

On Colonial Blind Spots, Ego-politics of Knowledge and 'Universal Reason'

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Abstract

This paper examines the notion of death as a philosophical and counter-hegemonic subject 'erased' from the imperialist cartography of knowledge. It revolves around three main points: the 'loss' of death from the imperialist epistemology of the global North, its subservient position towards the dominance of life in biopolitical discourses, and the instrumentality of death under the ongoing matrix of colonial/capitalist power. The paper challenges the hegemonic rationality of biopolitical discourses while proposing counter-hegemonic alternatives: they are hereby mainly situated in the critique of sovereignty exemplified by Achille Mbembe's groundbreaking work on the politics of death. In what serves as an attempt to avert our gaze from the dominant viewpoint of epistemic imperialism, the paper invites us to 'unlearn' what we are supposed to be proud of. As a way to engage in the decolonizing processes, it pleads for self-liberation from the forms of knowledge that, in their claim to be 'universal', continue to pertain to the imperialist reason and its hegemonic matrix of power.

Key-words: *death, knowledge, imperialist epistemology, necro-coloniality of power, second decolonization, ego-conquiritus*

Introduction

The present paper examines the notion of death as a philosophical and counter-hegemonic subject 'erased' from the imperialist cartography of knowledge. It also traces the traumatic links between this and other subjects, most notably in what concerns the context of the *colonial* – "the blind spot upon which the modern conceptions of knowledge and law are built" (Santos 2007: 50). The fundamental *loss of death* in contemporary philosophical thought of the Western world makes the starting point of my analysis. It revolves around the hypothesis proposed by Swiss philosopher Bernard N. Schumacher who, in his recent study of death and mortality (Schumacher 2011) indirectly reveals the darker side of the current

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epistemology centered exclusively on 'life' and points out its relations to the biopolitical dogma within which the 'Western man', in Schumacher's terms, resides without 'death'.

This is a problematic situation. Throughout its history, philosophy has treated 'death' on numerous and often polemical fronts as one of the central ideas constitutive for the discipline itself. However, the author notes a disturbing quietness – a “stony silence” (Schumacher 2011: ix) – that has nowadays prevailed around the philosophical reflections on death and dying. Due to this silence, the question of central importance for the first part of the paper at hand is as follows: *where* is 'death' in the imperialist epistemologies of the global North or the world-system that Schumacher calls 'the West'? Starting from this question, the paper assumes that the context in which 'death' occupies a subservient ('lost') position in contemporary philosophical discourses is the context framed by the politics of life or biopolitics proper (Foucault 2003, Lemke 2011). As Thomas Lemke reminds us, “according to Foucault, biopolitics marks the threshold of modernity since it places life at the center of political order. In this theoretical perspective, there is an intimate link between the constitution of a capitalist society and the birth of biopolitics” (Lemke, 2005: 3).² This 'intimacy' among biopolitics, modernity and capitalism also denotes the following: that the privilege by which 'life' and life-oriented discourses have gained their exclusive position over 'death' stems from the strategic separation between 'life' and 'death' in the imperialist cosmology. Such a cosmology grounds the biopolitical context as properly *hegemonic* and urges us to act by offering constructive counter-proposals.

The second part of the paper challenges this situation. It questions the hegemonic rationality of biopolitical discourses while proposing counter-hegemonic alternatives. In this case, they are centered around the critique of sovereignty as proposed by Achille Mbembe's groundbreaking work on the politics of death (Mbembe 2003). Accordingly, the second part

² In this context, it is worth noting that the concept of biopolitics has never been Foucault's brainchild: while the stubborn and repetitive application of the term to his name has determined our prevailing understanding of biopolitics in relation to him, its origins lie elsewhere. As Lemke argues: “Although the concept of biopolitics has now become familiar, it may not be widely known that it has nearly a hundred-year history. Its initial appearance was as part of a general historical and theoretical constellation. By the second half of the 19th century, *Lebensphilosophie* (the philosophy of life) had already emerged as an independent philosophical tendency; its founders were Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche in Germany and Henri Bergson in France. [...] The concept of biopolitics emerged in this intellectual setting at the beginning of the 20th century. The Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén may have been among the first to employ it.” See Lemke 2011: 9.

of the paper probes the “emancipatory/regulatory” dichotomy of the project of modernity by pointing out the obscurity of sovereign colonial reason and the instrumentality of death therein. The objective is to show that *death itself* has been mobilized by sovereignty for the sake of its universalist and imperialist goals imposed upon the colonial territories, both old and new, through the “appropriation/violence” dichotomy (Santos 2007: 46). Hence, it is the mortality of humankind – and not only their lives – that stands for the crucial element upon which the ‘Western man’ has exercised sovereignty over the rest of the world in order to preserve the ideas of so-called modernity and progress, inseparable from three adjoining historical phenomena, namely: capitalism, coloniality, and globality (Mignolo 2011, Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009).

