

**Reflection article**

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# Forgetting Larrosa. Post-western Guidelines for Reading Modernity

Esquecer Larrosa. Orientações  
pós-ocidentais para ler a modernidade

Olvidar Larrosa. Orientaciones  
posoccidentales para leer la modernidad

## Abstract

Having taken the movements of refusing European centrality in the production of knowledge as a starting point, and understanding Eurocentrism as a fundamentalism that neither tolerates nor accepts the existence of other epistemes, this essay proposes to develop a provocation against this epistemological horizon by considering as an object of controversy the notion of experience expressed by Jorge Larrosa, who poetically provokes us to identify experience as what touches us, that an element of transformation, but at the same time operates the interdiction of the phenomenon itself, by saying what it cannot be. Based on this movement, I develop arguments that question the concept of experience presented by the author. In conclusion, it is discuss how the interdictions presented to experience are rather representations of modern conceptions, which take the other as an impossibility.

**Keyword:** education, eurocentrism, experience, post-westernism.

## Resumo

Partindo dos movimentos de recusa da centralidade europeia na produção de conhecimento e compreendendo o eurocentrismo como um fundamentalismo que não tolera nem aceita a existência de outras epistemes, este ensaio se propõe a desenvolver uma provocação a este horizonte epistemológico tomando como objeto de controvérsia a noção de experiência expressa por Jorge Larrosa, que, poeticamente, nos provoca a identificar a experiência como o que nos toca enquanto elemento de transformação, mas, ao mesmo tempo, opera a interdição do

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próprio fenômeno, ao dizer do que ele não pode ser. A partir desse movimento, desenvolvo argumentos que questionam o conceito de experiência apresentado pelo autor. Como conclusão, discuto como as interdições apresentadas à experiência são antes representações de concepções modernas, que tomam o outro como impossibilidade.

**Palavras-Chave:** educação, eurocentrismo, experiência, pós-ocidentalismo.

### **Resumen**

A partir de los movimientos de rechazo a la centralidad europea en la producción de conocimiento y entendiendo el eurocentrismo como un fundamentalismo que no tolera ni acepta la existencia de otras epistemes, este ensayo se propone desarrollar una provocación a este horizonte epistemológico, tomando como objeto de polémica la noción de experiencia expresada por Jorge Larrosa, quien poéticamente nos provoca a identificar la experiencia como lo que nos toca, aquel elemento de transformación; pero al mismo tiempo opera la interdicción del fenómeno mismo al decir lo que él no puede ser. A partir de este movimiento, se desarrollan argumentos que cuestionan el concepto de experiencia presentado por el autor. En conclusión, se discute cómo las interdicciones presentadas a la experiencia son más bien representaciones de concepciones modernas, que toman al otro como una imposibilidad.

**Palabras clave:** educación, eurocentrismo, experiencia, posoccidentalismo.

**I**t could be said that “Forgetting” is part of a crooked tradition in which many texts propose forgetting something or someone while at the same time providing some form of homage and recognition, nevertheless this is not the case. First, I As a starting point want to contextualize that I am a first-class reader of Jorge Larrosa <sup>1</sup> in Brazil (Larrosa, 2002; 2015), primarily because I read him as an undergraduate student and followed his texts as I advanced in my career as a professor at a university, initially as a graduate student, then as a university professor, recommending it as reading to my advisees. My career grew *pari passu* with the increase in his reception in Brazil and Latin America. It was in this process of constant return to the text that a certain discomfort began to set in, initially as difficulty in responding to young students about their experiences from the text *Notes on Experience and the Knowledge of Experience* (2002), after dealing with the bans that are announced there and, finally, perceive a colonial dimension present in the idea of an experience marked by An European identity, in the examples, in the references, in the argumentative choices, which take a form of manifestation of the experience by a specific human group as universal. From these discomforts comes the forgetting proposed in the title, which is, above all, a reminder to myself of what needs to be done not only with the author who serves as my motto for this writing but with a tradition that substantially denies the existence of people from the Global South as epistemic subjects.

