

EPISTEMOLOGIES OF THE SOUTH MEET THE INSURRECTIONIST TURN IN PRAGMATISM: STEPS TOWARDS A DIALOGUE¹

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ABSTRACT: Recent debates within pragmatist philosophy are creating new openings for encounters and dialogues with alternative epistemologies and approaches to themes at the core of classical pragmatism. This article addresses some of the questions raised by what has been described as the “insurrectionist” challenge to pragmatism, exploring their convergence with the research program of Epistemologies of the South which grew out of the work of the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Santos’s proposal of a *postabyssal* philosophy draws, among other sources and influences, on an appropriation of contributions of pragmatist philosophy for a radical critique of Eurocentric conceptions of epistemology. This paper offers a discussion of selected topics of import to an ongoing exploration of the affinities, resonances and differences between the *postabyssal* conception of knowledges born out of struggle that underpins the project of Epistemologies of the South, on the one hand, and emerging “insurrectionist” versions or pragmatism, which extend and radicalize classical pragmatism, on the other, as well as possible paths to future dialogues.

Keywords: Epistemologies of the South; insurgent pragmatism; *postabyssal* thinking; Paulo Freire

Introduction

Recent debates within pragmatism are creating new openings for encounters and dialogues with alternative epistemologies and approaches to themes at the core of classical pragmatism. The field broadly and commonly described as postcolonial studies offers a fertile ground for the exploration of those themes, including experience, knowledge and ignorance, community, democracy or justice. The actual and potential contributions of philosophical pragmatism to these debates, however,

are often ignored, trivialized, or even assigned a pejorative trait associated with a reading of pragmatism as a peculiarly (North) American brand of instrumentalism or opportunism, or as part of a broader, post-analytic constellation of positions. This article proposes a different approach, which addresses some of the questions raised by what has been described as the “insurrectionist” challenge to pragmatism, exploring their convergence with the research program of Epistemologies of the South which grew out of the work of the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Santos’s proposal of a *postabyssal* philosophy – an “alternative thinking of alternatives” (Santos, 2007a) – draws, among other sources and influences, on an appropriation of contributions of pragmatist philosophy for a radical critique of Eurocentric conceptions of epistemology (Santos, 2007a, 2014; Nunes, 2009). It would be an impossible task to address the broad range of questions of relevance to that dialogue within the limits of this article. The aim is, more modestly, to provide a discussion of selected topics of import to an ongoing exploration of the affinities, resonances and differences between the *postabyssal* conception of *knowledges born out of struggle* that underpins the project of Epistemologies of the South, on the one hand, and emerging “insurrectionist” versions or pragmatism, which extend and radicalize classical pragmatism, on the other. This means that some topics will have to be briefly addressed, and left for further discussion in future publications.²

The first section of the paper offers a brief presentation of Epistemologies of the South, how it emerged as a research program and what its core propositions are. The second section discusses the explicit influences of pragmatism on the emergence and shaping of Epistemologies of the South, as well as the affinities and convergences between its concerns and approaches and

¹ This paper grew out of reflections that matured over nearly three decades of work at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra. I am grateful in particular to Boaventura de Sousa Santos and to the colleagues of the Coordination of the Research Program in Epistemologies of the South for creating and sustaining a unique and challenging intellectual environment and an ongoing connection to the experiences of struggle and of knowledges born out of struggle. Special thanks are due to Patrícia Ferreira, who read and commented on a previous draft of this paper. I am solely responsible, though, for the arguments advanced in the paper, as well as for any remaining shortcomings or flaws.

² These topics include, among others, the epistemologies of ignorance (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007), the debates over justice/injustice and democracy (Dieleman, Rondel and Voparil, 2017), and broader explorations of the relations of pragmatism with other philosophical currents and traditions, along the paths opened by Gregory Pappas (for the Americas), Scott R. Stroud (for India), Richard Shusterman (for China and Japan), Jessica Ching-Sze Wang and Sor-Hoo Tan (for China) and others.

those of recent engagements within pragmatist philosophy with Alain Locke's critical pragmatism and with the "insurrectionist challenge" to classical pragmatism. José Medina's recent work provides a focus on how these concerns have been answered through the move from classical to pragmatic pluralism and subsequently to an insurrectionist approach. The third section discusses in more detail the insurrectionist challenge to pragmatism, drawing on the work of Leonard Harris, and the convergences as well as the differences between knowledges born out of struggle and philosophy born out of struggle. The fourth and final section draws on the work of Paulo Freire – an author influenced by Deweyan pragmatism and a major reference of *Epistemologies of the South* – for a general commentary on how to open up the pathways to further dialogues between pragmatism and ES.

Epistemologies of the South: a guided tour

Epistemologies of the South (ES) is currently the name of a research program that took shape through a diversity of projects and interventions in different regions of the world by a broad and diverse network of researchers, researcher-activists, activists and popular educators.³ The program is hosted by the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, in Portugal. It builds on the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and on several collective and collaborative international projects he directed, of which two stand out: *Reinventing Social Emancipation* and *ALICE: Strange Mirrors, Unsuspected Lessons*.⁴ Both projects gathered international research teams, including researchers and activists, who generated a substantial and innovative series of collections of case studies and other initiatives covering experiences of resistance, struggle and creation of alternatives to di-

verse forms of domination and oppression, tracing their links to the broader historical dynamics of imperial domination. These projects included experiences from Latin America, India, Africa, East Timor and Europe, covering themes such as the diversity of forms of knowledge, experiences in democracy and demodiversity, conceptions of, and struggles for, human dignity, law, justice and the state, alternative forms of economic activity, new forms of labor internationalism, the diversity of conceptions, idioms and practices related to health, suffering, healing and care, arts and aesthetic practices and the production of history and memory.⁵

According to Santos, "[t]he epistemologies of the South concern the production and validation of knowledges anchored in the experiences of resistance of all social groups that have systematically suffered injustice, oppression and destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy" (2018a, 19). The South stands as a metaphor of the vast and diversified set of these experiences that, in different contexts and regions of the world, both in the geographic South and North, emerge from struggles and actions of resistance against imperial domination. In another formulation, the same author describes the South as the name of the unjust and unnecessary suffering that exists in the world, and the resistance and struggles against such suffering, in their multiple forms (Santos, 2014, 2018; Santos and Meneses, 2010, 2019).

The disqualification, invisibilization, silencing or suppression of the possibility of peoples, communities or collectives making and producing accounts of their own histories, based on their experiences and knowledges, places epistemological justice at the core of the resistance and struggle for dignity and recognition. The South can thus be redescribed as an epistemological South. The terms used to name this epistemological

³ For further information on the program see alice/ces.uc.pt.

⁴ *Reinventing Social Emancipation - EMANCIPA* (1999-2001) was funded by the MacArthur and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundations. *ALICE: Strange Mirrors, Unsuspected Lessons. Leading Europe to a new way of sharing the world experiences* (2011-2016) was funded by the European Research Council. Both projects were hosted by the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra.

⁵ The work coming out of the first project was published in several languages (Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and English). See Santos, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2010. The contributions to the ALICE project are in the process of publication, with three volumes available in Portuguese, Spanish and English at the time of writing. See Santos and Meneses, 2019; Santos and Mendes, 2020; Santos and Martins, 2021.

South and its protagonists are diverse, and often originate in the self-designation of those who suffer oppression and domination, but also in descriptions and conceptualizations by intellectuals committed to their struggles: “the wretched of the Earth” (Frantz Fanon), “the oppressed” (Paulo Freire), “the subaltern” (Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak), “the poor” (Paul Farmer)... The nexus between self-designation and conceptualization may vary depending on the epistemological and theoretical orientations and propositions and the relations established between the production of knowledge and the experiences and struggles of peoples, communities, social movements and marginalized and persecuted groups.

The Epistemologies of the South are built on a critique of modern Western thinking as *abyssal thinking*:

It consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of “this side of the line” and the realm of “the other side of the line”. The division is such that “the other side of the line” vanishes as reality, becomes non-existent, and is indeed produced as non-existent. Non-existing means not existing in any relevant or comprehensible way of being. Whatever is produced as non-existent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other. What most fundamentally characterizes abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. To the extent that it prevails, this side of the line only prevails by exhausting the field of relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only non-existence, invisibility, non-dialectical absence (Santos, 2007a, 45–46).

