

THE “REFUGEE CRISIS” IN EUROPE – BETWEEN TOTALITY AND THE INFINITE

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ABSTRACT

The self and the other. Totality and the infinite. In other words, totality as the discourse of the self which erases the other; and the infinite as the discourse of the other, which constrains and imposes reservations on the discourse of totality. I encounter the other in a face-to-face relationship, who thereby starts to exist within me, becomes part of me, constitutes me. This is the path whereby we fall in love, and can also be the path of compassion and solidarity. But the relationship with the other is not exhausted in the encounter. The encounter with the other is often followed by erasure, assimilation, and even domination of the other. Strictly speaking, we can say that the other can never be reduced to the self, i.e. may never be erased within me. And if the issue at stake is to ignore the other, or segregate, discriminate and dominate him, this implies exerting a form of violence over him. This is my starting point and my focus on discussing the “refugee crisis” in Europe.

KEYWORDS

Colonialism; European expansion; Lusophony; principle of analogy; refugees

A “CRISE DOS REFUGIADOS” NA EUROPA – ENTRE TOTALIDADE E INFINITO

RESUMO

O eu e o outro. A totalidade e o infinito. Ou seja, a totalidade como o discurso do eu, que apaga o outro; e o infinito como o discurso do outro, que limita e impõe reservas ao discurso da totalidade. É numa relação face a face que eu encontro o outro, o qual passa, então, a existir em mim, a fazer parte de mim, constituindo-me. Esse é o caminho do enamoramento, e pode ser também o caminho da compaixão e da solidariedade. Mas a relação com o outro não se esgota no encontro. Depois do encontro do outro, seguem-se muitas vezes o seu apagamento, assimilação, e mesmo dominação. Em termos rigorosos, o que podemos dizer é que o outro nunca é redutível ao eu, ou seja, nunca é apagável em mim. E se o que está em causa é ignorar o outro, ou então, segregá-lo, discriminá-lo e dominá-lo, do que se trata mesmo é de exercer sobre ele uma violência. É este o meu ponto de partida e o meu ângulo de enfoque para debater a “crise dos refugiados” na Europa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Colonialismo; expansão europeia; lusofonia; princípio da analogia; refugiados

INTRODUCTION

In the West, from the Ancient Greeks to Descartes, the debate over the Other has always been framed by the principle of analogy: wherein the universe may be traced back to a creator. But from the Enlightenment onwards, which laicised human enquiry and culture, the Other has been addressed in successively different manners: as the moral subject in a transcendental philosophy, in Kant (1781/1980, 1788/1989); as the result of the dialectic between the master and slave, in Hegel (1807/1970); as a metaphysical will, "blind, insatiable and evil", in Schopenhauer (1819/2005); as a distant and exotic other (Park, 1928; Simmel, 1908/1979), which became the obsession of ethnographers and ethnologists; and as an unconscious rationale and code, continually scrutinised by linguists and structuralists. The Other is also "the will to know", in Michel Foucault (1976); "repetition and difference", in Gilles Deleuze (1968); "totality and infinity", in Emanuel Lévinas (1971); "a difference", that resists, in Jacques Derrida (1967); "the self and the other", in Vincent Descombes (1979); a "produced identity, an established identity and an expressed identity", "a linguistic belonging, a collective destiny and an individual decision", in Michel Oriol (1979, 1985); "oneself as another", in Paul Ricoeur (1990). The Other is also white masks and black skins, in short, the damned of the earth, in Franz Fanon (1963, 1986); the voiceless subalterns, in Gayatri Spivak (1988/2010); or, reason that resists hegemonic reason, in Edward Said (1994); or the other in me and me in the other, in Homi Bhabha (1994); or even, the diversity of memories and identity-based narratives and singular social practices, in Stuart Hall (1997).

Michel Foucault's article, "La pensée du dehors" [The thought from outside], published in 1966, in the French magazine *Critique*, analysed a tension that has always existed in the West, between the self and the other. The terms used by Foucault in this debate are the phrases "I lie"; "I speak" (Foucault, 1966a). Now in the phrase "I lie", I am the one who lies. This means that I can only lie in the regime of the self, which is the regime of wholeness – the regime of sameness. But to lie, I have to be able to talk. And talking is no longer bound to the regime of sameness. Because talking is to inscribe the other in the regime of the self, to convene the other, otherness, and make totality coexist with the infinite. Language renders the other present within me. Language is the place of the other, it is a social construction, which does not depend on me in order to exist, it is the infinite; although the totality of my own existence can lend language a style, that will reinvent it and give it new horizons.