In Human Sciences, forgetfulness plays some roles, whether when taken in a strict or symbolic sense or when it explains the discomfort of part of an area of knowledge with the prevalence of a type of reading or methodological approach (Sahlins, 2004) or even a specific provocation of its contemporaries considering an often artificial controversy (Baudrillard, 1984; Veiga-Neto & Rech, 2014), in a dialectical relationship with memory reflects a tension over the interpretation of the past (Augé, 1998; Gagnebin, 2009; Matos-de-Souza, 2022a). I do not want to affiliate the essay you have in hand with any of these forms. I intend to relocate Larrosa’s interpretations of what cannot be an experience, in their proper place, that of being edicts of a

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 1 The author is also identified as Bondía, especially at the beginning of his career. In this text, I chose to use Larrosa, the most recognized bibliographic reference.

concept of experience aimed at denying experience outside of Eurocentric philosophical and cosmological prescriptions.

Eurocentrism is a fundamentalism that does not tolerate or accept the existence of other epistemes (Grosfoguel, 2007). Similar to all fundamentalism, in addition to the restricted reading and repetition of formulas, there is a movement of erasure, interdiction, and denial of the other as a possibility of being. Eurocentrism and its younger siblings, Westernism and Moderncentrism, built a solid narrative of a world in which the East (Asia and even so-called Eastern Europe), Africa, the Pacific Islands, and Central and South America exist only to the extent that they support the scene. In this scenario, even with the evidence of the existence of other possible worlds, their prefiguration is that of characters without history, and who, contradictorily, appear as if they had suddenly been invented: suddenly an empire, suddenly an army, suddenly millions of people materialize as an entity “without history” or as if their history necessarily only makes sense when oriented towards contact with the West.

This fundamentalism has produced its own science and philosophy and the discourse about what science and philosophy are in the world. It even began to say what the world is, to stratify it according to standards established by those who do the stratification, to construct zones of exclusion, in which what is scientific and philosophical cannot exist outside the diffuse symbolism surrounding what is Western. And many times, almost like a mantra, the West was taken as a synonym for where people think, where the thought is possible; the others were left with an attempt at emulation, at reproduction, under penalty of having their cosmology, their philosophy, their science and their thinking taken as naive, minor, magical.

A reminder: we, unlike Westerners, play with what they call magic and we need, somehow, to learn to invert the pole of magic as something negative and recognize that magic, art, and technique are not competing forms, but confluent and that in this movement increases in volume, in amplitude, because when converging we do not stop being us, “we become us and other people – we pluralize”<sup>2</sup> (Bispo dos Santos, 2023,

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2 Todas las traducciones de las citas han sido realizadas por el autor.

p. 15). Magical thinking, far from being an offense, speaks of the hermeticism in which those who qualify different, peripheral, ancestral, and original knowledge in such a way, of the difficulties of seeing the world in its different manifestations, of the desire for a reduced world, which only fits into its molds, colors, and identities, because the magic is always the other, the knowledge of the other. This is in no way a good thing.

The epistemological movements of resistance to hegemonic, European, northern, or white forms of thought have several and different histories. But they are found in many ways in the ambivalent movement of refusing a language about “us” and identifying and recognizing ways of making knowledge in spaces and times other than those of university thought in the Global North. These movements can be more or less fundamentalist, more or less reactive, more or less Eurocentric (yes, no one is free from pathology) in their attempts to produce a non-Westernized outside. I do not imagine that one person, not even the most well-intentioned, can account for all the non-Western forms of thought in the world. That said, what I will do in the subsequent paragraphs is a quasi-enumeration, considering a hypothetical Western or Westernized reader trained in the tradition of ignoring what is done in the rest of the world, as it is a bestialized, delayed, primitive, or reactionary (Mendoza, 2023; Said, 2014) – and which is the very foundation of Western cosmology (Descola, 2021)– ; for which I will succinctly present the most popular movements of resistance to the forms, modes or entirety of Eurocentrism in the hope that the reader makes his own calculation of exclusion. If those that have come to the attention of European and American academic centers are the most popular movements, imagine all the others that are not even heard of in these parts of the planet.

One of the main confusions that occur in recognition of resistance movements to Eurocentrism is their framing as Cultural Studies (Colin & Quiroz, 2023; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010; Rufer, 2023), much more a reduction and a demonstration of strength by certain departments of American universities, which end up fitting the ways of thinking, analyzing, and interpreting the non-Anglo-Saxon and non-European world within the multicultural arrangement that they already know and seek to disseminate as an ideal society. Hence, the identification of many intellectuals and currents of thought as

part of a culturalist universe when, in principle, they come from very different contexts in which they sought, without asking for permission, to produce their own thoughts about something.