The century-long history of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy established a durable and persisting divide between “this side”, the “civilized” zones of metropolitan sociability, and “the other side”, the “wild” zones of colonial sociability. Exclusion appears in different forms in these two zones. *Non-abyssal exclusions* are associated with inequalities in zones of metropolitan sociability, ruled by the tension between regulation and emancipation, whereas *abyssal exclusions* occur in the zones of colonial sociability, where violence and appropriation/dispos-

session rule (Santos, 2007a, 2014). The first kind of exclusion – *non-abyssal exclusion* – does not deny the rights associated with citizenship that allow those affected by injustices associated with inequality and, eventually, exclusion from access to standards and living conditions regarded as minimal, to claim their rights and be recognized as citizens. The second kind of exclusion, *abyssal exclusion*, is based on the denial of the full humanity of those who are excluded. Slavery, racism, colonialism, sexism and different forms of violence against women and LGBTQI people or against people with disabilities are just some of the ways this denial of humanity takes shape. Struggles emerging within the “wild” zone thus claim the recognition of the full humanity of those who are abyssally excluded, as a condition to fight for citizenship rights. The concept of the abyssal divide/abyssal line stands as a key and distinguishing feature of ES.

ES approach experiences of violence in its various forms – from direct, physical violence inflicted on bodies to structural, slow, symbolic and cognitive/epistemic violence –, suffering, dispossession and injustice through the resistances and struggles that emerge in responding to them. Different forms of domination, oppression and exclusion tend to be mutually reinforced, generating and perpetuating zones of non-being and predation, of destruction of ecologies and modes of existence, and of radical exclusion of a growing part of the world population. *Cognitive justice* – the recognition of the right of peoples, communities and social groups – to produce their own history and accounts of their experiences, memories, resistance and struggles and to create, validate and share the knowledges born out of these experiences – is a condition of social, historical and ecological justice. Achieving cognitive justice demands, on the one hand, access to the knowledge, resources and practices of modern Western science and technology that contribute to the alleviation or suppression of unjust suffering; on the other hand, it requires the recognition of the diversity and richness of knowledge practices that exist in the world. Decolonizing the hegemonic forms of knowledge associated with modern science and its epis-

temological premises is a key aspect of the struggle for cognitive justice.

One of the themes at the core of ES is the diversity of forms of understanding human dignity beyond Western-centric definitions of human rights. The notion of *pluriversity* allows the claims of universality of the human rights approach to dignity to be put to the test through the opening of dialogues with other conceptions of dignity and tracing the ways these are shaped by and in turn shape struggles against oppression and unjust and unnecessary suffering ensuing from it, in its multiple forms. Human dignity may thus be declined in different idioms, including that of human rights. Idioms and practices aimed at affirming, protecting and fostering human dignity should be considered in their relation to ontologies and forms of life. All conceptions of dignity are partial and incomplete. Western human rights have at their core the autonomous individual as the subject of rights. Other conceptions put collective obligations and entitlements at the core of the conditions that define dignity. Indigenous peoples and communities conceive of dignity as including humans as part of a broader, encompassing cosmos, along with non-human entities such as animals, plants, rivers, forests, mountains, ancestors and spirits. Struggling for dignity means standing for the integrity and sustainability of the ecologies that sustain life and social relations.

Struggles for dignity start from resistance and response to suffering as always inscribed in the bodies and souls of living persons as interdependent and as relying on their belonging to communities, territories and spatial webs.⁶ Interdependency is a source of protection and assistance in distress, but also a source of exposure to violence and oppression. The incompleteness and par-

⁶ The core idea of suffering as always referred to an embodied process, how different idioms of suffering account for it and whether and how the experience of suffering can be shared in order to promote solidaristic and collective responses to it and to its causes suggests an interesting path to dialogue between ES, phenomenological-existentialist and feminist-pragmatist approaches and recent developments in the life sciences inspired by feminist and postcolonial critique, such as that proposed by Sullivan (2015). See, for contributions along that path, Martins, 2021, and Nunes, 2021.

tiality of these diverse conceptions does not mean that they will be incommensurable or stand in permanent conflict. Dialogues are possible, and they rely on forms of intercultural translation, which have been documented and discussed by work within ES (Santos, 2014b; Santos and Martins, 2021). Experiences of resistance and struggle against violence inflicted on persons, communities, groups and territories and the unjust suffering that it causes allow connections to be traced and made explicit between the situated experiences of suffering and the broader processes of capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal domination, often mediated by forms of discrimination and exclusion performed in the idioms of religion, race, ethnicity or nationality, among others. Santos's (2014b) discussion of Western-Christian inspired, Islamic and Hindu conceptions of human dignity and their relations with particular political-theological configurations has set the stage for exploring actual possible experiences of counter-hegemonic, intercultural approaches to human dignity.⁷

According to Santos (2018b, chapter 11), "the epistemologies of the South are like an 'occupation' of the conventional reflection on epistemology" that includes institutions and pedagogies, but they "are far from being limited to actions of occupation. Whereas academic and pedagogical institutions treat knowledge practices as distinct from other social practices, the epistemologies of the South, while acknowledging such practices (...), include other knowledges and other practices of creating and transmitting the knowledge that results from social practices of resistance and struggle against domination.

⁷ For a detailed presentation and discussion of how the concept of the abyssal line is at the core of counter-hegemonic approaches to human rights and more generally of conceptions and struggles for dignity, see Santos and Martins, 2021. The contributions to this volume cover a broad range of experiences ranging from Europe to Africa, Asia, the Mediterranean area and the Americas. The chapters by Nunes and Martins (respectively on the genealogy and current practice of humanitarianism and on the experience of the survivors of the Bhopal disaster in India) engage the centrality of suffering in debates over the definitions of humanity and of the differences among humans, and of struggles for alleviating, healing and caring for human suffering. They propose ways of tracing back these experiences of suffering and struggle to the modern dynamics of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy.

In such cases, we have before us research-as-action and pedagogy-as-action in a particularly strong sense". The concept of *ecologies of knowledges* designates the articulation of "scientific and artisanal knowledges (...), whenever knowledges are mobilized in social practices, the distinction between the creation and the transmission of knowledge, between research and pedagogy, ends up being problematic". Combining institutional and extra-institutional practices is a key aspect of this particular configuration of knowledges and practices, of inquiry and/as learning.

ES propose a particular version of political epistemology, as "ways of knowing and validating knowledge that aim to contribute to the refoundation of insurgent politics capable of efficiently confronting the current, insidious, and techno-savage articulations between capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy (...). The centrality of social struggles in the epistemologies of the South, together with how broadly these struggles are conceived of (...), point to practices of criticism and possibility, non-conformity and resistance, denunciation and counter-proposal, which may be more or less consolidated, more or less formalized, and of longer or shorter duration", avoiding polarizations or segmentations between dichotomies such as revolution/reform or rupture/continuity, conceiving of struggles as existing in many forms that are not captured by these categories.

ES are influenced by, and engage in dialogues with a range of critical approaches in the humanities, the natural sciences and the social sciences, driven by a concern with identifying those versions which are more open to the recognition of the external pluralism of knowledge and the forms of dissent that emerge within established disciplines or areas of knowledge. These range from feminism and queer theory to anti-colonial, decolonial, post-colonial and Liberation philosophy, as well as critical approaches to capitalism. Indigenous, African and Caribbean philosophies have been central to the ongoing enrichment and growth of ES.

These dialogues take place within a commitment to the decolonization of modern scientific knowledge and of

the forms of abyssal thinking its authority rests on. This does not imply a radical cut with modern science nor its rejection. Instead, it seeks to identify and promote conditions allowing the mutual recognition and dialogue between knowledges and practices, including those of modern science, without disqualifications or suppressions, with special attention to the knowledges and practices that emerge from the experiences and struggles for dignity and for life against oppression and exclusion. As these rely on a constitutive relation between life and knowledge, they are often described as "artisanal", to distinguish them from those forms of knowledge that are produced through the creation of the specialized and autonomous domain associated with science. The encounters between different knowledges open the path for ecologies of knowledges. They start from the recognition that all forms of knowledge are incomplete, and that every knowledge is entangled with a particular form of ignorance. We find here a key postulate which is largely indebted to the influence of Paulo Freire's conception of knowing and learning (on which more later).⁸

The decolonization of hegemonic knowledge proceeds through two moments; both are connected to distinctive and yet interconnected aspects. The first moment is called "sociology of absences"; the second, "sociology of emergences" (Santos, 2014, 2018a, b). The sociology of absences seeks to identify the silences, the suppressions, invisibilizations and disqualifications that deny the existence of other knowledges or convert them into forms of ignorance, opposed to the allegedly true and rigorous knowledge of science. Hegemonic knowledge thus operates through the active creation of ignorance and non-existence.⁹

The sociology of emergences, in turn, seeks to identify the experiences, knowledges, and practices born out

⁸ Ignorance and the epistemology of ignorance have been a major topic of recent discussions within pragmatist philosophy and feminist work influenced by pragmatism, especially in relation to discussions of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination and exclusion. For an excellent introduction to these approaches, see the contributions to Sullivan and Tuana, 2007, and Medina, 2013.