In his Preface to François Flahaut's book, *La parole intermédiaire*, Roland Barthes explains how the other is inscribed in me, through speech:

[the subject] does not exist prior to language, he is constituted as a subject as he talks, listens. To be more precise, he says that which he imagines he hears in his own speech: by talking, man does not express himself, instead he realises himself, produces himself; his freedom does not originate in God, or in Reason, but in the game (and this word must be understood in all its meanings) that grants him the symbolic order, without which he would not speak and would not be a man. (Barthes, 1978, p. 9)

Therefore, since the inscription of the other in me constitutes a process of self realisation and production, we can conclude with the verses of Mário de Sá-Carneiro (1914/1993): “I am not me nor the other / I am something in between”, in a way “that passes from me to the Other”.

This reflection was prompted by the refugee crisis in Europe. I will therefore focus on Europe and its imaginary.

Eduardo Lourenço (1990) said that little remains that we can now present as an imaginary shared by all European peoples, i.e. there is little that can be related to a common European dream¹. It is, however, in terms of what I call the European imaginary that I will discuss the conditions of possibility in Europe for a discourse on migration, diversity, intercultural communication and mediation – a discourse that is, moreover, a condition of the possibility of building more welcoming, inclusive and peaceful communities.

GEOMETRIC REGIMES OF EXPLANATION OF THE WORLD

In July 2016, Manuel Albino defended his PhD thesis in Communication Sciences, at the University of Minho, about the geometric modes that Europe has engineered to construct a gaze that enables it to interpret reality. The geometric schemes used to explain the world are founded on measurement. And we can even say that the idea of Europe and its modernity has been built on such schemes.

Manuel Albino’s thesis is entitled *Contributos para o estudo semiótico das representações geométricas da realidade: a semântica da matéria e a geometria como expressão* [The representations of reality: the semantics of matter and the geometry of expression] (Albino, 2016) and can be summarised as follows: matter – that which we call nature and life – has an order, a meaning. This means that matter, like life, is organised and it is this order which produces meaning. And we construct geometric forms, i.e. measurements, that enables us to appropriate things from matter, which also means appropriating the meaning held by matter – held by life.

Appropriation of matter thus requires us to measure intensities, sonorities, movements, energies, dynamics, processes, durations, rhythms, cadences, that constitute declensions of the pulsations of life. The concept of *life* nowadays tends to assume the same role that was formerly occupied by the idea of *reason*, since the Enlightenment, since the eighteenth century, or the idea of *substance as essence* in Greek speculation, or the Christian idea of God in medieval theology, and even the idea of nature and the laws of mechanical movement in the Renaissance (Jankélévitch, 1925/1988, p. 11).

Such measurement is achieved using mixtures, which make the elements compatible and establish the *same*, and also via lenses, which filter the elements and identify *differences*. Established via geometric forms that verify that which is the same and that which is different, such measurements are geometric expressions.

Manuel Albino focused primarily on analysis of three geometric and mathematical models: the Euclidean model (3rd century BC), Cartesian model (17th century) and

¹ In the words of Eduardo Lourenço (1990, p. 157), “as a ‘cultural reality’, communitorily shared, Europe is (still) very little”.

Leibniz’s model (17th / 18th centuries). He was also interested in Michel Serres, a contemporary French philosopher, whom sociologists view as one of them, certainly for having written the work *Auguste Comte. Leçons de philosophie positive* (1975) i.e. lessons in Sociology. Communication scientists have also adopted Michel Serres as one of their theorists, no doubt for having written *Hermès – la Communication* in 1969.

Michel Serres wrote *Les origines de la Géométrie*, in 1993, after having written *Les système de Leibniz et ses modèles mathématiques* [Leibniz’s system and its mathematical models], in 1968. These were the main reasons that led Manuel Albino to turn to Michel Serres.

Of the various geometric models used by Manuel Albino to underpin his thesis, I was particularly interested in Euclid’s model, which revolves around points.