Some of these movements maintain, from a historical point of view, a certain primacy in terms of constituting a field of research or what is recognized as an area of knowledge as they seek, at a given moment, solutions to regional and national problems, which implied some degree of inventiveness within the convulsions that the world was going through in the 20th Century (obviously I will not fall into the epistemological “who came first” trap, which serves to flatter egos, but is very unrealistic in terms of theoretical production). Asian Subaltern Studies, African Postcolonial Studies, Pan-Africanism, Latin American studies, the Third World Movement, and Brazilian Social Thought were very concrete movements that sought to respond to a world in crisis in the 20th Century, split under the dichotomy of capitalist bloc/communist bloc and in which newly independent, poor, peripheral and non-aligned countries sought to balance themselves. We are dealing with theoretical projects that went far beyond the epistemological debate or the nature of a disciplinary field. They were founded in an interdisciplinary way, producing proposals for the constitution of the national identities of these people, how they saw themselves in a world that did not see them, and how the actions of the West affected a certain group, country, identity, transforming them, producing dependence on their system.

From these movements derive to a greater or lesser degree, other initiatives with more intentionality in what is the object of this section, which is the proposition of rupture with Eurocentric standards, such as the Latin American Subaltern movement, which more recently gained some unity under the identifier Decoloniality, and which is derived from the late reception of the works of Walter Mignolo and Aníbal Quijano. However, this is not a uniform movement whose pioneers still have difficulty developing what they announce: a thought that breaks with the forms, modes, and hegemonic narrative of the modern episteme. I highlight the confusion that occurs within the scope of the decolonial movement, as to a large extent, it also affects other ideas that have flourished in recent decades with some strength but which have little or no relationship with this movement beyond refusal or tension to a greater or lesser

intensity with the West: Liberation Theory, the *Ch'ixi Movement*, Andean Thought and Latin American anticolonial movements, the authors of *Ateliers de la Pensée*, Brazilian Black Feminist Thought, settler colonialism and indigenous and quilombola counter-coloniality.

All these movements are found in the refusal of Europe or the global north – and their local puppets – as the center of their worlds and in the proposition of a form of production of their own thought to think about problems that are also their own. In this sense, they are ethical guidelines for thinking, not a form of adherence to a type of Northern prescription, which limits our forms of reflection and even what we can do in terms of theoretical production. Hence, colonization through the bias of Mignolo, Quijano, Dussel, and Boaventura must also be combated – who appear, on many occasions, simply as a reference to replace authors whom could be better today some readers consider controversial and feel comforted with an identity to which they were accustomed to relating as being that of the producer of knowledge, that of white men who work in universities in the global north—. Imagine that this type of pathology even produced the acceptance that a Portuguese person dared to tell us that what we do is epistemology, but obviously, an epistemology that cannot serve others, as it is geolocated from the South.

As Mbembe (2017, p. 1) said, “Europe is no longer the center of gravity of the world.” We can replace Europe with Modernity or the West in this sentence, but the experience that the world is moving towards the constitution of other centers of interest, and this is the “significant event, the fundamental experience, of our era,” (2018, p. 11) and it is already a reality. Europe is, to some extent, paying the price announced by Césaire (2017) because, by reducing all human problems to a monologue performed solely by the same actor, on the same stages, and there being no one else outside its domains to open a dialogue, who to turn to when your soliloquy project no longer works? It seems that, both geopolitically and epistemologically, the West has been perishing due to the void it created around itself, the maximum expression of which is the impossibility of recognizing a possible interlocutor in the other.

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The idea of poverty of experience, an experience conditioned by certain factors explained by cultural constraints, has been a constant in modern thought (Benjamin, 1994; Heidegger, 2003; Larrosa, 2015). Their variations present an idea of what touches the subject in their relationship with the world, transforming them. However, it is its interdictions, by affirming the poverty of experience, that seem to have a perverse effect in *extramodern* contexts. The idea that it is impossible to give experience because it no longer exists or is difficult to happen, or even impossible, has been creeping in even in propositions that want to affirm the value of experience.