⁹ For a powerful example, from a pragmatist perspective, of how this active production of ignorance works, see Sullivan, 2007.

of the struggles and resistances against diverse forms of oppression and domination. The term *struggle* refers to any affirmation of freedom that, under certain circumstances, may turn into collective action for liberation. The practices of daily survival of groups, communities and peoples abysally excluded are part of these forms of struggle, as well as the social movements and forms of collective action that often reclaim, recreate or reinvent experiences and stories of past struggles and resistances (Santos, 2018a, b).

The knowledge accredited by science and recognized as such by institutions or accredited authorities (academic or professional knowledge, for example, or knowledge sanctioned by religious authorities as theology) tends to become a *monoculture*. It privileges particular definitions of what counts as knowledge, what the relevant scale and temporality are for the understanding of the phenomena under scrutiny, exclusionary criteria for recognition and classification and for establishing the value and productivity of practices. It stands on the separation between subject and object. Decolonizing hegemonic knowledge rests on what Santos (2018a, b, chapter 6) calls “decolonizing hermeneutics.” This depends on three conditions.

The first condition is the attention to a bias affecting all knowledge: all forms of knowledge have as their reverse corresponding forms of ignorance; to dismiss this condition amounts to dismissing what a certain form of knowledge is not capable to recognize, relegating what is unknown to a condition of non-existence or to being an obstacle to the progress of true knowledge.

The second condition is the recognition of the abyssal nature of partiality: “... modern science turned into [...] the main producer of absences, actively creating invisible, irrelevant, forgotten and inexistent realities” (Santos, 2018a, 232). The destruction, declaration of inexistence or predatory appropriation of other knowledges is inextricably linked to this active production of the abyssal line that separates metropolitan sociability from colonial sociability.

The third condition is the tension between autonomy and trust. The assertion of the autonomy and objectivity

of scientific knowledge may turn into a justification for the suppression of other knowledges and experiences, claiming an authority that demands unconditional trust in scientific knowledge and in its surrogates, yet equally allowing developments and appropriations of this knowledge by projects of domination and oppression.

The sociology of absences does not stop at the identification of these conditions, which allow the continued existence and affirmation of a given form of knowledge as a monoculture. It “operates through the replacement of monocultures by ecologies”, defined by Santos (2014, 175) as

sustainable diversity based on complex relationality. It is therefore a normative concept based on the following ideas. First, the value of diversity, complexity, and relationality must be recognized: nothing exists by itself; something or someone exists because something else or someone else exists. Second, complex and relational diversity means that the criteria that define diversity are themselves diverse. Third, the choice among them is a political one, and in order to respect diversity, it must be based on radical and intercultural democratic processes. Fourth, the robustness of the relations depends on nurturing diversity and exerting vigilance against monocultural temptations that come from both within and without, even if the distinction between what is within and what is without is intrinsically problematic.

In this perspective, the term “ecology” designates both a way of thinking/organizing the world and a description of certain kind of intervention in the world. It is characterized by the emphasis on relation, interdependence and sustainability, but always attentive to heterogeneity, diversity and uncertainty. The concept of ecology is attached to forms of ontological politics –actions that contribute to create versions of the world – different from those based on non-ecological views, as, for example, explanations of disease, of poverty, of environmental degradation based on linear versions of causality or on reductionist approaches. These ignore, or push to the background, the relational and procedural complexity of these phenomena. The experience of suffering associated with violence, deprivation, dispossession, illness or disorder and the understanding of the processes that

generate them thus tends to reassert the segmentations and divisions of the world associated with the disciplinary organization of scientific knowledge, of its biases and of the abyssal nature of such biases. Even when hegemonic science recognizes the relevance of processes outside its bounded field of knowledge, existing disciplines and specialties tend to treat the, as external factors, which at most may condition or influence processes that are described and explained in terms of the core assumptions and procedures of established disciplines or configurations of disciplinary knowledges.

This should not prevent the recognition of differences between versions of scientific knowledge that emerge from the internal dynamics of the sciences, from the debates and experiences that involve its practitioners. But recognition should extend to those versions of science forged in the engagement with the knowledges and practices that are born out of the experiences and struggles against forms of domination and oppression that become manifest in suffering, illness, violence in its different forms and in the precariousness of existence, but also in forms of resistance through knowledges and practices of solidarity, care and healing. Therefore, it is important to give special attention to the conditions in which versions of internal plurality emerge that are open to dialogue with other experiences and knowledges (Nunes, 2009; Santos, Nunes, Meneses, 2007).¹⁰

The decolonization of knowledge advocated by ES mobilizes epistemological imagination in order to recognize the existence and diversity of other forms of knowledge, but also to take account of changing conceptions of epistemic sovereignty (Nunes, 2009; Rouse, 1996) that have sustained the hegemony of modern Western science and academic and expert knowledge, disqualifying or suppressing other forms of knowledge.

Santos offers some provocative thoughts on how to advance towards an ongoing collaborative, participatory and non-extractivist recreation of the epistemological and political imagination:

1. To compare or contrast scientific and artisanal knowledge in order to imagine the different concerns each of them conveys and the different interests each of them serves or may serve (...).
2. To imagine surprising perspectives (...).
3. To imagine, open to further verification, the different ways through which different kinds of knowledge may contribute, whether positively or negatively, to a given social struggle as seen from the point of view of the different parts involved (...).
4. To imagine, on the basis of seemingly unrelated historical data, differences and even contradictions between positions conventionally deemed to be on the same side of a given social struggle (...).
5. To imagine forms of learning combined with forms of unlearning (...).
6. To imagine subjects where the epistemologies of the North only see objects (...).
7. To imagine new cartographies of the abyssal line, to identify new invisible divisions between metropolitan sociability and colonial sociability (...).
8. To imagine the consequences of not separating life from research (...).
9. To imagine civilizational questions circulating underground, remaining unanswered and never surfacing in the debates on technical issues and options within the limits of modern science (...).
10. To imagine the quest for ecological stances against monopolistic ones beyond the ecologies of knowledges (...).
11. To imagine the absences that cannot be captured by the sociology of absences, the emergences that never go beyond potentiality, or never stop being anticipated ruins" (Santos, 2018b: chapter 6; italics in original).

¹⁰ This section draws on material previously included in Nunes and Louvison, 2020.

These challenges to the epistemological imagination take shape in a set of methodological orientations, which can be summarily described as follows:

sensitivity – methodologies should be sensitive to context, situation and the composition of the research collaborative; engage all senses, in order to counter the hegemony of sight and hearing; procedures draw on aesthetic/artistic as well as on practical/instrumental resources, on reason and on affect, as they are brought together in terms such as *sentipensar* and *corazonar*;

collaboration – researching *with*, not *on*: inquiry is enacted through collaborative practices throughout the whole process, even if specific assignments are delegated on some participants; collaboration includes the identification and definition of problems and objectives, the methodological design, the carrying out of the inquiry, the sharing of results and the evaluation of the process and its outcomes;

non-extractivism – inquiry should not be appropriated for purposes other than those that are defined and decided by the community or group and for their benefit. Academic uses of the research should not imply any form of dispossession of the knowledge produced by those who have been part of it.

This approach relies, on the one hand, on the counter-hegemonic appropriation of methodologies developed within hegemonic forms of knowledge, including the social sciences, the humanities, the natural sciences and the range of multi- or interdisciplinary areas that have emerged in fields such as health or environment. But they also draw on a range of procedures which are inspired by the contributions to participatory research, action-research and popular education of Paulo Freire or Orlando Fals-Borda, among others, and on the ongoing development of innovative, collaborative and non-extractivist methodologies.¹¹

¹¹ These include conversations of the world, voices of the world, the Popular University of Popular Movements and a range of practices arising from popular experiences and struggles. For a detailed discussion of these methodologies, see Santos, 2018 b, chapters 6–9.

