

**Engaging with the Decolonization of Knowledge
through the Decentering of the Self**

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Introduction

From René Descartes' famous statement "cogito, ergo sum" or "I think, therefore I am" (Discourse on the Method 1637, Principles of Philosophy 1644) to the claim of the seers of Upanishads that "the ultimate real knowledge involves an understanding of the essence of the self" (Mohapatra, A & Mohapatra, B. 1993, 8), from Socrates' philosophical goal of "know thyself" to Indian philosopher and theologian Adi Shankaracharya's commentary that "self-knowledge alone is the means to the highest bliss" (Alladi 1992, 500), the notion of the self has captured the wonder and imagination of philosophers and psychologists throughout history and across cultures. After all, we can hardly dispute that the self is the center and source of our awareness, that is at the core of the reality we perceive and the relationships we create.

While our knowledge of the world is constructed by and through our selves, different understandings of the self abound. As argued by David Ho, whereas in the mainstream Western discourse on selfhood "the subject-object distinction is accepted as given" (1995, 15), to Taoism the notion of the unitary Tao "implies a negation of all subject-object distinctions where thinking in terms of dichotomies is arbitrary and ultimately futile" (Ho 1995, 16). While in some cultures the duality of self and others might be the foundation of understanding human relationships, "both Buddhist and Hindu conceptions regard such duality of selfhood as an impediment to be overcome--transcended--on the way to higher levels of consciousness" (Ho 1995, 17). Whereas some cultures consider the self as an independent being that is understood in its own right, as Markus and Kitayama state, "many Asian cultures have distinct conceptions of individuality that insists on the fundamental relatedness of individuals to each other" (1991, 224). As a result of the different understanding of the self and the self's relation to others, the self's knowledge of the world could be drastically different. As a famous Taoist tale goes, after Chuang-tzu, the author of the foundational texts of Taoism, woke up from a dream in which he was a happy butterfly not

knowing Chuang-tzu was actually a human being, he could not tell if it was Chuang-tzu the human that dreamt of him becoming a butterfly or Chuang-tzu the butterfly that was dreaming in that very moment that Chuang-tzu was human. In the Taoist understanding of the self, “there is no way of knowing whether he was waking or dreaming” (Ho 1995, 16) --- there is no way of answering the question about one’s identity or arriving at any objective or clear truth about the world.

American philosopher Daniel Dennett wittily describes the conceptualization of selfhood as “a convenient fiction” that need not yet could change and correspond to anything that allows people to devise stories to make sense of their world (1986). The understanding of the self, in Dennett’s narrative, is convenient, fictional, and fluid. Inspired by the philosophical inquiry into the notion of the self, particularly the Taoist selfhood that negates all subject-object and self-other dichotomies and Dennett’s understanding of the self as pliable, makeshift, yet fundamental to our knowledge of the world, this paper approaches the anthropological topic of decolonizing knowledge from the perspective of the self.

There are diverse literatures on the meanings of and means towards the decolonization of knowledge. Jaco Dreyer describes it as “an intellectual project” that considers “whether indigenous knowledge systems might contain truths that western science has not accessed” and “whether what we find in the canon of an academic discipline whose history has been dominated by Europe and America is really up to much” (2017); Jaco Dreyer maintains that decolonizing knowledge requires considerations that “challenge the hegemonic Western knowledge system with its claim of universality” (2017, 7); and according to Walter Mignolo, the decolonization of knowledge would involve the disruption of “the socio-historical organization and classification of the world founded on a macro narrative and on a specific concept and principles of knowledge that is rooted in European modernity” (2006, 205-221). While the decolonization of knowledge is a nuanced and sometimes contested concept, it inevitably engages with people’s acquisition

and production of knowledge, regardless in what form or through what episteme, which, as suggested earlier, is perceived by and through the self. Therefore, this paper looks at the decolonization of knowledge as a form of “labor” (Boulbina 2019, 293), the labor of the self, through which one’s self takes part in an active reconceptualization of the self and the self-other relation that are critical to the coloniality and decolonization of knowledge production. Foucault suggests that “since the Middle Ages at least, Western societies have established the confessions as one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth” and that “western man has become a confessing animal” (1978, 58-59), therefore this paper focuses on confessional epistemology and the understanding of the self that underlies its coloniality, highlighting the ways in which the decentering of the self could contribute to the decolonization of confessional knowledge production.