I will allow myself, like Rivera Cusicanqui (2018), to read the sources we know differently, to invert academic values, to search for theory in experience, and, most likely, with this movement, I will get closer to those I want to affect with this exercise without juggling theories to fit an *alien* theory into my context, which is a reflection of our colonized and modern-centric academic formation (Matos-de-Souza, 2022b). This formation seems to be solely oriented so that a subject can join theoretically and, after a long period of study, can receive a title that knows how to read a specific author, a specific tradition, and what's worse, with pride, we believe in the fiction of which we are part of this tradition – and, it should go without saying, hugely financed with public funds, – just as an unwary child believes it is part of the adults' game when they know perfectly well that they are dealing with a child.

What Jorge Larrosa (2002) calls experience is basically a more poetic and synthetic translation of what Heidegger (1972, p. 57) expressed: "To undergo an experience with something – be it a thing, a person, or a god – means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us". With some influence from the poverty of Benjamin's experience (1994), the idea that experience has become rare, even unfolding into a muteness resulting from the impossibility of narrating after a catastrophic event such as the First World War (in which we did not even participate). Doing this type of synthesis exercise is not a minor task, and a large part of academic work consists precisely of producing syntheses with some density which are a reflection of some level of dense reading. It is necessary to recognize this merit, making a good summary. The author,



however, include it seems more willing to adhere to Benjamin's statement that the actions of experience had lost their value, "and it looks as if it is continuing to fall into bottomlessness" (2007, p. 84), than dealing with experience as a phenomenon.

Even on the horizon of modernity this seems to be an idea that is being overcome: "Are we 'poor on experience'? Then let us make that poverty itself – that semidarkness – an experience" (Didi-Huberman, 2018, p. 68), said a French philosopher in a frontal attack on the idea of scarcity present in the Benjaminian tradition. North American pragmatism has long pointed to the power of experience as a vector of knowledge, with the act of experiencing being the foundation of knowledge itself, and it is from the first that we reach the second. And, in a more post-structuralist tradition, the phenomenon comes as a dynamic force, which denies transcendental reduction but is also empirical, crossed by the dimension of desire, and is inscribed in language but exceeds it and is, at the same time, objective observation and the fabulation about the observation. Experience, in this sense, takes place neither totally inside nor completely outside the subject. It is a manifestation of their inner life undeniably linked to a given objective (Bataille, 2013; Jay, 2009). That said, the idea that someone is wrong about how they approach the mentioned concept should not cause any concern, as this topic does not enjoy the universality it claims, even among its contemporaries. Could you imagine if we peered into the recesses of human existence beyond the West in search of what we have called experience?

The effects of this abstract universalism are terrible, since it comes to us as a type of prefigured particularism as if it were devoid of a geopolitical identity, whose principle is based on the destabilization of the subjects' ways of knowing. A form of disqualification and obliteration of language and ways of existing that are different from the hegemonic but that presents itself as if it were suspended in the air, without belonging to a place, and that takes as nothing what is not a mirror (Bernardino-Costa *et al*, 2023; Mbembe, 2016; Rodrigues, 2017). This movement is so radical that it manages to deny the reality of the subjects, who, even in the face of a concrete fact, deny what is before their eyes, as it does not fit into the theoretical prescription they have learned to obey.

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I now move on to explore the discomforts that I identified in the proposition of experience expressed by Larrosa in his text and reproduced, in what I report exhaustively<sup>3</sup>, as a way of denying the phenomenon of experience outside the limits of existence of the Northern, urban, and consumer subject of modern technologies of the self.