THE METAPHYSICS OF UNITY – GEOMETRIC REGIMES AND COMPREHENSIVE REGIMES

I’ve never been particularly interested in geometric figures. My attempts to appropriate reality are not based on measurement, which objectifies reality in order to explain it. Instead I have based my work on discourse, which seeks to understand reality, bringing it closer to the subject. My main thesis is that the movement that underpins Western civilisation is the metaphysics of unity. I developed this point of view, in 2011, in *Crise no castelo da cultura. Das estrelas para os ecrãs* [Crisis in the castle of culture. From the stars to screens], that was republished in 2017 (Martins, 2011a).

But geometrical representations, which have governed us in Europe up until the modern era, have also been underpinned by the metaphysics of reality. Let us consider Euclid. From Classical Antiquity until the late medieval period, i.e. until the dawn in the modern era, that began with the Renaissance, the point was the dominant representation of the world. The point is the foundation, the first principle, the origin, the beginning of all things. The point is thus unity, i.e., the point is the whole. And, since it is the whole, the point is everything: it is the essence, the substance, and it is God, when the point is projected into the infinite, in an asymptotic movement.

An iteration of points, i.e. a repetition of points, produces a straight line, in other words an *analogy*, wherein all the points are made in likeness (in the image) of the first point, made in the image of God, so they connect back to Him. In conclusion, the regime of analogy is tautological, redundant, because it is an iteration (repetition) of the *same*. In these circumstances, we have a single path, always the same path, in a straight line.

A straight line – which is an iteration of points, of points either moving forward, or moving backward – can only give us projections of unity: if they are points moving backward, we have an eternal return to genesis, that can constitute a work of archaeology and genealogy; if they are points moving forward, we have a projection of the future, the apocalypse, able to constitute a work of eschatology (i.e. the part of theology concerned with the end of time). If we want to be paradoxical, as with Gilles Deleuze, we may affirm that the eternal recurrence (the *same*) repeats the future (*difference*) (Deleuze, 1968).

In conclusion, also from a Euclidean perspective, we can say that if we have a point, we have a first principle, a foundation. And if we have a foundation, we can live according

to it, in correspondence, i.e. we can live analogically, pointing and always redirecting ourselves back towards it.

We can therefore say that the Euclidean regime expresses a metaphysics of unity. But we can say the same thing about the regime of analogue representation. In this regime, difference, all forms of difference, refer to unity, i.e. all difference is annulled and assimilated by unity. In these circumstances, the journey, which we are called to embark upon, is *a passage*, in which the tale is always the same, *between a genesis and an apocalypse*, with us living in accordance with the origin, with the first principle, with the foundation. Therefore, in the future, the great mystery of our life, its very magic, and also its apotheosis, would be to hasten our arrival to the genesis.

However, as I have already emphasised, the metaphysics of unity ignores, or stifles, nullifies and absorbs, all difference. For this reason, the tale is always the same. This was the case with *logocentrism*, in which reason is the sovereign instance of decision. It was the case with *clericalism*, in which the Church is “unique and true”. It was also the case with *ethnocentrism*, in which the only traditions, memories and narratives that matter are those of a *chosen people*. It was the case with *imperialism*, in which the sovereignty and strength of a single state were manifested. It was the case with *colonialism*, in which the idea of a *civilising people* justifies the historical mission that it assigns to itself and exercises over other peoples. It was also the case with *sexism/machismo/phallograticism*, in which men disqualify and subalternise women². And it is now the case with productivism, with the technological civilisation that is currently mobilising us, “totally” (Jünger, 1930/1990) and “infinitely” (Sloterdijk, 2000), towards the market, having as its corollary the monetarisation of life, i.e. the conversion of goods, bodies and souls into merchandise.

THE EUROPEAN EPISTEME, UNTIL MODERNITY

On the limits of the analogical representation of reality, which in fact permanently reiterates the *same*, through the principle of analogy, Michel Foucault (1966b) wrote chapter VII of *Les mots et les choses – une archéologie des Sciences Humaines*.

Michel Foucault, in *Les mots et les choses* (1966b) and *L'ordre du discours* (1971), also tells us that all discourses follow a mode of production of specific meaning, or a regime of the particular gaze, which he calls an *episteme*. A mode of production of meaning gives us the conditions of the possibility of a discourse, its conditions of emergence, functioning and reproduction, which means that a mode of production of meaning enables us to speak about certain objects, use certain methodologies and point to specific theoretical horizons, to the point that even the modes of reasoning are subject to this regime (Foucault, 1971).