I first explicate the coloniality of confessional epistemology, following which I expound on a particular self at the center of the self-as-subject and other-as-object relation, which in turn grounds the colonial system of knowledge production. Lastly, I discuss the shift from the will to truth and transparency in confessional epistemology towards opacity as an important means to decolonial work, and emphasize how the decentering of the self described above underlies the ways of relating and knowing in the world of opacity, through which I ultimately hope to convey that the decolonization of knowledge requires individuals’ subjective labor in the reconceptualization of the self that is at the heart of one’s own knowledge production.

The Coloniality of Confessional Epistemology

To establish the connection between coloniality and confessional epistemology, we must first consider the extractive and possessive nature of the colonial system of knowledge production.

The colonial Empire, as posited by Audra Simpson, enlists culture as a “conceptual and necessarily essentialized space” of difference that “needed to be made sense of, to be ordered, ranked, to be governed, to be possessed” (2007, 67). Since colonization sets out to establish a hierarchical relationship of the governing power and the governed, the possessor and the possessed, and the controller and the controlled, it first demands differences among the defined territorial and population spaces to be extracted, seen, legitimized, and subsequently controlled. The colonial system of knowledge production under the colonial empire thus must serve the extractive and possessive needs of colonization, and in the process of doing so knowledge production itself becomes a form of colonization. As articulated by Simpson, the production of anthropological knowledge goes beyond mere representations and serves as “a governmental and disciplinary possession of bodies and territories, and in this were included existent forms of philosophy, history, and social life that Empire sought to speak of and speak for” (2007, 67). Therefore, extracting, producing, and performing representations of culture allows the production of knowledge to facilitate the process of colonization. In this process, the culture spoken of and for by the Empire becomes reliant on the Colonial Empire’s knowledge institutions, such as medicine, public health, education systems, presses, and academia dominated by whiteness, for legitimation. Producing knowledge to “give voice” to the peoples and cultures perceived as the marginalized others in the colonial system, such as indigenous populations and racial minorities, thus ironically becomes part of the colonial mechanism of extraction and possession.

The connection between the colonial system of knowledge production and confessional epistemology boils down to the process whereby people, by confessing their truths and seeking to uncover truths, participate in a system of knowledge where the colonial exercise of organization, regulation, and control could occur. To elaborate, confession, as described by

Foucault, has become “the West’s most highly valued techniques for producing truth” (Foucault 1978, 59), that has become a broad form of being and relating in Western society. As such, the will to truth, the need to always speak the truth of oneself and seek the truth of oneself and others becomes a fundamental aspect to the existence of people in this society. Preoccupied with the idea that one has a truth in oneself that would, could, and yet to be revealed through confession, we set out to relentlessly seek and uncover a deeper truth about ourselves and others. In this internalized process of confessional truth speaking and truth seeking, people become voluntary confessional beings that demand an institution that can make true the truth that they speak and seek. The institution of truth making thus operates on and exercises power at all levels of society, ranging from “justice, medicine, education, family relationships, love relations, the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, to the most solemn rites” (Foucault 1978, 59), that altogether constitute a system that confessional beings participate in and thus a system that regulates and controls its participating beings.