Pragmatism and Epistemologies of the South: convergences and common concerns

The relations between pragmatist philosophy and Epistemologies of the South encompass not just explicit, acknowledged influences of pragmatism on ES, but also affinities and convergences between the concerns and approaches of ES and those of the critical pragmatism of Alain Locke (Harris, 1989), as well as recent engagements with and developments of his work (Harris, 1999).

In a paper which may be described as the first systematic statement of Epistemologies of the South as a program, Santos (2007a) includes a specific reference to a pragmatic approach to knowledges as an alternative to the hierarchical validation of claims to knowledge by the hegemonic conception of epistemology. Direct references to pragmatism have been present in Santos's work since the late 1980s, with explicit drawing on William James and John Dewey and, in an earlier period, Richard Rorty and Richard Bernstein, ranging from the need to start from consequences in validating knowledge/practice configurations to Dewey's critique of mind-body dualism, among others (Santos, 1995, 2018a, b). Most of these references concern epistemology and how pragmatism provides a form of bringing closeness to where hegemonic science and knowledge create distance between science and life experiences. The approach of ES to how to evaluate/validate knowledges and their hierarchies in a situated way is explicitly described as pragmatic and based on the need to start from consequences, (with an explicit reference to James's "last things"):

The ecology of knowledges does not conceive of knowledges in abstraction; it conceives of them as knowledge practices and the interventions they enable or impede in the real world. An epistemological pragmatics is above all justified because the life-experiences of the oppressed are primarily made intelligible to them through an epistemology of consequences. In their life-world, consequences are first. Causes are second (Santos, 2007a, 72).¹²

¹² In *The End of the Cognitive Empire* (Santos, 2018a, b), Dewey is mentioned again in relation to his critique of the mind-soul dualism and a reference to Deweyan pragmatism as it was used by the Indian sociologist K. Shridharani (1939) to introduce

In an extended comment on Santos's paper, Nunes (2009) explored the relationship of pragmatism and ES and proposed a tentative approach to their convergences, as well as their differences. In the concluding remarks to the essay, these convergences and differences were stated as follows:

The pragmatism advocated by Santos (...), despite its apparent kinship with the philosophical current of the same name, is in fact a radical reconstruction that results from the encounter between the experiences of subaltern populations, groups and collectives, particularly in the global South, and the act of putting the proposals of pragmatist philosophers such as William James and John Dewey "to work" for the critique of conventional epistemologies. It is in the explicit reference to the world and experiences of the oppressed as a place of departure and arrival for another conception of what counts as knowledge that the epistemology of the South confronts pragmatism with its limits. Those limits are the limits of the critique of epistemology within the framework of abyssal thinking (Nunes, 2009, 117).

In the remainder of this section, I shall focus on recent developments within pragmatism which open up new pathways to dialogue. José Medina's work appears as a privileged point of entry, being exemplary of a trajectory that starts from a clearly argued discussion of core commitments of classical pragmatism – especially of Dewey's work – and how they provide ways of addressing issues of diversity and democracy to a concern with what a pragmatist approach should look like in dealing with injustice and oppression, leading to an insurrectionist version of pragmatism.¹³ This trajectory is strikingly similar to the approach described in ES as sociology of absences, and opens the way to a convergence with the sociology of emergences, by extending and radicalizing

some of the tenets of pragmatism. I shall consider the affinities and convergences, but also some of the differences between the insurrectionist approach proposed by Medina and ES.

Medina (2004, 112) reminds us that one of the core ideas of pragmatism is that philosophical reflection should be continuous with everyday life, and that, according to Dewey, it should follow what he described as an "empirical method". Medina goes on to elaborate on Dewey's idea and how to fulfill it in the very practice of philosophy:

According to Dewey, by focusing on ordinary life experiences philosophy does not simply become the voice of common sense, for philosophical reflection is essentially *critical* and *transformative*. On this view, the relation of philosophy and everyday life experiences is a two-way street: philosophical reflection must start from experience, but it must also return to it and enrich it. For Dewey, the "primary concern" of philosophy should be to "clarify, liberate and extend the goods which inhere in the naturally generated functions of experience" (...). What motivates philosophical reflection is "the interest of a more intense and just appreciation of the meanings present in experience" (...). Accordingly, Dewey proposes as a practical test for philosophical reflection that we ask whether or not such reflection results in the clarification and "enrichment" of experience (Medina, 2004: 113).

Dewey proposes as a "first-rate test of the value of any philosophy" the question of whether it ends "in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful" (Dewey, 1997: 9-10, cited by Medina, 2004: 113, note 2).

Medina's rendering of Dewey's position resonates with the approach taken by ES in respect of how to approach the relation between experience and the production of knowledge, and how to validate reflection and knowledge claims through its contribution to clarifying and enriching experience.

But one question arises, which is not considered in Dewey's formulation: what kind of life experiences, and of whom, are we dealing with when we move towards this empirically grounded reflection? Dewey's position is

Gandhian thought into the struggles for civil rights in the USA. Recent contributions by Scott R. Stroud (2018) on Dewey's influence in India, namely through R. Ambedkar (who was a student of Dewey), signal the relevance of appropriations of Dewey's work by Dalit movements and intellectuals.

¹³ Medina's *The Epistemology of Resistance* (2013) is a landmark contribution to further questions which are of central concern to ES, but will have to be pursued in a separate discussion. These would include topics such as epistemic virtue and epistemic vice, epistemic responsibility or epistemologies of ignorance, among others, and the complexities arising from the recognition of abyssal exclusion (but see his comment on Fanon's depiction of two kinds of blindness to difference, pp. 150–51).

clearly related to the meliorist strand that runs across his philosophy, which tends to downplay the questions of inequality, violence and power relations as they affect life experiences. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's memorable phrase, if we look back at the long and continuing history of myriad experiences of oppression and exclusion, we are reminded that for much of the population of the world living in a "state of emergency is not the exception but the rule" (Benjamin, 1979). How, then, to refashion Dewey's empirical turn in the face of those experiences for which "ordinary" means being vulnerable or subject to different forms of violence and oppression? How to address these experiences in such a way that the reflection and knowledge that emerge from them contribute to the clarification and enrichment of experience, or to its reconstruction? And how does it affect the relation of intellectuals (including philosophers, scientists, professionals and activists) to experience?

Taking up this challenge involves more than dealing with difference, inequality and injustice. A reminder of a core proposition of ES is called for at this point: the abyssal divide as a defining feature of modernity and of the contemporary world, and abyssal thinking as its epistemological corollary. One consequence of this is that a distinction has to be made between two spaces or zones characterized by different forms of sociability. The first is the metropolitan zone, a space of relations and sociability which is framed by the tension between regulation and emancipation, and where inequalities and exclusions do not imply the dehumanization and radical exclusion of those who are regarded as dangerous or inassimilable "others". The other is the colonial zone, where appropriation and violence dominate. The two forms of sociability may emerge within any of the two zones if we consider them as territorial inscriptions, but they may also appear as inscribed in bodies and singular/personal experiences and trajectories.

Medina's work on how the dual commitment of pragmatism to critique and reconstruction addresses questions of pluralism and multiculturalism offers an important entry point into both the virtues and the limits

of an approach whose focus is on metropolitan sociability. Drawing on Locke, Medina defines the task of a critical pragmatism as "how to recognize and respect cultural differences without exoticism or commercialization, that is, without contributing to their marginalization or subjecting them to the homogenizing forces of a global market" (Medina, 2011: 200). But there is a third possibility beyond exoticizing or commercializing difference: denying the full humanity of those who incarnate difference. This possibility, as we shall see, has been present historically and under contemporary conditions through forms of discrimination, persecution, oppression and suppression of human difference exemplified by colonialism, slavery, racism, sexism, homophobia, apartheid, displacement of populations by war, disasters, environmental degradation or economic conditions and exploitation, or the abyssal exclusion of undocumented migrants and refugees. This third possibility raises well-founded doubts on the outcomes of practices of inclusion or of multicultural remaking of societies where dehumanizing practices are rhetorically disavowed and often defined as unlawful, but nonetheless persist as longstanding marks of a history where the noblest principles coexist with those dehumanizing practices. Anticolonial movements were aware of the resistance that would be met even within societies claiming to be built on the solid foundations of human rights, equality and democracy. The case of the United States provides one of the strongest examples of how even at the core of the modern West violations of cherished principles of constitutional order are persistent, and are even sanctioned by laws drafted through due legislative process.