In the last two decades, the world has been experiencing a relationship of doubt and the false in what once seemed to be the communication process. The idea of being informed, which in the not-too-distant past would be reduced to contact with a set of means of communication, was affected by the emergence of the false as an experience. Subjects and think tanks around

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3 According to data collected on the *Publish or Perish* platform, in 2024, the author of this article alone, in its Portuguese version, in the two surname variations Bondía and Larrosa, received more than 8 thousand citations in the 22 years of its publication by *Revista Brasileira de Educação - RBE*, an average of 395.14 citations per year. There are also a number of his texts in which the concept of experience appears in the title, almost always in self-citation, self-plagiarism, or reuse of the excerpt in which he summarizes the idea of experience as something that touches and transforms subjects, originally present in the text published by RBE, in 2002. These variations in Portuguese and Spanish reach more than 5 thousand citations. A single excerpt, extensively reproduced, that collected more than 12,000 citations in Latin America. This phenomenon is what I have been calling, with some insistence, Citation Colony, which is the exercise of overvaluing what is said by teachers and researchers from the Global North, which produces an asymmetry in the North-South relationship and turns us into a citation market to be explored by professionals in contexts in which the university career is measured exclusively or partially by indexes – Brazil alone published 157 thousand scientific articles in its ecosystem of scientific journals in 2023 (Capes, 2023). It is not a “market” that can be ignored. This movement identifies countries in the Global South as mere consumers of what is produced by the West. Not very rarely, this asymmetry produces and reproduces readings in our universities by authors with little or no relevance in their place of origin, sometimes by authors who are not even in epistemological dispute in the field of which they claim to be part; they are read here and nowhere else. Often, there is no plausible explanation for the consumption of certain authors, except, obviously, local camaraderie, a university form of manifestation of colonialism of submission, a well-known type of quid pro quo, in which the local professor enters with invitations to conferences, with the insertion of text in bibliographies, with exhaustive citations from himself and his advisees and students, and the professor from the global North enters, in return, with a pat on the back or a “very good, my son.”

the world, mainly from the far-right, bequeathed to the world contact with the constant and overwhelming production of what they call alternative facts (Kessal-Wulf, 2022), almost all experiments in conspiracism, moral panic, and fundamentalist conservatism that, in relation to reality, produce a world that is more to the taste of the groups that represent and consume them. They are readers of a simulacrum whose foundation is precisely the detachment from the real without concealment but with a lot of conviction, and which impacts precisely the subjects who, in recent decades, stopped consuming information made through traditional media outlets and turned to social networks as a means of consumption of what they understand as truth, or better, what that they perceive as true as it reinforces their convictions. These subjects have contact with a multiplicity of things that are distant in content from the new data, that is, information; these things are marked by their exhaustive reproducibility (memes, trends), which are very distant from the fact or of reality, they are, rather, mere entertainment.

Also, in the world, there are billions of people whose experience with the media has never been even close to excessive in their relationship with information. The number of people who have not even had contact with the internet reaches the astonishing mark of 2.7 billion individuals (Naciones Unidas [UN], 2022). Considering the idea proposed by the author (Larrosa, 2002, 2015) that “information is not experience. And more, information leaves no room for experience [...] information does nothing else other than cancel our possibilities of experience” (Larrosa, 2002, pp. 21-22; Larrosa, 2015), and just this single means of communication, these statements do not seem to fit reality: over 1/3 of the world’s population is offline, and many others have limited and precarious access (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2024). Many people did not even have access or quality of access, so their experience is considered, a priori, as an impossibility.

Both the lack of access to mass media – which would produce excess – and the consumption of the false (through fake news) speak of a subject who does not have the obsession with communication, which the author talks about, and would be one of the problems that he identifies as impeding the subjects to let something happen in their life. If the consumer of fake news cannot be identified as the subject of the inaugural experience of information (as at some point he had access

to mass media), the subject outside the spectrum of modern news consumption (whether due to poverty or isolation), when initially faced with news, as it appears today, would not he have an experience? Would not he be crossed by the narrative of another place, of an event? It is unlikely not. In a world where fake news abounds, and the level of falsification defies intelligence, we can rightly say that what is missing is precisely contact with information.

On the other hand, opinion seems to be much more in vogue in our times, perhaps in its hyphen aspect, which is its manifestation for small groups. We are facing the repetition of a phenomenon very well recorded by Canetti (2011) in the preparation of mentalities for adherence to Hitlerism: the uses and manipulations of the masses and their subgroups, packs, based on the dissemination of opinions that provoke such aggressive movements (see invasion of the Capitol, in 2021, in the USA, and the assault on Praça dos Três Poderes, in 2023, in Brasília). At this moment, the game seems to be to expand the uses of opinion and the manipulation through it and remove any possibility of experience to the Larrosian extent: "Experience is what passes through to us, what happens to us, what touches us. Not what goes on, not what happens, or what touches" (Larrosa, 2002, p. 21).