Two major characteristics of the confessional practices of knowledge production render the confessional episteme a convenient apparatus of the colonial project, that is, as explained previously, extractive and possessive in nature. The first is the creation of “subjectivity”. As noted by Foucault, “an immense labor to which the west has submitted generations in order to produce [...] men’s subjection” (1978, 60). Subjectivity is constructed across all types of discourses where “the truth did not reside solely in the subject who, by confessing, would reveal it wholly formed. It was constituted in two stages, present but incomplete, blind to itself, in the one who spoke, it could only reach completion in the one who assimilated and recorded it” (1978, 66). As one’s inner identities and thoughts are rendered subjective, truth could only come into being when the interior thoughts are confessed and subsequently “prescribe[d], appreciate[d],

judge[d], punish[ed], forgive[n], console[d], and reconcile[d]” (1978, 61-62) by external authority. The will to truth sets out to remove the subjectivity of one’s interiority through confession, which in turn demands a system of discourses that produce men’s subjection in the first place, such as biology, medicine, history, and psychology, to act as the external authority that has a set of rules, means, and methodologies through which subjective inner thoughts are exteriorized and transformed into objective truths. The creation of men’s subjection drives people to participate in the confessional system of knowledge production, which subsequently “produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it (confession)” (1978, 62). Therefore, producing and affirming subjectivity, confessional epistemology renders possible the colonial exercise of modification, regulation, and organization. In Simpsons’ language, the “bodies and territories” (Simpson 2007, 67) whose truths are extracted, received, and legitimized thus fall under the possession and organization of this confessional system of knowledge discourses that control the means of legitimation. This epistemological system, when producing and performing the representation of the extracted truths according to their possessive means of truth making, thus takes on coloniality and appropriates the represented bodies and territories.

The second characteristic is the creation of an identifiable, quantifiable, classifiable, and categorizable population. Confession is a diffused form of power that operates upon myriad levels of social institutions in which social members participate. As a result of these institutions that legitimize and categorize people’s confessed truths as well as people’s active confession of their own truths, the entire population becomes a collection of identified categories. Along the same means of classification, global populations today have become distinct categorizations of race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, culture, religions, etc. As individuals are categorized into particular kinds of population via the confessional system, they are sorted into classes and

spaces eligible or ineligible for certain resources, such as healthcare, land, wealth, education, and employment. The colonial regulative system could then decide where and to whom resources are to be granted or expropriated, thus given the capacity for modulating, organizing, and ultimately controlling the population at its own discretion. The confessional practice of knowledge production thus becomes a critical tool for the colonial project by turning populations into different identified and classified entities that can ultimately be controlled. Simpson, in her proposition for decolonial work, critiques the notion of “difference and attendant containment” (2007, 68) as the basis of knowledge production. By utilizing membership and accounting to think through the legacy of colonial knowledge production, Simpson argues that memberships, along the classification and categorization of population theorized by Foucault, are used by the colonial power to grant and deny indigenous people access to sovereignty in their own spaces. In doing so, knowledge produced through and of the differences among peoples and cultures continues to permeate the colonial negotiation, determination, and control of the truth and sovereignty of the classified populations. As categorization of membership continues, colonial accounting, which is enabled by the viewing and placing of people into categories, continues, ultimately allowing colonial organization, control, and subjugation to occur in the form of knowledge production.

To summarize, the colonial system of knowledge production serves the extractive and possessive practices of colonial rulership, which demands a basis for the differentiation, possession, and organization of populations. In confessional epistemology, regulative knowledge discourses simultaneously create people’s subjective identities. As people’s will to truth drives them to participate in confessions as well as the regulative knowledge discourses that legitimize and make objective their interior thoughts, confessional epistemology also inscribes populations

into systems of classification, categorization, and organization, that consequently allows the colonization of bodies and territories to take place through knowledge production.

The Centrality of a Particular “Self”

Having established the critical connection between confessional epistemology and its coloniality, I now direct your attention to a particular self-other relation that underlies this epistemology and a particular self at the center of this relation.