These basic theoretical premises around ‘death’ (in terms of its ‘loss’ from the imperialist epistemology, its instrumentality under the ongoing matrix of colonial/capitalist power, and its subservient position towards the dominance of life in biopolitical discourses) have provided the main grounds for the object of present analysis: the *necro-coloniality of power*, as I shall call it. It situates the idea of power in-between ‘death’ (Mbembe 2003) and ‘coloniality’ (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009)³ where, for centuries, it has been mobilized by the imperialist epistemology as a privileged preserve of ‘life-politics’ and its ‘universal’ reason. Behind the biopolitical mask of such pretensions, the sovereignty has continuously instrumentalized death. Death fabricated in the name of ‘reason’ perpetuated the massive production of victims for the sake of a colonial cause.

I dare to say that the ‘universal’ reason of an Imperial Being reflects its darker side in the image of its own victims. Hence, the idea of modernity/coloniality/globality must be treated as a form of violence, both epistemic and ‘real’, and analyzed in relation to the mortality of humankind inasmuch as to the death-worlds of knowledge. Both mirror the instrumentality of human deaths produced throughout the historical period of colonial occupation as much as in its current, global neo-colonial phase. The main thesis to be exposed here develops

³ When using the term ‘coloniality’ I am aware of its difference from the terminology applied to the European historical colonialism overseas and the notion of the white ‘colonial’ powers over the waters of the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Pacific and so on. Here it implies the logic of the “colonial matrix of power”. This is pointed out in scholarly writing on coloniality as “the imperial/colonial organization of societies”, inclusive of historical period of colonialism yet extending up till today. (Tlostanova and Mignolo, 2009: 132).

along this line of thought: it targets the lethal points of epistemic 'universalism' in the conceptual framework of "colonial blind spots" (Santos 2007) and "ego-politics of knowledge" (Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006), respectively. In the case of the former I refer to the strategic obscurity of death-politics inherent to the imperialist necro-colonial rationality and its 'amnesia' about colonial crimes over humankind committed in the global anti-imperialist South; in the case of the latter I refer to the self-proclaimed universal knowledge of an Imperial Being that constitutes the essence of today's global epistemic sovereignty and its rationality dating back to the European 'Enlightenment'. Both formulations are understood as inherent to the necro-coloniality of power, the violence against the anti-colonial and anti-imperial subjects, and the tacit acceptance of crimes committed on behalf of the 'modernist', 'civilizing', and 'emancipatory' project of the global imperialist North.

Imperialist Epistemology and the 'Loss' of Death

In his book *Death and Mortality in Contemporary Philosophy* Bernard N. Schumacher discusses death as a philosophical issue that "remains one of the most troubling mysteries for philosophical reflection" (Schumacher 2011: x). From the very outset he reminds us – and rightfully so – of the long philosophical tradition that has treated "the act of philosophizing [...] as a preparation for death, as a rumination on life and death" (Schumacher 2011: ix). He contends that we are currently experiencing the situation of fundamental *loss* when it comes to the state of reflections on death in the context of Western philosophical thought. He puts philosophy and its innate task – the task of being a discipline of knowledge – into the center of his arguments regarding the idea of loss – not the 'loss of life' but the loss of *death itself* as a philosophical subject. Thus he pleads against the 'poverty' of philosophy with regard to its aversion towards speculations on death. For him, *philosophy itself* is threatened by the experience of a fundamental loss: the connection of philosophy – through death – to the essence of human existence deprives philosophy of its ontological grounds which constitute its nature of being *philosophical*. Hence, philosophy subverts its own nature when it refuses to have itself exposed to "its theoretical and practical reflections on such fundamental themes" such as death (Schumacher 2011: ix). Why would philosophy ever allow this to happen?