Medina rightly endorses the need for groups commonly defined – and often self-described – in ethnic and/or racial terms to make their own voices heard and to exercise critical control over the outcomes and products of their own agency, so as to enjoy the freedom and have access to the resources necessary for self-expression and cultural self-affirmation. Acknowledging that these groups are subject to forms of discrimination or deprivation does not prevent them from being able to

stand and fight for their rights as citizens, even when the odds are against their being successful in achieving the rights they claim. ES describes these forms of inequality and of exclusion within zones of metropolitan sociability as configuring non-abysal exclusions, that is, forms of inequality and marginalization which do not exclude, by denying their status as humans, those who claim their rights. The struggle for emancipation stands in tension with the regulatory workings of metropolitan sociability, but it does not rest upon the systematic use of violence and dispossession. Is this what happens in the situations that Medina is describing? What if much of what prevents these groups to achieve full citizenship while having their cultural difference recognized as a condition for democratic citizenship in pluralistic society is invisible to approaches that fail to recognize the existence of another form of sociability, colonial sociability, and forms of exclusion which rest upon dehumanizing conceptions and practices aimed at keeping differences regarded as non-assimilable or threatening to the unity of a nation conceived as being founded on a “normal” associated with white, heterosexual and epistemically dominant?

These two forms of sociability are divided by a series of visible and invisible lines, sometimes inscribed in territorial partitions and segregations, but also through trajectories and situations that place persons, communities and social groups under the threat of dehumanizing violence and dispossession, even within the spatial boundaries of “civilized”, metropolitan zones. This is a persistent possibility for all those who, because of their ethnic or racialized status, their gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, age, disability or health condition are subject to violence in various forms, including those that are life-threatening. These forms of violence are linked to a form of representative heuristics, of identifying the person with the alleged attributes of a social, ethnic, racialized or religious group, for instance. The obstacles in the way of recognition cannot be reduced to inequalities that could be addressed through redistributive policies within metropolitan sociability. Their identification requires procedures that allow those who have

been marginalized, invisibilized, disqualified or radically excluded to be made visible.

This raises considerable challenges to identifying the conditions allowing a “critical reconstruction of collective experience [that] can lead to the empowerment of racial and ethnic groups [and, one could add, other, radically excluded groups] and (...) how it can promote and facilitate the open dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures and races. The empowerment of the diverse racial and ethnic groups that compose a multicultural society and the genuine and continuing dialogue between them are the preconditions for justice and equality and for the flourishing of all the members of such a society” (Medina, 2011: 200).

Medina goes on to carefully identify the double-sided feature of this dialog, which involves “an *intracultural dialogue* of all voices within the group in question; and an *intercultural dialogue* between groups in which they articulate their identities vis-à-vis each other” (Medina, 2011: 200). Medina offers here a signal contribution to how to proceed *under conditions of metropolitan sociability*.

But the difficulties on the way to this pragmatic pluralist approach to the problem of “unity in diversity”, as Locke aptly formulated it, are compounded by the distinction between diversity within metropolitan sociability and radical – or abyssal – exclusion. Are dialogues possible across the abyssal line? Does the claim to the recognition of full humanity of those who are abyssally excluded provide a ground for intercultural dialogue as is proposed by Medina? And are there exclusions within groups that prevent intracultural dialogue to be achieved?

Medina’s recent engagement with epistemologies of resistance and with the insurrectionist challenge to pragmatism are significant steps towards concerns that converge with those animating ES. Due to limits of space and for the sake of clarity I shall focus here on Medina’s discussion of the insurrectionist challenge (Medina, 2017). A crucial aspect of Medina’s position is his questioning of classical pragmatism’s focus on the epistemic requirement of predictability and controllability as a condition for the

capacity to work from an indefinite-turned-problematic situation into a definite situation through inquiry and intelligent action, as postulated by Dewey. But what happens if this condition is not met? Medina's position is that "the epistemic requirement of predictability and controllability must be given up in situations of radical exclusion and oppression that call for insurrectionary actions and practices". He rightly notes that the requirement of predictability and controllability "functions as an epistemic mechanism of complicity with the institutions, practices, and social designs that perpetuate injustices". (Medina, 2017: 206). Medina goes on to lay out the conditions for insurrectionary practices to be recognized, accepted and supported by pragmatists. These do not depend just on "merely removing obstacles from the pragmatist framework", but also on "providing reasons for insurrectionary action within that framework", or what he describes as motivational reasons and/or challenges for insurrection. These make themselves present at two levels, the *subjective and personal* and the *collective and institutional*. Medina connects the two levels through *epistemic insurrection*. Insurrectionist pragmatism thus requires an engagement in resistance - individual and collective -, "even when the outcome of such disruption leaves us in the dark" (207). We shall go back to this point in the next section. But Medina also provides a detailed discussion of how "pragmatism's commitment to embodied, lived experience as the bedrock of philosophical theory and practice is an important point of contact with the insurrectionist tradition". The egalitarian strand that pervades this commitment calls on the duty to "discontinue our complacency with and participation in practices, structures, and institutions that create obstacles to - or simply block - the human flourishing of some" (207).

Medina identifies a "normative ground within pragmatism that is the source of strong normative demands: it demands that people take responsibility for facilitating each other's flourishing and that they respond to injustices that constrain such flourishing - and the more radical the injustice in question, the more radical the response needed". He goes on to

discuss one dimension of injustice in relation to race, namely the epistemic dimension, based on "a pragmatic understanding of *epistemic oppression* and *epistemic insurrection*" (207).

A normative stance close to the one discussed by Medina is taken by ES. But the difference here is that the latter is not based on the identification of and response to injustice on the basis of a commitment to human flourishing, but from the very acts of resistance and struggle against injustice as the grounds on which other experiences and knowledges flourished. In ES, this is described as sociology of emergences.

The sociology of emergences postulates the identification of experiences, knowledges, and practices born out of the struggles and resistances against diverse forms of oppression and domination. A struggle is an affirmation of acts of freedom that, under given circumstances, may turn into collective action for liberation. The practices of daily survival of groups, communities and peoples abysally excluded are part of these forms of struggle, as well as the social movements and forms of collective action that often reclaim, recreate or reinvent experiences and stories of past struggles and resistances (Santos, 2018a, b, chapter 4).

Again, Medina offers a starting point for a reassessment of Locke's approach to what he described as unity in diversity, referring to the necessary and productive tension between the recognition of diverse ethnic traditions and collectives within a given national space, and how they may coexist, communicate and participate in common endeavors that cut across their differences, while preserving their capacity to tell their own histories and to reconstruct their identities, drawing on their past experiences and their present involvements.

Drawing on Maria Stewart's work and in dialogue with Leonard Harris, Medina builds his version of insurrectionist pragmatism on the recognition of a plurality of communities of resistance - heterogeneous communities of resistance - that would allow for links to be made of "individual acts of resistance in our personal life and collective actions of resistance in our public life" (209).

The resonance with Santos's definition of struggle is striking. But a further condition for resistance is intergroup solidarity. The case advanced by Medina is that of intergroup racial solidarity, but his argument is relevant for a broader range of instances of intergroup solidarity. How is this to be enacted, considering that it cannot be taken for granted that groups or collectives not directly affected by the oppression that generates resistance will be willing to engage in insurrectionist acts in support of those who are not part of their "immediate sphere of concern" (210)? This is a particularly "pressing" concern "for communities whose struggles have been blocked, marginalized, or rendered invisible" (210). Medina refers specifically to the case of US society, but he has a broader point, that, again, brings his version of pragmatism close to ES. How to support and promote the creation of those forms of intergroup solidarity? In the concluding section of his paper, Medina asserts that "[b]oth in its epistemic and its political dimension, the radical pluralism I have developed from pragmatist conceptions of community and public life suggests insurrectionary possibilities for resisting racial oppression and for achieving greater degrees of respect and justice for marginalized social groups". Explicitly restating the grounding of his position on a pluralization and contextualization on Dewey's conceptions of community and public, he calls for further steps to provide "an account of epistemic resistance that incorporates forms of insurrectionary communication and activism in order to address issues of social apathy, complicity, and social invisibility, which are the epistemic side of racial [and, one could add, other forms] of injustice". There is thus a lot of common ground between his approach to insurrectionist pragmatism and ES. But some differences persist.