At the core of the confessional questioner-answerer relation lies the self-as-subject and other-as-object duality. As one “confess[es] in public and in private, to one’s parents, one’s educators, one’s doctor, to those one loves, and admitting to oneself, in pleasure and in pain” (Foucault 1978, 59), not only does he or she confess to uncover the truth about themselves, but the receivers of confessions also uncover the truth about the confessor. In other words, truth making through confessions, regardless of whether one intends to acquire the truth of oneself or others, always involves a “self” that is the subject of truth making and an “other” that is the object of truth making. On one hand, as one comes to know and speak the truth of others, one’s self becomes the subject that generates the knowledge of others-as-objects. On the other hand, as one confesses and speaks the truth of oneself and as that truth comes into being through its acceptance by others, the parents, the educators, the doctors, the loved ones, the confessor’s self becomes the other-as-object whose truth comes to be known and spoken by others’ selves-as-subjects. As argued earlier, colonialism aims to establish relationships that allow a dominant subject to regulate a subordinate object. The duality of self-as-subject and self-as-object at the center of confessional epistemology allows some categories of selves to become subjects of regulation and control, and others objects.

Furthermore, the self-other relation in confessional practices of knowledge production also entails the self's reduction of others. As Glissant claims, "the requirement for transparency" has become "the basis of the process of understanding" (1997, 190), which highlights the dependence of the notion of difference and the notion of understanding through difference in the Western thought of transparent truth. The confessional system of knowledge production requires one to have a transparent understanding of the self as well as of others, which becomes the basis for the uncovering and extraction of truth, that is understood, trusted, and legitimized by the idea of transparency. Transparency, as a way of understanding truth, thus elevates the will to truth to the will to transparent truth or the will to transparency. Consequently, one constantly attempts to make oneself and others transparent to fulfill the will to transparent truth. In this exercise of producing transparency through confession, where "in order to understand and thus accept you", argues Glissant, "I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to comparisons and, perhaps, judgments" (1997, 190). Here we see the "I" at the center of uncovering and extracting the truth of "you", the non-selves, the others. The colonial work is being done at the level of self-practice and self-conceptualization, where the way we understand differences constantly entail a self-other relation that sets the I against the You, the self against the others. The "I" also becomes the center against which the comparison of differences is made, where the "I" creates the basis that the understanding of "you" is grounded in, where the truth and knowledge of "you" become an extension of the I's knowledge of itself, where, for instance, the truth of indigenous people is extracted and appropriated by a colonial agent that understands indigeneity against and from his own whiteness. This process of comparison, as articulated by Glissant, inevitably leads to the central self's reduction of others, where "I admit you to existence, within my system; I create you afresh" (1997, 190). Such a way of knowing, where the "I"

depends on comparison of differences, ineluctably reduces the You's self-truth to the I's already established space of knowledge. For a knowing being, through reduction to the "I", the transparency and truth of others becomes a creation of the truth of his, her, or their self.

Coloniality thus rests in the self-as-subject and other-as-object duality that is embedded in the confessional epistemology, which produces regulative effect by classifying the confessed and uncovered identities of some as the subject of power that deserves life sustaining resources, and those of others as subordinate objects that can be left to perish and be conquered. The question now is what kind of Self undertakes the central role as the regulating subject within this colonial regime of truth. As Sylvia Wynter maintains, "within the truth of our present epistemological order, we cannot marry our thought to the wellbeing of the human, rather than only to that of 'Man', ie, our present middle-class mode of the subject" (1992, 8). Wynter's distinction between the human, which refers to the entire humanity, and the "Man", which refers to the "White, of Euroamerican culture and descent, middleclass, college-educated and suburban" category (1992, 4), illuminates the particular kind of self that is given the status of subject as opposed to object in the colonial system of knowledge production. As one participates in, theorizes, and makes truth from the epistemological world where the "Man" represents all of humanity, one's self that acts as the subject of knowledge production inevitably fulfills the role of the self of the "Man". As a result, the "category of the liminal" (Wynter 1992, 19), that of people excluded from this notion of the "Man", such as "enslaved black laborers, the global poor, and the jobless" (Wynter 1992, 13) mentioned by Wynter, are rendered perennially the others-as-objects whose confessed identities are to be organized and controlled.