The regime of analogy, whether with the Greek *logos*, a word that also means reason, meaning and direction, or with the Judeo-Christian *sun/bolé* (sun is the Greek prefix of union), or with Allah, the creator god, in the Islam, an image that unites, is not therefore a path to the other, but only to the same, to unity.

² I remember this ancient Jewish prayer: “thank you, God, that I was not born a Gentile, a slave or a woman”. On the subalternisation of women in ancient Judaism, see Josualdo Dreger (2014).

It was, however, the metaphysics of unity that underpinned the tyranny of binary oppositions, that Charles Sanders Peirce, as Lúcia Santaella says, called the “Western punishment”: the dualisms of spirit and matter; soul and body; essence / substance and accident; subject and object; abstract and concrete; number and phenomenon; thought and feeling; reason and emotion³. This is a genuine punishment, because the metaphysics of unity, which is implicit in binary opposition, concludes that the true and only reality is the spirit (the idea, for the Greeks; the “breath”, “ruah”, for the Jews; the soul, for Christians); it is the subject, the *noumenon*, thought, reason.

All difference is thereby nullified and absorbed by the culture of the one, by its force. To speak geometrically, we can think of the Möebius strip, in which zero and infinity coincide. Or, use a more poetic expression, we can refer to Fernando Pessoa’s *Mensagem*, and specifically the first verse of the poem “Ulisses” in which he says “myth is the nothing that is everything” (Pessoa, 1928/1986, p. 1146).

Modernity erupted precisely through the destruction of this regime, the regime of analogy, with the advent of the *Enlightenment* and *Romanticism*. These are the two tonalities, one larger, one smaller, that have shaped the modern imaginary. *Enlightenment* and *Romanticism* both constitute a fissure in time, they both constitute a rupture with the regime of analogy. Since then, there has no longer been anything that can be given as a foundation (a *Grund*, in Nietzsche’s terms), with which it is possible to *live in accordance* or *in correspondence*. In other words, both life and living individuals cease to be creatures who are united by God.

It is, however, in these circumstances, since we are no longer united by God, nor life, nor living individuals, and were previously possessed by the *dia/bolé*, an image that separates and autonomises (Martins, 2003, 2011a), the figure of the “tragedy of culture” emerges – for example, in the work of Nietzsche (1881/1996), Georg Simmel (1925/1988) and Hannah Arendt (1954/1972). As Jankelevitch (1925/1988, p. 69) has pointed out, the first moment of the tragedy of modern Western culture can be traced back to the day when “the continual stream of life [of God’s creatures] crystallised into self-enclosed and perishable individuals”⁴.

But let us return to the two main tonalities of modernity, the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Enlightenment is like a greater sun; while Romanticism is a kind of minor sun. The greater sun of the Enlightenment is universalist, it formulates universal human rights and natural rights, and establishes an Apollonian culture, in which Humanity is one, as is Culture, in its triumphant march, from barbarism to civilisation, in linear and evolutionary terms. The *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Metiers*, published between 1751 and 1772, by Diderot and D’Alembert⁵, exemplifies this

³ Charles Sanders Peirce, quoted by Lúcia Santaella, at the inaugural lecture of the IX Lusocom Conference, entitled “Interculturality in Brazilian space” (Paulista University, São Paulo, August 6, 2011).

⁴ But this self-contained movement of the world proceeds unabated in the contemporary era, through the widespread circulation of technologically produced images. See, for example, Martins (1998, 2003, 2007, 2011c); and Martins and Correia (2014).

⁵ More information available at <https://tinyurl.com/y3q28yub>

zeitgeist, a tonality in which reason must clarify and illuminate darkness, obscurantism and superstition.

Here we have another meaning associated to the idea of the “tragedy of culture” – with the Enlightenment, we move away from the regime of analogy and are left without redemption, yet we remain attached to the metaphysics of unity, which absorbs and erases difference. By making reason the sovereign decision-making power, we have entered the field of colonialism and arrive at productivism, which is the present form of the ongoing metamorphosis of the metaphysics of unity.