When reviewing the potential reasons for the emergence of such a calamitous situation, Schumacher exposes at least five possible answers: one is that we no more think about death; another is that this might be the result of our fear of death; also, it might be that the subject has lost its legitimate status (since some philosophers consider it not to be philosophical enough or not to be philosophical at all); additionally, its legitimate status has been revoked by considering death taboo; finally, we are averting our gaze from death as we are no more able or willing to devote any due attention to it – we are focused instead on some less important or less fundamental issues. “Whatever the reason”, says Schumacher, “it seems that philosophy would have everything to gain if it once again centered its theoretical and practical reflections on such fundamental themes, *for they are at the heart of human existence*” (Schumacher 2011: ix; my emphasis).

He expands his arguments further, when it comes to the social context of so-called Western liberal democracies. There, “in order to safeguard his happiness, contemporary Western man has contrived to stop thinking at all about death and, more particularly, about his own death, to deny it in a way by maintaining a stony silence with regard to it” (Schumacher 2011: ix). He adds to the discussion when he points out that the atmosphere of a ‘stony silence’ results from the situation in which our attention has *wrongly* been shifted to the direction that creates the experience of the ‘loss’ of death. If keeping one’s voice low or silent about death means to keep one’s happiness intact, this introduces a whole new series of questions and doubts. In my view, instead of prohibiting our speech about death and dying, a different kind of discursive turn has to be introduced. It should redirect our attention elsewhere, toward other possible clarifications of the ‘mystery of death’. I argue that this *redirection of attention* is necessary as much as urgent because ‘death’ has never been lost: it has been purposefully eradicated from our view. Where is death, then?

I find this question important and challenging enough to open up the imperialist epistemic horizons centered predominantly on ‘life’. The task, therefore, consists in finding the way out from the strategic preserve of ‘life and happiness’ in the imperialist epistemology of the global North at large. This is in order to turn our attention in the direction that might have been neglected so far: towards the space where the proper

philosophy of death resides or where such philosophy coexists among the many and varied local philosophies and knowledges spread across the global pluriverse of knowledge.

For the Canadian philosopher Stuart J. Murray (2006) it is clear that the power of the sovereign (singular) universe of knowledge depends upon the imposition of 'life' over 'death'. Biopolitics, in his view, presupposes a hegemonic condition where the superiority of life does not only appear against death but, more importantly, against the *values* inherent to the concepts of death, its theorizing and reflections across the many worlds of knowledge. That the predominant 'work of life' operates against the episteme related to the 'work of death' may sound paradoxical for our times of globally increased and expanded violence. Yet, centering on life and life-related issues presupposes an *exclusion* of implicitly or explicitly 'sacrilegious' discourses (including those on dying and death) from the normative or 'sacred' discourses on living. When he questions the fundamental lack of death from our discourses on (good) life, he rightfully highlights their 'exclusionary right' to exist against the backdrop of obscurity imposed on the question of death. Says Murray:

Death informing life' will seem counter-intuitive or even insane to us because, as Foucault has claimed, in the last two centuries we no longer properly *speak* of death. Discourses on death are as forgotten and disavowed as the nameless and innumerable deaths themselves. In the last two centuries, Foucault argues, political and sovereign discourses have focused instead on *life*. Life has eclipsed death. In the name of life, the 'mass grave' has become popularized, making death(s) nameless and innumerable, obscure and obscured (Murray 2006: 192–193).

The experience of exclusion thus produced makes an indispensable part of the negation by which the sovereign reason condemns the 'other' – a type of intellectual racism that excludes the subject of death as the undesirable 'other' of life. It seems as if death and discourses on death have been 'sacrificed' for the sake of life and discourses on life as an indispensable condition of contemporary biopolitical rationality and the undisturbed survival of its 'universal' reason. Such rationality negatively interferes with other possible types of rationality, forcefully dismissed from the life-centered imperialist epistemic universe. In that sense, the question of epistemic sovereign power is worth being recalled over and over again, in particular through the figure of 'ego-conquirus':

Occidentalism created the epistemic privilege and hegemonic identity politics of the West from which to judge and produce knowledge about the 'Others.' The egopolitics of knowledge of Rene Descartes in the 17th century, where Western men replace God as the foundation of knowledge, is the foundational basis of modern Western philosophy. However as Enrique Dussel (1994), Latin American philosopher of liberation, reminds us, Descartes' ego-cogito ("I think, therefore I am") was preceded by 150 years of the ego-conquiro ("I conquer, therefore I am"). The God-eye view defended by Descartes transferred the attributes of the Christian God to Western men (the gender here is not accidental). But this was only possible from an Imperial Being, that is, from the panoptic gaze of someone who is at the center of the world because he has conquered it (Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006: 8).