At the core of the colonial accounting critiqued by Simpson lies this particular self-as-subject, which serves the central framework against which one comes to compare and understand the differences of the others-as-objects. In colonial accountings of differences, as Simpson argues,

“culture is defined in anthropological terms most consistently by its proximal relationship to difference, and that difference was to be defined against the sameness and omniscience of a stable ontological core, an unquestioned “self” that defined that difference and hence culture for a readership, one that corresponded to a metropole and to a colony, a self and an other to define oneself proximally against” (2007, 70).

Colonial knowing is thus a constant process of extracting, receiving, and knowing others’ truths by the centered, stable, and familiar self, who takes on the truth of the “Man” and who acts as the center that makes the truth of both itself and others. When these particular figures of the self occupy the metropole of knowledge production, the knowledge produced also becomes a representation of and speaks with the same “stable, centered, and unquestionable self” (70) in the accounting of the others. For instance, as Patricia H. Collins claims, “against White male interpretations of the world, Black feminist thought can best be viewed as subjugated knowledge” (1990, 252), which is indicative of the oppression that occurs as truth made and spoken by the self of the “Man” acts as the subject over the truth spoken by Black women’s selves. Likewise, as Fanon’s narrative goes, when a little white boy saw “the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage” (1967, 114), poignantly speaking to the appropriation or rather misappropriation of Black people’s truth against a white figure’s “centered, stable, and familiar self” (Simpson 2007, 70). Hence, at the center of the colonality of the confessional regime of

truth making is a self-as-subject and other-as-object relation, where the self, that is of the “Man” described by Wynter, creates the possession of others through representation and accounting.

In confessional epistemology, the content of such possessive representation of accounting is made possible by people’s will to transparency. In Glissant’s words, this process of producing knowledge through the will to transparency and the understanding of differences aims at “grasping” (1997, 191), a metaphor of dual meaning that refers to both the idea of “understanding” and the idea of “taking hold of, enclosure, and appropriation”. The mechanism of coloniality based upon this I-you or self-other duality has thus come to light--- to colonize is to “grasp”, the self reaching out, taking hold of, and bringing back to oneself the truth of others. The coloniality of knowledge thus entails this grasping system where the colonial agent extracts, encloses, holds onto, and appropriates the colonized others’ truths, which the self then attempts to understand, makes transparent, and makes true. As explained previously, the confessional practices of Eurocentric epistemology are extractive in nature, and Glissant’s theorization of transparency and grasping explicates the self-other duality in which a centered self is positioned and enabled to extract from others. As such, to disrupt the self-as-subject and other-as-object duality and remove the centrality of this self as the subject that produces and validates the truth of others is to challenge the very foundation of the coloniality of confessional epistemology. A way of understanding that disrupts the very ground of self-other separation would thereby engage with decolonial work by fundamentally decentering the colonial self from the extraction and appropriation of knowledge.

The Decentering of the Self in the Move Towards Opacity

The move from transparency to opacity is one way of doing such decentering and decolonial work. Opacity first and foremost starts within the self. When one sees the self as transparent or possessing transparent truths, the others, that are understood through difference as the non-selves, become menacing, uncertain, and opaque beings that the make-believe transparent self, with his will to transparency, need to understand and grasp. In a transparent self's grasping, in both senses of the word, the self colonizes the others by overcoming their opacities. However, if one is opaque to oneself, recognizing that opacity within oneself allows one to accept one's own opacity for the other and the other's opacity for oneself because the I is necessarily and equally opaque to oneself and others as others are opaque to themselves and to the "I". Opacity thus breaks down the duality of the self and the other upon which a colonial grasping system is predicated. Subsequently, to understand the self in opacity decenters the transparent self from the basis against which all the seemingly non-transparent truths are understood, taken hold of, and enclosed within.