However, the lesser tonality of modernity – Romanticism – which constitutes the flipside of the Enlightenment, its repression, or its unhappy conscience, opens itself up to difference and the diversity of cultures, “between genius and madness” (Clair, 2005). In this sense, Herder’s essay, *Idées sur la philosophie de l’histoire de l’humanité*, published in 1774 (Herder 1774/1827), can be understood as an answer addressed directly to the *Encyclopédie*.

It is this romantic understanding of that which is separate, which opens the path towards understanding that which is diverse, which, in the words of Victor Segalen (1995, p. 747), is simply “the power to conceive Others”. According to Christine Buci-Glucksmann (2005, p. 51), this perception of the diverse “provokes in knowledge a feeling of strangeness, of unexpectedness, of superhuman, of ‘all that is Other’”. Indeed, one can say that, as Buci-Glucksmann (2005, p. 51) remarks, “the wind of revindicated atheism is not equivalent to the loss of mystery”. Such a wind engenders the moment “in which the mysterious participates in the vertigo. Because it is through diversity that ‘existence is exalted’” (Buci-Glucksmann, 2005, p. 51). Precisely, “between genius and madness” (Clair, 2005), with “the mysterious participating in the vertigo”, i.e. “from strangeness and unexpectedness” (Buci-Glucksmann, 2005, p. 51), the other, the diverse, the infinite, has the same vertigo of totality, the same vertigo of self, the same vertigo of sameness.

EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND COLONIALISM

I encounter the other in a personal relationship, which then exists within me, becomes part of me, constitutes myself (Martins, 1999)⁶. This is the path of falling in love, and it can also be the path of compassion and solidarity. But the relationship with the other is not exhausted by the encounter. The encounter with the other is often followed by erasure, assimilation, and even domination of the other (Martins, 2015b, pp. 37-38). Strictly speaking, we can say that the other can never be reduced to the self, i.e. may never be erased within me. And if the issue at stake is to ignore the other, or segregate, discriminate and dominate him, this implies exerting a form of violence over him.

⁶ The relation constitutes the condition of possibility of my own existence and yours. It is, therefore, the relationship that determines the nature of speech. To speak is to argue. And to argue is to obey rules, to follow the rules of practice (Martins, 1999, p. 49). And what are these rules? The rules of practice refer to the contextuality that underpins social action, i.e. “for the specific time and space of its achievement”. For this reason, the rules of practice “project a future with some degree of uncertainty” – they are fulfilled in relationships lived in doubt and anguish (Martins, 1999, p. 50).

Six hundred years ago, Europe began its maritime expansion. And the known world opened up to the diversity of new worlds. But this enterprise, which produced an encounter between peoples, was coupled with the domination of the peoples of the south by the peoples of the north, wherein the peoples of the north assimilated and dominated the peoples of the south⁷.

We can, however, say that what happened with colonialism is similar to the dynamics of any relationship between individuals, and between peoples. The fact is that everything in Europe prepared it for the exclusive regime of the one, which erases the other. The kinetics of western culture, marked by the regime of the *logos*, of the Greco-Latin tradition, by regime of the *sun/bolé*, of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and by Allah, the creator god, of the Islamic tradition, translates a long narrative of absorption of the other by the regime of the *same*.

In this regard, I distance myself from the views of the Mozambican, Elísio Macamo, Professor of African Studies, at the University of Basel, who published an opinion article in the *Público* newspaper, entitled: "Portugal pode pedir desculpas? Quantas vezes forem necessárias" [Can Portugal apologise? As many times as is necessary] (2017). In this article he criticises colonial reasoning, discussing it from a purely moral perspective. Macamo (2017) understands that colonialism means Europeans betraying their own ideals:

you are heir to a culture that is defined by a set of values that it has not consistently been able to respect and is confronted with this fact; how do you react? You shrug your shoulders and say that it was from the past, or worse, that the slaves were victims of their own societies?

He continues: "Portugal must apologize to itself for violating its own values. The apology will renew its commitment with these values"; "the issue at stake here is the relationship between the Portuguese and their own values" (Macamo, 2017).

I do not think that the Social and Human Sciences should address the colonial question in moral terms⁸. Colonialism is yet another metamorphosis of the metaphysics of unity, which constituted the West, and which erases all difference. What is required from the Social and Human Sciences is that they understand and explain this movement, which means that they are also expected to understand and explain colonialism, rather than seek the culprits or promote expiatory acts of past guilts⁹.