ES start from the recognition of the existing diversity of experiences and forms of knowledge, and how they relate to different forms of oppression. Cognitive or epistemic injustice is one of the key dimensions of these oppressions. It can be briefly described as the denial of the capacity of peoples, communities and social groups to tell their own stories in their own terms and to have

the knowledges born out of their experiences and struggles to be recognized as forms of knowledge with their own practices of production, validation, sharing and transmission. This entails a specific form of cognitive resistance, aimed at the hegemony of what in shorthand may be described as epistemologies of the North and the related forms of knowledge they legitimize and validate. Epistemic resistance, in many cases, takes the form of resistance against disqualification, invisibilization, marginalization, appropriation according to hegemonic criteria, or suppression of these knowledges. *Epistemicide* – the suppression of knowledge – is a key dimension of all forms of oppression. Thus a major challenge to building forms of intergroup solidarity is how to achieve solidarity between groups while at the same time recognizing and respecting their diverse experiences and knowledges. This point is of particular relevance when the groups in co-presence differ in their ontologies, as is often the case when seeking alliances, for instance, between environmental organizations and indigenous peoples to protect the latter's territories. In order to deal with this difficulty, ES propose to work through *intercultural translation*, relating and converging on the basis of the recognition of similarities and the momentary suspension of differences that seem irreducible, thus crafting a common ground for situated action. Intercultural translation is always partial, it does not aim at suppressing or dissolving cultural differences, but at finding the partial, situated understandings that make common action possible, even if these open up durable and broader forms of engagement beyond the specific situation.

Finally, this discussion calls for a clarification of the position and role of the philosopher/scientist/intellectual in insurrectionist pragmatism and in ES. ES sustains that the role of the intellectual should be that of a *rear-guard* actor, not of a path-showing member of vanguard equipped with the intellectual resources that are lacking in social groups or movements. Her role is rather to be able to record, provide testimonial material, contribute to amplify the claims and voices of those who resist and

struggle and bring in, as requested, their specific skills and knowledge. How does the Deweyan intellectual as insurrectionist pragmatist philosopher describe her position and her engagement in struggles for social and epistemic justice? Here we find some important ground to cover in future dialogues.

The “insurrectionist” challenge

The convergences between ES and the “insurrectionist” challenge to pragmatism invite further discussion of the concepts of the abyssal line, of metropolitan versus colonial sociability and of zones of non-being, and how they resonate with Leonard Harris’s work, and with the central place he assigns to struggle.

Although they were developed independently, Leonard Harris’s philosophy born out of struggle and the recent engagements of pragmatism with this approach - largely mediated through a return to the critical pragmatism of Alain Locke - open up interesting convergences with the conception of postabyssal thinking held by ES. The discussion of concepts like struggle, suffering or dignity, proposals such as Harris’s actuarial approach and the sociology of absences, the sociology of emergences and the modes of displaying injustice and denial of humanity, abyssal exclusion and the use of testimonial expressions, representative heuristics and the triad of modes of oppression in ES, all these signal interesting spaces of dialogue anchored in actual experiences of resistance and struggle.

A key aspect of Harris’s challenge lies in his question of whether pragmatists *qua* pragmatists commit themselves to insurrectionist action on behalf of strangers to their own moral community, as is the case of those - intellectuals, professionals, activists, advocates - who support or actively participate in struggles against oppression and de-humanizing conditions? In other words, Harris’s “query is whether there exist features of pragmatism that require, as necessary conditions to be a pragmatist, support for participation in insurrection” (Harris, 2020a, 181).

Harris finds in Alain Locke’s version of pragmatism an instance of “a viable philosophy” providing “resources and reasoning methods that make the management of abjection and existential crisis viable, given impossible odds of relief”. He thus calls for Locke to be added to the list of classical pragmatists, contributing “resources for the abused, subjugated, and humiliated facing existential crisis and impossible odds of relief”, all with “reasoning methods, terms, words, depiction, explanations, queries, dispositions, spirit, and conceptual categories as resources” (Harris, 2020b: 189). Locke made a landmark contribution to the study of race and later of ethnic diversity and of the question of values and their diversity.

Harris points out that a “tension between the reality of relativism and the need in some situations for certainty and moral imperatives is encoded in how Locke views ‘philosophy’” (Harris, 2020b, 193). We find here another theme that is central to ES: how to recognize diversity and the value of difference and diversity without embracing relativism and legitimizing difference as inequality (on which more in a moment). Harris concludes that “Locke, arguably, was not an insurrectionist. I draw from the issues that distinguish him from other pragmatists to help picture my account: it is his critical stance that helps me intimate an insurrectionist disposition, attitude, spirit - for example, critique of ‘uniformitarian universalism’ and cultural uniformity - stereotypes, proprietary culture and promotion of advocacy aesthetics, group self-expression, anti-colonialism, self-fidelity, and self-confidence”. But he “leave[s] open the question of whether Locke’s meliorism lends weight to a radical, if not critical, pragmatism in the sense that there may be no reason in principle to restrict possible ways to improve life through human effort or limits to modes of valuable forms of cognition and reasoning methods” (Harris, 2020b, 196).

In ES, the questions raised by insurrectionist approaches are closely tied to the theme of experience: what is different about the lived experience of those who suffer or are oppressed and the living experience of those who join their struggle by option? How does knowledge relate to these different forms of experi-

ence? What does it mean to struggle out of necessity, as the sole alternative to yielding and resignation to suffering and oppression? And under what circumstances can the living experience of joining and participating in their struggles be recognized as authentic? (Santos, 2018a,b, chapter 4)? The question as well as the answer are not very different from the ones provided by Harris: putting oneself at risk for the sake of solidarity is the key criterion for assessing the authenticity of engagement, even when the limit for one's actions is physical violence against persons – except in situations of self-defense. But the two kinds of experience are different, and the possibility of sharing them is a lively topic of debate.¹⁴ In other words, certain conditions are not ones you can simply step in, but they are the outcome of a process which occurs under certain conditions beyond your control. Paulo Freire's liberation pedagogy requires as well a willingness to expose oneself to different forms of discrimination, repression, violence and even risk of severe harm or death, but these are entangled in particular experiences and their conditions and situations. Teachers and educators of different kinds are among those likely, under conditions of repression or authoritarian rule, to be the target of repression, violence or persecution. Under current conditions, and in contexts of strong inequality and exclusion, teaching may become a high-risk activity, subject to censorship, restrictions, retaliations and even physical harm.

As will be discussed in the next section, Harris meets Paulo Freire – a major influence on ES, and himself influenced by Dewey – on several points, though they start from different, even if converging experiences. The question of defining the responsibility of the intellectual, the scientist, the philosopher, the activist or the advocate in not just denouncing injustice and oppression but

acting to confront it, even at risk of one's safety and, at times, one's life, brings to the fore not only the limits of classical pragmatism, as Harris has discussed, but also the problems that pervade radical thinking in its relation to action. Harris and Freire converge on their support for insurgent action and on the importance of indignation as a moving force in any form of struggle against injustice and oppression. They are also clear on the need for struggle even when the probabilities of success of lasting victory are bleak, or defeat is certain. Both call for the need to believe in the justice of one's cause, regardless of whether they are likely to be defeated, and of the role of moral or religious persuasions as a condition of possibility of these struggles. But they differ otherwise in their conceptions of the importance of religion, faith and hope, for instance. We shall have a closer look at Freire's contribution to ES in the next section.

Building on Locke, Harris advances a

view of adversarial traditions [that] does not require essentializing the least well-off, as if they were invested with some special truths. Rather, it requires believing that traditions emanating from adversary voices are likely to perceive community as a becoming that includes the least well-off as subjects. If the imagined community that is the home of one's loyalty is the community of the downtrodden, wretched, degraded, raped, victims of cruelty, the object of viciousness, they are subjects integral to the conceptualized community that is to become. Present traditions may be considered corruptions of a previously existing pristine state of affairs or demeaning practices of a chronically racist society; in either case, if the least well-off are considered agents in the moral community, the future is a becoming in a way that counts the immiserated – any future consensus takes their voices as meaningful in defining what counts as consensus (Harris, 2020c, 267).