In opacity, there is no transparent center in the understanding and knowing of both the self and the others. In opacity, there is no basis for reduction of others into a particular version of the self, the white Euroamerican self. As Glissant admits, "it does not disturb me to accept that there are places where my identity is obscure to me" (1997, 192), and in such acceptance of self-opacity we decenter our selves through the de-separation of the "I" and the "you", rendering obsolete the thought of self and thought of other. We thus resist becoming the self of the "Man" that perpetuates the colonial enterprise of knowledge extraction and appropriation. The fruit of such decolonial work is, as envisioned by Glissant, "openness", where, as opposed to the grasping system of knowledge production, we move towards a system of knowing and relation-based

understanding of the world through “weaving”. Metaphorically speaking, in this system of weaving, there are no boundaries between multiple threads of selves; there is no center but constantly weaving, interlacing, and moving threads of all the selves, one’s own self and the self of others. In this openness that turns the duality of the centered grasping self and the grasped and reduced others into a vibrant dynamic of decentered yet tightly interconnected beings, we start to liberate both ourselves and others’ selves, who are no longer understood as different non-selves but simply equally opaque beings, from the colonial way of relating and controlling.

As we enter the space of openness through opacity, where reduction is impossible, knowledge would be inevitably, as described by Collins, “unfinished” (2000, 270). As one’s self is as much an irreducible subject of knowledge production as the selves of the others, one can perceive his or her own truth as objective yet partial as the others’. For example, as Collins argues, “Black women’s experiences serve as one specific social location for examining points of connection among multiple epistemologies” (2000, 270). The truth spoken by Black women is as valuable as the truth spoken by another group as they both truths in themselves rather than truths used to achieve a total transparent and objective truth made by a dominant kind of self, particularly that of the White, Euroamerican, middle-class Man.

The centrality of the self in the self-as-subject and other-as-object relation is subsequently disrupted when the completeness of knowledge, which confessional practices of knowledge production aims to arrive at, is replaced with the conceptualization of knowledge as always incomplete and consisting of partialities. One’s will to truth in confessional epistemology entails the belief that one, through collaboration with others, could complete the partial knowledge of oneself as well as the self’s knowledge of others. By participating in this confessional epistemology, the self whose knowledge is to be completed takes on the colonial characteristics

of the knowledge production system that creates oppressions and exclusion through classification in the first place. To understand knowledge as always “unfinished” (Collins 2000, 270) is to remove the need for a centered self to constantly reduce others’ truths into parts of the totality of an objective “real” truth that could serve to complete the truth of the self. Therefore, not only does the opaque understanding of the self involves the decentering of the self from the self-other duality, but the means of knowledge production that occur in the openness of opaque relations also disrupts the self-other relation underlying the confessional epistemology.

The exercise of “sincerity” (Jackson 2005) further illuminates how we can move away from the self-as-subject and other-as-object relation and create new forms of relations as we recognize the opacity of human identities. In the discussion of race, Jackson makes the distinction between authenticity and sincerity. Whereas authenticity implies a process where “people, as animate subjects, verifying inanimate objects” (Jackson 2005, 14), sincerity entails the acknowledgement of one’s lack of authority and the inevitable need to, metaphorically speaking, “grope around in the dark” (2005, 17). One gropes in the dark because there is no possibility of absolute social transparency. As an integral part of confessional epistemology and the will to truth, the system of organization and categorization creates classified social notions, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, that serve as “shortcuts [and] templates we use in lieu of absolute interpersonal transparency” (2005, 17). In recognition of the fundamental opacity of our identities, Jackson invites us to approach relations through sincerity by first understanding the limitation of categorization. For example, race is not merely a way of authenticating people based on racialized scripts, but a dual process of using these racialized scripts to overcome opacity but while doing so recognizing that we cannot confine, prescribe, and reduce others into these scripts. Stopping the use of categorization at the point where it has allowed us to overcome the inability