We still find a situation of colonial domination, already in a post-colonial regime, wherein the tropics constitute a way for anthropologists and geographers to talk about us and them, wherein totality erases the infinite, and does not exactly allow itself to be questioned and fertilised by it (Pimenta, Sarmiento & Azevedo, 2011).

⁷ On European Expansion, and specifically on the Portuguese expansion, see Russell-Wood (1992); Page (2002); Leitão (2009); Crowley (2015).

⁸ I point out that it was not from a moral perspective, but from a theoretical perspective, that the father of contemporary African Studies, the anthropologist Georges Balandier, questioned colonisation when confronted with it for the first time, in "La situation coloniale: approche théorique" (Balandier, 1951).

⁹ Regarding the theoretical and methodological requirements with which the Social and Human Sciences are confronted, I recall the article that I published in 1994: "A verdade e a função da verdade nas Ciências Sociais" [The truth and the function of truth in the Social Sciences] (Martins, 1994).

The totality, the regime of the *same*, which we embrace, even today continues to assume a central role, it pushes the other to the periphery – as a subaltern, subdued, dominated place. In this regime, whenever Europe speaks, it speaks from the centre to the periphery, so the infinite can never interrogate and question the totality – the tropics are always a place far away from the centre, a place that is strange to it, a place that ultimately, is not ours. And the world remains in the regime of the *same*, in the exact terms of the old order, with the infinite (the regime of the other), to the order of totality (the regime of unity).

This is also the view defended by Gayatri Spivak (1988/2010), in the book *Pode o subalterno falar?* [Can the subaltern speak?] The discursive process that establishes Europe as the subject imposes a subaltern condition on the Other. Because knowledge is exactly like speech, it always serves the interests of those who produce it. By establishing itself as the subject of discourse, and of a “universal” discourse, Europe denies the Other the right to speak, deprives it of the capacity for representation, strips it of its name and removes its voice¹⁰.

When we look at the media’s dominant discourse today, we see that the refugee crisis did not bring us a different reality from that which we already knew: Europe is our place, i.e., the place of the *same*; and Africa and the Middle East are the places of the *other*, i.e., the place of the different, of the diverse (Martins & Marcondes, in press). But these two worlds never meet, to the point that we can say that the infinite spawns the totality.

On the one hand, we see Europe and the countries of Africa and the Middle East as dichotomous and watertight realities (the centre versus the periphery), wherein this difference is becoming increasingly rigid as a result of Islamic radicalism and the discourse of Western security. On the other hand, we see a permanent reactivation of the regime of the *one*, wherein Europe erases and absorbs the regime of the other.

LUSOPHONY BETWEEN TOTALITY AND THE INFINITE

In 2016, Carlos Alberto Faraco published *História sociopolítica da língua portuguesa* [Sociopolitical history of the Portuguese language]. In a long chapter on Lusophony, he discusses the relations between Portuguese-speaking peoples and their respective diasporas. Such relations are also affected by the situation of the peoples who were colonised in the past, and that of the people which constituted the former colonial power. And they are also affected by the processes of decolonisation, that several peoples have passed through, as well as civil wars, which in many cases followed these processes.

The position of the Mozambican writer Mia Couto on Lusophony is well known. He prefers to talk about “luso-aphonia” (Couto, 2009). Marcos Bagno (2009), a Brazilian

¹⁰ I think that this discursive process, which establishes Europe as a subject and imposes a subaltern condition on the other, a former colonised country, helps to understand the mismatch between the memories of the common colonial past, held by the Portuguese and other Portuguese-speaking peoples. Rosa Cabecinhas (2015) clarified these ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions in the social representations of history that link together the Portuguese-speaking countries, when analysing the data of a survey carried out with young people in four Portuguese-speaking countries: Angola, Brazil, Portugal and East Timor.

linguist, speaks, in turn, about “illusophony”. Nataniel Ngomane, a professor of literature at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, does not see Lusophony as a “deletion” – of narratives, identities, and peoples (Ngomane, 2012). Armando Jorge Lopes, a Mozambican linguist, places Lusophony amongst the Mozambican beads “of language, culture and inclusiveness,” beads that are introduced into the thread of communication – that are “beads of coloured glass and other materials,” and “are also beads of the world” (Lopes, 2017, p. 288). Carlos Alberto Faraco, in turn, refers, with a certain degree of suspicion, to Lusophony, but this did not prevent him from coordinating the Brazilian National Commission of the International Institute of the Portuguese Language (IILP), which is the language organ of the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP) [Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries]. Nataniel Ngomane has also represented Mozambique in this Institute.