The panoptic gaze of an Imperial Being has cemented the dominant ideology of knowledge in a way that Enrique Dussel describes as deformed. For him, this has been heavily dependent upon the explanation of European 'superiority' from a Eurocentric point of view that "assumes Modernity as exclusively European [...] and only as a result of inter-European phenomena" (Dussel, 2006: 494). He detects them in the Enlightenment, the ideology of the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution. This indirectly suggests the reluctance of Europeans to deal profoundly with their own colonial responsibilities behind the mask of 'progress' aligned with them. As he argues, "in order to understand Modernity, we need to discuss capitalism, colonization and Eurocentrism as processes that lend it their specific content [in demand for] a critical posture concerning the dominant explanation of Modernity and its associated processes" (Dussel 2006: 493). This especially relates to the massive production of death during the era of the so-called colonial discoveries:

To understand the history of the world from a different perspective [uncovers] an alternative history that emerges *from the experience of the victims*: the ideas of those who have been invaded and dominated and who have not had the chance to express themselves. [...] The Eurocentric point of view 'forgets' very quickly that it was precisely the plundered resources of the colonies that have allowed the European splendor of the last 200 years (Dussel, 2006: 492–494; my emphasis).

Similarly, when describing the myths of European 'emancipatory' and 'developmentalist' colonial project, Aimé Césaire also spoke in relation to what he defines as colonial hypocrisy:

The fact is that the so-called European civilization – 'Western' civilization – as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of 'reason' or before the bar of 'conscience'; and that it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive (Césaire 1972: 2).

A few questions must be posed at this point of discussion: first, how to think of 'life' and biopolitics in general (and of *our* own lives in particular) if we have not yet been able to cope with *their* deaths – the deaths of the colonized 'others', that is, of the human beings who had to be sacrificed for the sake of *our* own living comfort in what is supposed to be a contemporary European democratic society today? How to think about the world politics and world-systems at large without acknowledging death, dispossession and accumulation of wealth – everything that the colonial (European and North American) hegemonic power machine has achieved throughout the last five centuries by means of the rational and systematic "management of extraction, expulsion, and exclusion" (Banerjee 2011, online)? How to think of biopolitics when its principle of life-management has become applicable not only to the "organization of modern life based on commerce" but also to "the concealment and denial of the irrational use of violence that Eurocentric Modernity requires to enforce its domination" (Dussel, 2006: 495–496)? This discloses the need of contemporary humanity to regain full awareness of the fundamental dichotomy between the "plurality of experiences in the diversity of local knowledges" (Moosa 2010: 302) on the one hand, and the singular sovereign epistemic universe on the other hand. The latter (that particular local knowledge recognized as 'universal') has been formative for the capitalist logic through which the so-called ego-conquiritus still exercises sovereign power across the neo-colonial world.

This is also the moment where necropolitics – as another name for biopolitics – must come to play. Without power linked to death (and the massive production of victimhood) no sovereignty could aspire toward the ultimate objective of the politics that it embodies, which is the necropolitics proper. I will focus on one exemplary module of counter-hegemonic thinking with regard to the sovereignty of death, as Achille Mbembe described it ten years ago. I see this as a necessary precondition to outline the limits of sovereignty on behalf of the 'sacrosanct values' invested in 'life' via the contemporary 'biopolitical' discourses and policies. To establish the forms of governance over humankind, primarily in terms of colonial subjects, here means nothing else but to have the human beings exposed to death through the sovereign right to kill. The limits of such governance outline the extent to which the travestied hegemonic 'biopolitical' thinking has not only been pertinent to the earlier, historical period of colonization, but to the fact that it still operates upon the power of death

and death-politics – behind the mask of ‘happiness’, as Schumacher says, that the ‘Western man’ wants to safeguard at any cost. Had the price of that happiness been paid by the long and painful unhappiness of a non-Western man, would that come as a big surprise and, if yes, for whom?