As for opinion, it seems it has not touched a large part of the world's population. As the act of giving an opinion is articulated with taking a position on a given objective and which produces a stir in society (hence much of what is said to be an opinion, in common sense, is nothing more than a pure expression of taste), almost all population throughout its relationship with the media was excluded from the process of taking a position and expressing it publicly, which started to happen after the advent of the internet, and later, of social networks, and the platformization of life: now, anyone who has a smartphone or a computer with internet access, and who is on a data sharing platform, can try expressing their opinion and monitoring the reception of what they say.

The consequences of this other production and reception environment are reflected in government policies. There are countries that prohibit specific networks (USA, China, and Iran, for example) that they consider to be harmful to their political environment, which reveals the strength that such

means have in the dissemination of information, but also of opinion, of its power to mobilize groups to adhere to a certain doxa. The ordinary citizen, the one who does not have the auratic condition of the opinion leader, for the hyphen experiences being able to echo his worldview, which may be pro-democracy in an authoritarian regime or pro-authoritarian in a democracy system, or complete stupidity in both. In the history of the West, there is no precedent either in terms of possibility or scope for the opinion expressed by an ordinary citizen to reach such a reception.

We can even follow the author in the idea that opinion, and its excess, generates some emptying of the subject's experience, especially when he adheres to a single opinion thesis, but would not the subjects be exposed to different and multiple opinions? Would not they be also in a position to experience having their opinion conveyed and read for the first time? The answer is too obvious.

When developing the pair "lack of time/excess of work," it seems to incur the same type of repetition that Western-centric authors always face, which is confusing the events of their daily lives with something universal (Matos-de-Souza, 2022c). "Everything that happens, happens extremely fast, and increasingly faster. The event is given to us in the form of shock, stimulus, raw sensation, in the shape of instantaneous, punctual, and fragmented experience" (Larrosa, 2002, p. 23). Sometimes, it is necessary to say things with shameful obviousness, but life is fast, instantaneous, and fragmented for the urban-centered subject. As I have already presented the argument that 1/3 of the world's population does not even have access to the internet, it is also necessary to remind the modern subject that life exists outside of its standards. If there is a growing concern about the impact of cities and the degradation and inequality in the lives of urban subjects around the world, there is no way to ignore that 45% of the world's population lives in rural and forest areas and (UN-Habitat, 2022), therefore, subject to other times and relationships with events. The life span and relationship with things of a riverside resident, an indigenous person, a quilombola, an inhabitant of the Siberian steppes, an inhabitant of the mountains in the Andes or the Himalayas, cannot be reduced to the experience of the subjects of cities around the world. There is a difference between someone who buys a tomato packaged in polystyrene

and plastic in a supermarket and someone who plants a seed and hopes it bears fruit. Under all contingencies, there is a distinction in the relationship with time between these two subjects.

Lack of time and excess work are pathologies of modernity in its most promiscuous relationship with neoliberalism, which implemented shit work and the precariat (Graeber, 2022; Standing, 2017), more sophisticated forms of (self) exploration of subjects' time in such a propagandist eagerness that makes that one believes that only this way of living exists in the world. The only way to live is to let capital exploit your body and time to the fullest. The export of these models to other urban spaces around the world is part of the capital expansion project and the degradation of life around the world as well. The unproductive subject is disturbing, on the right and left of the contemporary political spectrum, because, to some extent, by having his time for himself, he denies domination and deeply offends those who want him dominated or imprisoned in their analytical formulas.

A subject who disposes and organizes his own time, who can decide when to get up, challenges the logic of capital and the reduction of human life to urban life operated by the exclusionary notion of experience announced by Larrosa in his text, which, as I said, seems more intent on joining a tradition of denial of experience than, in fact, understanding what it can be to experience around the world.