to recognize, we proceed to building relations where there is no centered subject constantly trying to reduce others but equal subjects in a “never-ending conversation about how the opacity of social identities and individual intentions gets clarified” (Jackson 2005, 17). In doing so, we “displace all reduction” (Glissant 1997, 3) in relating and knowing, where the self, which Jackson describes as “the powerful seer”, can no longer reduce the other into “the impotently seen”. The relationship of objectification therefore breaks down in the exercise of sincerity, nullifying the authority of the self-as-subject at the center of extractive relation in confessional epistemology.

“Disorientation” (Boulbina 2019) further projects the subjective labor in the abandoning of a centered self, through which people become part of Glissant’s decolonial world of opacity, openness, and freedom. The colonial system of knowledge discourses creates in discourses an orientation that dictates the space of the right and the left, the space of the right and the wrong. Decolonization needs individuals to seek the in-between space that abandons the clear oriented map of knowledge, and expressing one’s own disorientation thus becomes “one of the quintessential postcolonial endeavors” (Boulbina 2019, 292). The colonial space of the left, the right, the top, and the bottom, where “Africa is fully left and hence far down, the modern is right, the traditional is left; the universal is right, the individual is left; language is right, the dialect is left; the people is right, the tribe is left; religion is right, belief and superstition are left; white is right; black is left” (295), manifests the I-you duality and self-other separation that Glissant’s notion of opacity aims to overcome. To arrive from the overcoming of such separation to a world of openness through opacity, in Boulbina’s words, “we must learn to become disoriented and thereby to become decentered—within oneself and from oneself” (293). Because the grasping system of knowledge production requires a map that positions the world into polarized categories, the orientation of which then becomes the basis for “evaluation” and “assessment” of the right,

the wrong, the good, and the bad that the colonization of space obeys (295), we must forget this orientation in order to decenter the self from the colonially oriented space. In doing so, we can start to understand the world from the perspective of a decentered self.

The connection between a decentered self and the real decolonized truth can be drawn in reference to Boulbina's humorous analogy of Felix the Cat. As Felix the Cat falls from the cliff, he realizes that "the ground has disappeared beneath him" (Boulbina 2019, 69), which represents the precise moment where truth comes out as the epistemological base is abandoned. We realize the real truth that the orientation we have been following ends in limitation, bondage, and the loss of individuality and life to the colonial power. That epistemological base is confined within or simply is the space and transparent image of the self, which is limited and bound to cease at one point. As we fall off that base, we fall into the space of absence, the space where the transparent self is decentered and made absent, that no longer directs one to race on a charted colonial terrain of knowledge in a particular course but to wander in disorientation.

The collective disappearance and absence of self-centered epistemological base also manifest in Glissant's ideal of interweaving opaque beings, whose grounds of truth-making have no boundaries and thus no oriented ends. In this disoriented world, people leave the clear space mapped out by the colonial Empire and enter into a directionless interworld in the "the margins of uncertainty" (Boulbina 2019, 294) between the colonial strokes. In this in-between space, the weave occurs. Such in-between space, to Boulbina, represents "reality itself", the truth unbounded by colonial dictation, and, to Glissant, entails the real totality of relations freed from the colonial understanding of differences and multiplicity. In the merge of the disoriented world and the weaving world of Relation, we start to produce knowledge and participate in relations of freedom and openness in a decolonial space, where all the "I"s or the "you"s feel in solidarity

through the acceptance of opaque existence in a space free of colonial orientation, and where the decentered self relinquishes the need to colonize and reduce others through the extraction of truth, rendering obsolete the colonial map of relating and knowing.