I have been interested in thinking about the *other* of European expansion, specifically Portuguese expansion, for more than two decades (Martins, 1990/2016, 1991, 1996, 2006, 2011b, 2014, 2015a, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). I was interested by that which the chronicler Pero Vaz de Caminha wrote in a letter to King D. Manuel in 1500¹¹, describing with awe a docile, peaceful people with fine noses, who ran naked on the beach without any embarrassment or shame.

However, Pero Vaz de Caminha omitted the fact that the relationship with the other includes other phases, after the encounter, which presuppose violence, assimilation and erasure, as Tzvetan Todorov pointed out in his 1982 book *La conquest de l’Amérique – la question de l’autre*¹².

THE REFUGEES AND EUROPE, AS AN ALIGNMENT OF DISCONTINUOUS AND INTERMITTENT POINTS

In 2019, in co-authorship with Valéria Marcondes, I concluded a study entitled *Os olhares do Público à “crise dos refugiados”* [Perspectives of the *Público* newspaper on the “refugee crisis”] (Martins & Marcondes, in press). The study analysed the discourse of the media, based on a set of news articles published by the *Público*, a Portuguese daily newspaper, on the “refugee crisis” in Europe. The debate on the refugee crisis occurs in a post-colonial context. That means several things. In the current refugee crisis in Europe, what needs to be thematised is the tension between the self and the other, i.e. between the totality and the infinite, which also means to thematise the relationship between centrally-located countries, and peripheral countries (those of the south); and between the epistemologies of the developed and domineering North, and the “epistemologies of the South”, peripheral and excluded (Santos & Meneses, 2009)¹³.

This debate presupposes, for example, that we must bear in mind the intricate relationship that non-Western countries have with their former colonisers, and vice versa,

¹¹ Available at <http://www.culturabrasil.org/zip/carta.pdf>

¹² See, also, Martins (2015b, note 15, pp. 37-38), in a comment to Tzvetan Todorov.

¹³ An important contribution towards this topic (“negotiation”) is provided in the work edited by Elísio Macamo, in 2005, *Negotiating modernity. African’s ambivalent experience*.

which in both cases is a paradoxical relationship of approximation and rejection, as argued by Homi Bhabha (1994). It also assumes that we must evaluate the role of the media in the social process of building social stereotypes about ethnicity (Cabecinhas, 2002).

In a somewhat paradoxical, perhaps anachronistic manner, I return to Euclid and the geometric point. The point corresponds to spots. An alignment of points makes a line. And with lines, we can produce strings. On the other hand, with dots and lines we can draw circles. A line, whether curved or straight, indicates movement, direction, relationship, and measure. But if the line is made up of discontinuous points, everything changes. An alignment of discontinuous points may also indicate motion, direction, relation, and measure. But as the movement is intermittent, discontinuous, the direction changes, being emphasized its fragility, vulnerability, and finitude.

For me, this geometrical figure, an alignment of discontinuous, intermittent points, is a metaphor of contemporary life, which rather than being a line indicating a sure foundation, a known territory and a stable identity, is above all an alignment of inconstant points, across space. But by drawing the lines and aligning the points, we can trace physical and tactile strings. Lines, such as points aligned in a straight line, can thus be taut strings, shelters against abandonment, impersonality, and isolation.

It is up to the European countries, as well as the former colonised countries, to interweave the lines into a fabric that connects them.

END NOTE

Euclid's geometry allowed us to figure – through points and lines, curves and straight lines – the passage to unity, that inscribed us within the metaphysics of unity.

But the issue at stake in the European dream is a challenge. It is to be hoped that a fabric of discontinuous points will allow Europe to float and remain protected, between the continuum (the totality, the *same*) and the discontinuous (the infinite, the *other*), as in response to its historical hesitation between being solid, i.e. totality, and being fluid, i.e. infinite. ✍

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