In this sense, the interdiction of experience seems to be an everyday fact of the life of the modern, urban, and Western subject and who was affected by what the author places as an impediment or interdiction to experience. It is the norm of the Eurocentric *ethos* to take the world as a mirror and, from this reflection, to dictate what humanity is —in an arrangement of exclusion that places the other as unrecognizable: “Humanity has been [represented as] white, male, European, Christian, heterosexual, binary. [...] Its invention emerged against the backdrop of the barbarian, enslaved people, crowds, infidels, marginalized people, indigenous people, black people, heretics, monsters [...]”<sup>4</sup> (Rueda, 2022, p. 18), and with this, it seems to

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4 “La humanidad ha sido blanca, masculina, europea, cristiana, heterosexual, binaria. [...] Su invención ha surgido a contraluz del bárbaro, el

have fulfilled its conceptual role of exorcising different bodies, which did not perfectly reflect its image. This perfect image, built under the narrative of retroactive superiority, generates a perception of a triumphalism that comes to us dictating that there is no other possibility than submission in a teleology that connects Greece to the United States as if it were a continuous story, which continues to this day, and, in the words of Mendoza (2023), seems to have no end.

If experience is possible, trying to define it by what it is not, by what can steal time from this condition, is a mistake. It is all things considered, like trying to define an event by what did not happen. Imagine someone trying to explain the 9/11 attack, the COVID-19 pandemic, or the Invasion of the Americas by any of these three events cannot be of these three events. Said like that, it seems absurd, it lacks logic, and borders on nonsense argumentation, but it is precisely this type of imposition that characterizes the discourse of modernity. No matter what happens, what matters is that the narrative is coherent (although not so much) and operates within the logic of exclusion and that the excluded is always the extra-modern subject. That said, Larrosa's (2002, 2015) text is an excellent example of Eurocentric fundamentalism, as it clings to the idea of poverty in the Benjaminian experience and takes it to the extreme and, despite the existence of other possible worlds, other realities that would confront its denials, throws it into the air as if it were universal.

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Post-Western movements have something very concrete to teach anyone who wants to listen: to learn to recognize that history is a narrative (and that the history of the West as we know is a product constructed to reaffirm a retroactive superiority), produced so that foreigners, outsiders, with their different ways of thinking, are always the barbarians, those of impossibility, "political and cultural enemies, and naturally inferior to their opposites, the civilized ones"<sup>5</sup> (Mendoza, 2023, p. 211), which

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esclavo, las hordas, los infieles, los torcidos, los indios, los negros, los herejes, los monstruos."

5 "enemigos políticos y culturales, y naturalmente inferiores a sus opuestos, los civilizados."

facilitates their domination since the elements of goodness, beauty, and capacity are outside these territories, and bringing these blessings is part of the civilizing work of northern men.

History, this narrative dimension of the lived experience, cannot be closed to other possibilities of reconstruction, revision, and opposition to the colonizer's Grand Narrative. Thinking in this way implies a movement of disciplinary transformation, of a certain historical indiscipline, which reallocates our ways of representing towards a non-abstract universalism, which only reproduces European provincialism, to "a political project that proposes horizontal relationships and dialogues, between the various particularities" (Bernardino-Costa *et al.*, 2023, p. 15). And if, as Said stated (2017), representation is a form of human economy, it is up to us to reject system projects whose language does not allow us to intervene, participate, and exist fully.

This inevitably implies a movement of openness to other epistemological adventures, which find solutions to the impasses created by modernity, in ways that reject the universality of solutions and propose a more plural environment, allowing the rise of those who have had their knowledge made invisible by the arrangement of modernity. In concrete terms that move towards what Dussel (2012, p. 43) has been calling transmodernity, "all of those aspects that are situated 'beyond' (and also 'prior to') the structures valorized by modern European/North American culture, and which are present in the great non-European universal cultures". We are talking specifically about a process of recognition of cultures and epistemologies that is happening underneath, alongside, on the periphery, without occupying the supposed central spaces, which have sought dialogue among themselves and recognized their forms and conceptions of what they call universal, and in what conflicts and contrasts with the modern narrative. Underground movements, as we know, tend to destabilize what is on the surface.

A more strategic move would be to start dialoguing with these areas converging towards a more plural epistemological environment. And, in a world that is destabilizing and melting, it would be a good time to try to learn some subterfuge from those who, until recently, were called savages (Bona, 2020), and know how to live in a world that has been destroyed at least five hundred years ago (Krenak, 2021). But this movement does not seem to be in the plans of the subjects of modernity, on the



contrary, it seems that, now, the acceleration of the destruction of the world and the resumption of political manifestations of extermination of others more properly occupy the spaces of debate and the mentality of the “center.”