As the coloniality of confessional epistemology relies on a centered self, usually that of the White, Euroamerican and middleclass “Man”, extracting and reducing the truth of others to the same self, the decolonization of knowledge could be approached from the decentering of the self from the system of knowledge production. Opacity disrupts the self-as-subject and other-as-object duality and engages with such decentering work. As we move away from the idea of a possible absolute social transparency that underlies confessional epistemology to opacity, we move to a disoriented epistemological space where knowledge is necessarily unfinished and consists of equally valued partialities and where human relations can be based on sincerity.

Conclusion

I have sought to understand the decolonization of knowledge from the understanding of the self. Firstly, I have expounded on the coloniality of confessional epistemology, which is produced by and simultaneously produces the system of knowledge discourses that regulates and organizes the population. Highlighting that confessional knowledge production does not create a one-directional power that a dominating central power exerts upon the governed but entails a system of power that everyone participates in through the practice of confession, I have linked the coloniality of confessional epistemology to the production of subjectivity and the creation of classification in regulative knowledge discourses. With the will to transparent truth, one exteriorizes his interior thoughts to make objective truth out of their selves that are deemed subjective by the multitude of knowledge discourses operating on every level of society. One

therefore participates in the epistemological order that produces regulative discourses through the very action of confessing. Such discourses allow the colonial exercise of organization, regulation, control, and subjugation to take place. A particular self at the center of the self-as-subject and other-as-object relation that underlies the coloniality of confessional epistemology has then been explicated. In an epistemological world where the truth of the middle class, White, and Euroamerican “Man” represents the truth of all humanity, as one’s self acts as the subject of knowledge production and the inquiries into the others, who are excluded from the notion of the “Man”, the self participates in the same system of colonial truth making where truth is fundamentally built on the creation of the liminal and the exceptional. The creation of exclusion and the subsequent representation and accounting of differences between the “Man” and the liminal groups, facilitated by classifications of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, etc., is the ground upon which the colonial system of knowledge production is created. Thus, to decenter the self from a self-as-object and self-as-object relation in the extractive practice of confessional truth making is to distance the agent of knowledge production from the process where the truth of all humanity is appropriated and possessed by the truth of the “Man”. I have furthermore aligned the decentering of the self with the shift towards opacity, that requires the subjective labor of the self in achieving the conceptualization both the self’s and the other’s opaqueness, the recognition of knowledge as unfinished and consisting of partialities, the creation of relations through sincerity, and a sense of disorientation that abandons the colonial map of differences. Through such labor, the self participates in the decolonization of knowledge as it becomes decentered from the self-other duality that underlies the coloniality of confessional epistemology.

Lastly, I hope to accentuate the significance of decolonizing knowledge. As beautifully proclaimed by Wynter,

“it is convergence that will make it possible for us to understand the rules governing our human modes of perception and the behaviors to which they lead; [...] it is only by the mutation of knowledge that we shall be able to secure, as a species, the full dimensions of our human autonomy with respect to the systemic and always narratively instituted purposes that have governed us hitherto outside of our conscious awareness and consensual intentionality” (1992, 13).

There is a broader humanity that we must recognize in order to thrive as a species. We need to shift the way through which we relate, make truth, and produce knowledge in order to arrive at that fuller humanity, where one’s subjugation of the other can no longer be validated and given legitimacy in the name of “truth” under the colonial epistemology. As Collins rightfully points out, “if the epistemology used to validate knowledge comes into question, then all prior knowledge claims validated under the dominant model become suspect” (2000, 271). There is thus profound meaning and power in the decolonization of knowledge as we, collectively, come to recognize the surfeit of social injustice and oppression that have been tolerated and legitimized by the schema of truth and anti-truth via knowledge discourses throughout human history. As the self is the birthplace and ultimate agent through and by which knowledge is perceived and power created, and as one can exercise immediate agency over the conceptualization and actualization of the self, in Boulbina’s words, “decolonization must be envisaged not simply as a historical period but also as subjective labor on the self” (2019, 297).

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