And he adds:

Resistance traditions are distinguished by a concern with radical social change for the purpose of universal human liberation (...). That concern is often expressed by arguments for justified methods of social action to create change, accounts of why humanity should change, evaluations of conditions of misery, and depictions of unnecessary unjust conditions and explanations as to why they exist (Harris, 2020d, 275).

¹⁴ On this matter, see the exchange between two Dalit intellectuals, Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai (2012, 2019), and the commentary by Santos (2019a, b, chapter 4) on how they raise broader questions on the understanding of experience starting from their different views of being Dalit intellectuals in India, a country with a caste system. This debate provides interesting contributions to the defense of the continuing centrality of experience in pragmatism (Pappas, 2014).

Harris adds a crucial point which is of particular interest in discussions within a broadly understood domain of postcolonial approaches, and whose salience in current struggles for memory and recognition of historical and ongoing collective suffering associated with colonialism has amplified its public visibility: archives and landmarks of colonial memories and narratives, such as statues and other artifacts. Here is how Harris states his case:

We need a trace. It is a compelling need. It describes the agency of our ancestors. There is a need to know that our ancestors were agents, whether successful insurrectionists, captured slaves, entrepreneurs, or basket weavers. It is a condition of our being. It is what makes our lives existentially meaningful to us. We record the meaning, not the universe. An image of the future gives the sacrifices of the present a meaning and purpose. One feature of Locke's philosophy provides a way to see why traces, embedded in the records of archives, have an import far beyond the sheer fact of records as memories and why they have that import in a way that has nothing to do with contributing to a linear history in a moral universe (...). [O]ne import of the sheer existence of archives as repositories is that they are at least in some cases simultaneous local tradition sustainers and crafters, thereby making possible an accord of dignity and honor to the peoples who authored the collection. That is their trace. (...) Even if citizens are caused to become agents of resistance, their resistance is nonetheless in tandem with the terrain that is not pre-given – their trace is the consequence of their agency (Harris, 2020d, 281–282).¹⁵

A further and significant question raised by insurrectionist approaches is that of *representative heuristics* and its effects, and in particular how it relates to the positive defense of differences across groups or collectives against destruction, ethnocide or harm. As stated by Harris, “there are no revolutions or insurrections without representative heuristics, that is, without women who see themselves as representing ‘women’ as an objective category, without persons who see themselves as representing the interests of the poor, without workers who see themselves as the embodiment of meritorious traits,

and without environmentalists who see themselves as pressing for the best interest of all sentient beings by pressing for the interests of environmentalists” (Harris, 2020a, 182). This requires a conception of groups that does not reify them, but also recognizes their existence as historically constituted collectives - Black people, Dalits, Roma, indigenous and First Peoples, and any group, community or population calling for recognition of their collective existence.

The Freirean connection

The relevance of Paulo Freire's work for our discussion does not just lie in his acknowledged debt to Deweyan pragmatism, but also in the central place he holds as a major inspiration for ES and the way he managed to work through the tension between struggle and dialogue, insurgency and democracy.¹⁶

Freire's lifework is pervaded by the tension between struggle and dialogue, the denouncing of oppression in all its forms and the announcing and enactment of a vision of democracy that bears a strong mark of Deweyan conceptions. The centrality of education and learning, and his recurrent use of the term *pedagogy* to describe his engagements with oppression and injustice as well as his commitment to democracy should not be allowed to conceal his broader influence in matters ranging from epistemology to politics, ethics and communication, among others. This pervasive influence is felt in the conspicuous presence of Freire-inspired approaches in popular education and in participatory, collaborative and non-extractivist forms of research. Many of these draw explicitly on ES, which in turn draws on readings of Freire (Santos, 2018a, b, chapter 11). My own experience as a researcher committed to the kind of collaborative, non-

¹⁵ This signals another topic for a productive debate, the question of archives and their importance for both imperial/hegemonic projects and for the task of demonumentalizing hegemonic forms of knowledge. See the discussion in Santos, 2018a, b, chapter 9.

¹⁶ A series of collections of previously unreleased writings and assembling public interventions during the later years of Freire's life have been published after his death in 1997. They provide important clues and materials that help in clarifying the development of his thinking and action over time and across the different contexts he was involved with, including responses to critiques to the limits of his earlier positions (Freire, 2000, 2001, 2005a).

extractivist research advocated by ES - in engagements with struggles and initiatives related to health, environment and popular education in Brazil – has been deeply influenced and inspired by Freire's work.

Freire's upbringing in a Christian-catholic environment in Northeastern Brazil was a major influence in his outlook and commitment, and its mark is visible Freire's particular blend of thinking and intervening which included Christian-inspired progressivism, a proximity to radical political action inspired by marxism and liberation struggles throughout the world and an approach to education with a lasting imprint of Dewey's work.

Dewey's imprint is apparent in Freire's early contributions to education policies in Brazil in the late 1950s and early 60s, and in particular his pioneering and renowned work on adult literacy and education. Dewey's influence on Freire has often been credited to Freire's proximity to the work of Anísio Teixeira, a leading figure in the debates and experiences on the reform of education in Brazil. Beyond direct references to Dewey, Freire revealed, throughout his life and work, an affinity with Dewey's ideas on education which has been largely commented on. His commitment to education during what came to be known the Populist Era in Brazil was influenced by Dewey, but mostly through the work of Brazilian reformers who were in turn inspired by Dewey, such as Anísio Teixeira or Lourenço Filho (Munaro, 2021, 211). There is a tendency across comments on Dewey and Freire to treat their relation as one of affinity or converging views. Munaro summarizes thus a widely shared account of Dewey's influence on Freire: "... Deweyan thought echoed directly and indirectly in Freire's work as an announced research field that was scarcely explored in the attempt to understanding how Deweyan thought contributed to the conceptual weaving of democracy and education" (Munaro, 2012, 211).

Dewey's influence is particularly visible in Freire's work on adult literacy in the late 1950s and early 60s. Beisigel (2008), in what remains the best account of Freire's early work and its political and social context, offers a comment that goes in the same direction, refer-

ring to the direct and indirect influence of Dewey on the popular education initiatives in Northeastern Brazil during the Populist Era. Freire's work on rural extension while in exile in Chile and his later work on education reform and politics after his return to Brazil bear the same mark, even if not explicitly acknowledged. Munaro (2012) proposed a comparative analysis of Dewey's and Freire's work as a way of addressing their commonalities and differences and of assessing possible Deweyan influences on Freire's oeuvre. He signals the explicit reference to Dewey in Freire's 1959 dissertation, along with reference to a number of authors who were influenced by Dewey (see as well Feinberg and Torres, 2001).

Munaro calls for a comprehensive engagement with Freire's work powered by two questions: which Deweyan conceptions are to be found in Freire's work? And to what new uses does Freire appropriate Dewey's work?

Freire's approach to adult education and literacy was pervaded by a sense of learning as a practice based on active and participatory, collective approaches, and building on the discovery of generative words and definition of generative themes based on the vocabulary of subjects and worked through with them. *Conscientization* as the name of the process of becoming a subject of one's life, of reading the word and the world, was the explicit aim of the process, in what can easily be compared to Dewey's call for intelligent action. This occurred in a context where the idea of development and the role of literacy and education in it converged with attempts at broadening the franchise in order to create the conditions for development to find room and energy. The process, however, was interrupted by the 1964 military coup and the establishment of a military-civil dictatorship which ruled over Brazil for the next two decades.

