffering the pain *together* or Getting to know *each other*. Always in relation with each other, which is also pointed out by the prefix "Com" used in the word, which means "with" and not "for".

[7] That evening, with a chat over a cup of tea with Sharjeel—a friend, university hostel mate, colleague, a brilliant software engineer and scholar of history, who completes more than four years now in jail booked under the terrible and unscrupulously imposed sedition law by the current Indian government—happened to be the time/place of birth of the intentionality of this doctoral research.

[8] CONACYT is a Mexican national academic body that grants scholarships to students doing their postgraduate studies from a university or department approved under the PNPC (*Programa Nacional de Posgrado de Calidad)*. National Program of Postgraduate Quality.

[9] Can be translated to Non-absolutism or Pluri-versalism.

[10] "We will use these terms inter-exchangeably for now. Specially because, the term Jñana that Mahavir uses, has the same root as gnosis and gnoseology."

[11] Sarah Corona (Corona and Kaltmeier 93) refers to this as understanding all the identifications/names given by the society.

[12] Here coloniality means all practices of Otherization—assuming the modern-colonial system/episteme but also going beyond it—founded upon the negligence of analogical similarity/non-duality between the "Self" and "Other" in the community of life.

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