Imperial Necropolitics and Anti-imperial Epistemic Resistance

In 2003, the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe published an article that starts, in his own words, from the assumption that “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. Hence, to kill or to allow to live constitute the limits of sovereignty, its fundamental attributes. To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power” (Mbembe 2003: 11). While drawing a critical distance from Michael Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, he ascribes this power to what he calls necropolitics, “the concept of biopower, its relation to notions of sovereignty (*imperium*) and the state of exception” (Mbembe 2003: 12). What he means by ‘necropolitics’ and the ‘new formations of power’ pertains to populations’ mortality in the hands of the imperialist matrix of power: the limits of sovereignty thus reside in its potency of exposing human life to death. Such a hypothesis implies the notion of *imperium* under conditions of the suspension of law, by which contemporary capitalism and its power-mechanisms of control become directly in charge of populations’ death. This corresponds with the definition of necrocapitalism or “the contemporary forms of organizational accumulation that involve dispossession and the subjugation of life to the power of death” (Banerjee 2008: 1541). Hence, what is meant by the ‘new formations of power’ is the *neoliberal matrix of necropower* that has colonized not only the people, their natural resources and their territories, but also their right to live and their right to die *unconstrained*. If death is the objective of the political, conditioned by the neoliberal matrix of power as necropower, then the politics of death can be recognized as necropolitics proper. Necropolitics, as Mbembe concludes, is designated by “the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective” (Mbembe 2003: 12).

His work on the limits of sovereign power, its control over life and death, and its relation to human mortality was groundbreaking in that regard. According to him, both Western political science and the Foucauldian critical history of modernity have fallen short of the most significant task that the philosophy of power still has to perform nowadays. This task conceives of providing an account of sovereignty that is satisfactory for the existential and theoretical position of the subjects behind the 'iron curtain' of neocolonial domination: the subjects of the global anti-imperialist South whose experience of life differs from the conditions in the global imperialist North. This implies the living conditions imposed by the global neoliberal regime and its ongoing colonial (or necro-colonial) matrix of power. Under such conditions, the life of the governed differs substantially from the lives of their masters. By naming them 'masters' I broadly imply the subjects of the imperialist North who have embraced, rather than opposed, the colonial conditions that, in a historical retrospective, turned to be beneficial for their own comfort of living nowadays. Our awareness about such different ways of living – and dying – under the necro-colonial matrix of power imposes an urgent need to approach the notion of colonial and capitalist sovereignty from a critically revised perspective, which Mbembe justly proposed.

Hence, to speak in the name of death – instead of speaking in the name of life – exposes the need to speak differently from what the hegemonic context has already prescribed as a 'universal' norm for its own sake. To speak in the name of death means to take one's own right to speak, to think and to act from a counter-position with regard to the hegemonic reason and according to the kind of rationality that does not necessarily comply with what is currently considered as a normative binary along the 'life versus death' axis of thought. Finally, to speak in the name of death does not only mean to oppose the hegemonic reason centered on life and life-oriented discourses – it also means to propose another, counter-hegemonic possibility of thinking, that overcomes the gap between two divided categories as essentially asymmetrical. In this regard, Dussel's words can be useful when he pleads against "a historical process of *asymmetric exchanges* [...] by so-called 'Western civilization' [and] the construction of what is usually called 'Modernity', a phenomenon that denotes the cultural centrality of Europe [...] since the European invasion of the Amerindian cultures" (Dussel 2006: 492; my emphasis). Accordingly, the roots of the prevailing Eurocentric

simplification and rationalization of “the world of life in all its economic, political, cultural and religious subsystems” (Dussel 2006: 492) are also the roots of epistemic sovereignty - “the culture of the European vision of the world” - that we need to scrutinize and discuss again.

Similarly, what Mbembe proposes is to work out our own ways towards another vision of the world, perceived from *another viewpoint*. Such a vision is but a significant example of today’s counter-hegemonic theoretical strategies, produced locally yet with the causality and implications of global necrocolonial politics in mind. However, this vision is not conceived and shall not be accepted as another particular local knowledge, constructed in defense of a yet another pseudo-universal form of thinking that aspires to become the new epistemic sovereignty. We have to understand it as an alternative to the existent pseudo-universalism of imperial thinking and, by doing so, to work towards establishing a possible counter-hegemonic theoretical coexistence among various knowledge-worlds in their plurality. Mbembe’s own arguments have inscribed his theory of necropolitics into contemporary philosophy as one *possible* and *legitimate* variant of global knowledges. That is the main reason why to understand necropolitics means to approach it as the *other* of biopolitics: not as its clone but as its inevitable half in the ‘Siamese twin’ situation. In this regard, I treat the theory of necropolitics as an intentionally pseudo-universal option characterized by the strategic propensity to claim its own ‘universality’ on behalf of the global anti-imperialist South, and justly so: because its pseudo-universalism is aware of universalist mythology and its counter-effects: an obscurity imposed by the regime of singular universe of knowledge in the modern/colonial/capitalist/racial world-system (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2002). Necropolitical theory thus appears as a *disguised decolonial option* behind which the South enters into a profound dialogue with the obdurate Northern epistemic mytheme. Positioned side by side, they must keep this dialogue open. If the biopolitical armature (the dominant structure of knowledge-communication) is gradually dismantled through such a dialogue, this will allow for a truly emancipatory potential of theoretical propositions, earlier dismissed, to be exposed again (or, in many cases, for the first time ever). In that sense, Mbembe’s ‘return of death’ to philosophy is part of the global and unavoidable process that is not only characterized by