Returning to the experience, this means recognizing that it is possible, perhaps its possibility has some level of fraying for the urban, white subject living in a middle-class neighborhood in a country in Western Europe or North America. However, the possibility that someone will be affected by something that transforms their life seems more feasible today than in a pre-modern or modern sedentary past. We are affected daily by life, which comes at us from all sides and literally passes through us as if given, occupying different forms and acting on different stages, which represent contact with the new, the first, with otherness, in a way that has never existed before in volume and shape. And this is when we are only considering the subject fully inserted into the standards and distinctions of modernity.

On a transmodern level, we are considering a life that has learned to resist despite all the strength and seduction of Western mechanisms of consumption. The subject not in this space lives the daily experience in contact with things and reaffirms the experience in the narrative, that of the narrator who seemed on the verge of extinction in Benjamin’s expression at the beginning of the 20th century and who, it seems, learned other ways of existing to survive the destruction of his world. In the same way that we learn to recognize that there is a specific time for the event (Matos-de-Souza, 2022c), it is necessary to read a form of recognition of the time of experience, which does not need to come out of any semi-darkness, as it is still alive, is the very foundation of existence, and well lit, by the way, the light is very strong in these parts of the world.

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This type of exercise needs to be more frequent, in a context in which the world is moving towards the elaboration of geopolitical arrangements that are very different from those that have been in vogue in recent centuries, and in which a very large portion of the world has been subjugated and subsumed as an outside. Talking about what no longer serves us, or what needs to be reallocated in ways of using it, are part of the ethical challenges of thinking about a post-Western, post-Eurocentric world or any

other expression of this overcoming. And this is a facet of the decolonization process of being and knowledge that is quite neglected, it is as if it were enough to stick the decolonial onto something, like a wild adjective, for its effect to be given.

Reflection on what does not serve us, on what has failed us, needs to find an outlet, as the volume of authors, concepts, and prescriptions to be put to the test is very high. This is why it is important to go beyond a *collage*, to develop an environment of genuine theoretical criticism, in which only those who can withstand the most in-depth look at their not-always-noteworthy exercises survive.

Another movement that seems inevitable to me is learning not to read, not to quote, and not to reproduce what has not been properly put to the test in transmodern epistemological terms. As we have seen, a concept can be created with argumentative bases that are fundamentally a mistake, or worse, they say what we cannot be.

This fight is not easy, because in formative terms, in Latin America, we learned that the good, the beautiful, and the correct are produced somewhere else, where intellectuals are produced, where concepts can be produced, and, interestingly, in a thesis, in an article, in an essay, the same typologies that we use here to reproduce. This reveals a training and submission problem in our universities, which have abandoned the training of intellectuals, of researchers with some degree of inventiveness, of thinkers of the present as if the solution to our problems could be imported from a different reality *ipsis literis* (I recommend that, in case of doubt, you return to the second note of this essay, as I think it clarifies the problem).

An exercise that we can do, with some condescension, is to try to open a dialogue – as I said, there are very radical movements that do not even propose an opening to the modern-centric world system; we cannot blame them since there are centuries of erasure, silencing and violence that cannot find a basis to be pacified, – as I understand that in this new multipolar world, of climate change, of massive international migrations and of reconfiguration (and even dissolution) of identities and national states, in this unstable world, we have something to teach the Global North, as we have lived in this world for a long time.

To do this, it would be necessary for the soliloquy actor, for a minute, to stop talking to listen and perhaps hear what is said behind the scenes, in the audience, and even completely outside the theater, from those who are already tired of hearing a monologue that talks about himself, only about himself and only sees the other when he seeks to find someone to blame for the flaws in his speech.

When it comes to experience, confronting the idea of what affects and in fact transforms us, us, not an abstract us, someone who exists outside of modern standards, perhaps a subject not crossed by the uses of memory, perhaps not crossed by the fixed positions in the social arrangement, in terms of gender, sexuality, and race, or even understanding who we are when we are run over, when our bodies are affected by the experience and can no longer be the same. The metaphor is not bad, as I said, it is rather a problem of execution or exclusion.

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