In the late 1960s, and after having been forced into exile, Freire's approach to education took a radical turn, influenced by an increasing proximity to poverty stricken, immiserated and excluded populations in the Third World, and with the rising tide of insurrectionist and revolutionary resistance and upheaval, especially in Latin America. The most powerful, lasting and influential

statement of this period is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005b), a work which still bears a recognizable mark of Deweyan contributions to conceptions of learning. But it also shows how the experience of oppression and dispossession may breed knowledge. In one crucial aspect, Freire departs from the Deweyan progressive-meliorist approach: the centrality of insurgency and struggle as a condition for conscientization. This brought to the fore a key problem for progressive approaches to democracy and education: the divide between metropolitan populations and societies and the massive exclusion of what at the time was called the Third World, or, in Freire's terms, the oppressed. This came to be a major influence on the notion of abyssal divide and abyssal exclusion which is a central and differentiating feature of ES. The figure of the oppressed, broadening the range of those under the sway of capitalism and colonialism beyond the traditional Marxian working class (and hinting at Gramsci's subaltern or Fanon's wretched of the Earth), signaled a move towards a conception of education which was to be promoted well beyond institutionalized education and schools. Over the following years, Freire incorporated into his view the insights and the experiences of dealing with colonialism, racism, sexism and patriarchy and all forms of oppression and violence. Freire's approach to education, to the role of experience, to participatory research and to a broadening of what counts as knowledge opens up a promising dialogue with radical and insurrectionist approaches within pragmatism, including Locke's critical pragmatism and Harris's philosophy born out of struggle and all of the insurrectionist tradition the latter claims. Recent collections of interventions, letters, interviews or public presentations, posthumously organized and published, highlight themes that were recurrent in Freire's life and work, but seemed to acquire new salience in the later years of his life, expressed in his singular idiom, bringing together the force of indignation, the hope for possible futures as dreams and instances of unprecedented but viable worlds or situations (*inédito viável*), the shaky path of tolerance or the horizon of liberation. All this in a play without guarantees between

autonomy and duress, appeals to dialogical engagement and calls for struggle. These are, I shall argue, key topics for rethinking Freire's resonance with the concerns of pragmatism in a Deweyan key, but also with the critical and insurrectional challenges to classical pragmatism.

One significant theme that is recurrent and pervades all of Freire's work is his concern with the aesthetic and affective dimension of learning, knowing and acting. His conception of knowledge arising from the inextricable relation of reason and affect is central to the notions of *sentipensar* - literally, feeling-thinking, borrowed from another major influence, the Colombian sociologist and pioneer of participatory action-research Orlando Fals Borda - or *corazonar*, a concept arising from indigenous peoples of the Andean region (Guerrero, 2016; Santos, 2018a, b, chapter 5). These, in turn, underpin the advocacy, by ES, of its conception of researching *with* - rather than *on* - communities, groups and social movements, involving all senses in the acts of learning and knowing through listening, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling, reason and affect. One is reminded, here, of the importance of faith and religion as sustaining the motivational force behind struggle and insurrection. Carter (2003: 61-62), in a comment on Harris, notices how the calls to insurrection mentioned by Harris in his discussion of Black traditions of resistance in the context of the United States (but one finds the same trend in other contexts as well) are associated, for the most part, with movements of a religious nature or background. This calls for an acknowledgment of the limits of reasoning as a way of turning the recognition of injustice into calls to action, even if the odds are against their success. Faith and a kind of hope that acknowledges these odds appear as well as crucial resources in Freire's calls for struggle, and their role in different experiences of insurgency in different countries, regions and continents is well-documented.

Culture circles as venues for learning and knowing, deep listening, the relation between knowledge and ignorance and the incompleteness of all forms of knowledge, the relation between the word and the world,

reason and affect, the importance of the aesthetic in social life, the recognition of the diversity of forms of democratic and community life are part of the lasting legacy of Freire's lifework and founding influences in ES, and they come close to topics dear to Deweyan and Lockean versions of pragmatism.

This Deweyan mood, though, was tempered by, and stood in tension with, a radical commitment to those he named the oppressed, which is most visible in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (PO), one of the most influential texts of all times in the fields of education and human and social sciences. PO bears a strong imprint of the time of his writing, amidst the upheavals in Latin America following the Cuban revolution and insurrections in several countries where what Eduardo Galeano aptly named the opening veins of Latin America were associated with US imperialism and dictatorships and authoritarian rule, and more widely with Third World struggles against colonialism and for national liberation.

The radical edge of PO has proved to be remarkably relevant until the present, at a time of the normalization of a state of exception for most of the world population. But it raises the question of whether Freire's commitment to conceptions of education and democracy inspired by Dewey fit comfortably with that radical move. In how far did it pull him away from Dewey's reformist and meliorist approach, and from pragmatism as a philosophical current? A different question, however, could be asked: are there versions of pragmatism that resonate with those features of the Freirean approach that seem to move away from Deweyan conceptions?

The answer is yes, but with qualifications. Again, we face here the question of affinity, resonance and convergence, rather than direct or indirect influence. If we take this path, we get to recognize some familiar features of Freire's later work in Alain Locke's critical pragmatism and in Leonard Harris's philosophy born out of struggle. Over time, the category of the oppressed seemed to morph into categories subject to representative heuristics, with its broadening and diversification, encompassing a range of forms of violence, suffering, injustice and

discrimination, from race and gender to nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and others.

Freire's affinity with Dewey's approach to knowledge persists, to be sure, in his conception of the continuity of experience-based knowledge and critical knowledge, characterized by what Freire calls overcoming (*superarçãõ*), rather than rupture. But in fact, that passage is a possible outcome of encounters between forms of scientific/critical knowledge and common sense knowledge. The starting point, though, always comes from the experience of subjects and their capacity to "read the world". Both kinds of knowledge are characterized as configurations of knowledge and ignorance, whereby each kind displays knowledge and ignorance of different things (Freire, 2000, 106). The process of conscientization provides a description of how these forms of knowledge mutually engage. The distinction between banking education and dialogical-problematizing education at the core of Freire's pedagogy and epistemology resonates strongly with Dewey's conception of active learning and intelligent action as a counterpoint to the conformist and instrumental conception of learning and knowledge that underpins hegemonic forms of education. Culture circles, generative words, generative themes were the main tools of this approach.

A partial convergence of Dewey and Freire which also displays a key difference is the notion of situation as the setting of intelligent action (for Dewey) and insurgent-liberatory action (for Freire). For Dewey, the identification of an indefinite situation and its definition as problematic situation lies at the core of how to produce knowledge aimed at responding to the situation while learning in the process. The capacity to think that brings up original ways of dealing with a situation, as stated by Dewey, does not consider how these new or original thoughts and the actions that they lead to may sustain or reinforce relations of domination, oppression, discrimination or exploitation, or how they can foster or support the struggle against oppression. For Freire, limit situations, such as those that have become permanent features of the life of the oppressed, when the possibility of a decent living and free-

dom seem unreachable, challenge conformism and associate knowledge and learning with struggle. A statement of Freire's valuing of experience-based knowledge is his description of the knowledge of slum-dwellers, a setting where "one learns soon enough that only through sheer stubbornness is it possible to weave a life where it is nearly absent or denied – with deprivation, with threat, with despair, with offense and pain" (Freire, 2000, 77).

A consequence of Freire's work with the oppressed is a permanent feature of his lifelong commitment to the cause who those who suffer and struggle, run through by a tension between the creation of forms of solidarity that allow the oppressed to emerge as subjects of their own histories, working through their differences and conceptions of community, and his strong endorsement of and participation in forms of struggle whose prime mover is the denouncing of injustice, suffering and violence in its diverse forms and the struggle to defeat them, even when the odds seem to be against them. Hope thus figures prominently in the vocabulary of liberation proposed by Freire, in ways and with connections to struggles which join Leonard Harris's conception of struggle. But a difference that would deserve further scrutiny is the claim by Freire of the possibility, through struggle, to bring about what he calls *inédito viável*. In several passages of a work that extends over decades, Santos echoed the Freirean call through his notion of utopias that are utopias only as long as they have yet to be made real.

Looking forward...

Recent debates within pragmatism have inspired a move towards radical conceptions of pragmatist philosophy. They have revisited the classics, but have also explored the relations between other radical approaches and struggles and their convergence with pragmatism, in particular the insurrectionist traditions. These are likely to remain important interlocutors for an ongoing dialogue with Epistemologies of the South and to help shape ongoing work on a diversity of topics defined by

both their importance and their urgency. The current situation of a convergence and synergy of crises commonly described through the shorthand "Covid-19 pandemic" has brought to the fore with unprecedented visibility a range of issues that have been ongoing concerns of both pragmatism and ES. A provisional and necessarily incomplete list would include topics like justice and injustice, epistemologies and ontologies, knowledges and experiences, ecologies of knowledges and practices, exclusion, violence and suffering, experiences of resistance and struggle, conceptions of dignity, forms of democracy and citizenship, aesthetics, the question of hope and its relation to struggle, among other topics. The convergences and differences explored in this paper may thus be read as an invitation to further discussions and joint engagements with the challenges that are before us.

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