one single anti-imperial paradigm ('necropolitical', for that matter) but rather by numerous possible paradigms unrelated to necropolitics itself. Within such complexity, a single imperial epistemology is an insufficient option to cope with the numerous modalities of knowledge, or the pluriverse of local knowledge(s). Hence, to have the epistemological pluralism legitimized – and to have such legitimacy recognized and globally accepted side by side with the imperialist epistemology – is not only a worthwhile but an urgent task. It is so for the global anti-imperialist South as much as for the rest of the world.

Conclusion

In the present article I have undertaken the task to reflect, through 'death' as a philosophical subject, the possibilities of offering one counter-hegemonic option against the normativity of biopolitical reasoning as presumably 'universal'. Its name is necropolitical theory, here particularly understood as the theory of necro-coloniality of power. Instead of accepting the singular and paternalistic relevance of 'universal rationality' pertaining to the colonial and capitalist sovereignty and its ongoing epistemic matrix of power, the aim of this paper was to go deeper into questioning the philosophies of life and death under the ruling authority of neoliberal necrocapitalism as we are experiencing it nowadays. I have tried to develop some initial steps towards a discourse that examines the instrumentality of death behind the mask of biopolitics. In order to do so, I have put in the center of attention what I call the necro-coloniality of power: the neologism coined by theoretical adherences to the notions of necropolitics, necrocapitalism, and coloniality, respectively. It is also meant to expose a variety of theories from the other side of normative interpretations of life- and death-politics, most notably supported by theoretical patterns given by Mbembe, Santos, Grosfoguel and Mignolo. While focusing on the notions of power, knowledge, and subjectivities behind the 'universal rationality' of a dominant world-system, the paper asks critical questions around the system's necropolitical hegemony in relation to our knowledge-worlds of life and death, and around the epistemic sovereignty of biopolitics against the counter-hegemonic discourses of death. Hence, the paper outlines the critical terrain from which to achieve two central goals: working out our own ways against any knowledge that claims to be universal, and opening up our own views toward the pluriversal horizons of

knowledge – those that belong to the worlds of *knowledge* spread across the global anti-imperialist South and its counter-hegemonic epistemic cartographies.

The message this paper aims at transmitting is, therefore, the following: if we are to understand the premises upon which we have inherited our conceptions of the ‘world of life’ and life-related subsystems, we must necessarily try and understand their conceptual and ideological backgrounds. They lie in the hegemonic rationality that has been pertinent to European modernity and the processes of massive and strategic death-production aligned with it. This brings us back to the beginning of the European colonial expansion overseas, to the normative (‘universal’) rationality enforced by the ‘civilizing’ project of Western European Enlightenment, and to its long-term effects - including the so-called biopolitics. This dominant narrative, established by the rationalist ideology, is essentially mythological and reflects the “deformed ideological history that we all studied at school” (Dussel 2006: 494). This paper thus serves as an invitation to avert our gaze from the dominant viewpoint of epistemic imperialism and to ‘unlearn’ what we, as ‘Europeans’, are supposed to be proud of. This is but one possible way to engage in the processes of self-liberation from imperialist thinking through what is nowadays called the “second decolonization”. In that regard, visionary enough, says Grosfoguel:

The world needs a *second decolonization* more profound than the political-juridical decolonization experienced in the last 50 years. This second decolonization should address the global class, gender, racial, sexual, and regional asymmetries produced by the hierarchical structures of the modern/colonial capitalist world system. Definitely, a global problem cannot have a ‘national’ solution: it requires global solutions [plural] (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodriguez 2002: xxviii).

The main goals of the global self-liberating processes – to which this paper modestly contributes – consist in finding our own ways towards the horizons of epistemic decolonization. Such a liberation might be a long and never achievable goal; yet, it gives us the reason, *universal enough*, to keep aspiring towards the unrestrained forms of thinking, acting and living. The aim of this paper is to contribute to this struggle.

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