Coloniality of Power, Knowledge, and Epistemic Violence

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Revision Note:
This revised version clarifies key ideas, expands the analysis, and updates the sources. The revisions strengthen the paper's central argument and situate it more explicitly within the debates of decolonial and critical theory.

Abstract

The paper explores the legacy of colonialism as it persists through the Coloniality of Power, the ongoing social and political structures rooted in colonial rule, and the Coloniality of Knowledge, the dominance of Western ways of knowing, which together shape modern systems of thought, identity, and global inequality. It examines how Eurocentric epistemologies, defined as systems of knowledge rooted in European perspectives, erased and exploited indigenous knowledge and ways of being, justified social and racial hierarchies, and continue to determine what counts as truth. The paper draws on diverse scholars, such as Quijano, Mignolo, Spivak, and Madina Tlostanova, to reveal how knowledge, language, and race serve as tools of domination. The paper calls for more inclusive, pluralistic, and embodied ways of knowing.

I. Introduction

All countries and people have an original account or myth: the comforting tales that enabled the birth of national consciousness in which members feel a commonality with others, the "imagined communities," even though they may not know them. People come to understand themselves, their place in the world, their communities, and their nation through the stories they tell themselves. The official story of America began in 1607 with the Europeans' settlement of Jamestown, Virginia. The official narratives and the dominant discourses about their arrival in America greatly omit the presence of Native peoples living in complex civilizations spanning modern Canada, thousands of miles to Chile (Sjursen, 2021).

For centuries, the Eurocentric version of American history has been the dominant perspective, uncritical, hegemonic, and universally accepted as a paradigm for interpreting the world. The one taught in our knowledge institutions. A 2015 study by researchers at Pennsylvania State University found that only 87 percent of the content taught to most students about Native Americans focused on pre-1900 contexts (Diamond, 2019). What little history is taught about Native Americans does not accurately reflect Native American culture (Diamond, 2019). The arrival of Europeans proved disastrous for the people of the Caribbean. Settlers killed off vast numbers of people in conflicts and also by spreading disease, which reduced the indigenous population by 90% in the century following Christopher Columbus's initial journey to the Americas and Caribbean in 1492 (Milman, 2019).

However, from the European perspective, Europe also brought modernity to the world, establishing knowledge centers and great universities that increased human understanding. It improved the health and well-being of millions through advances in medical techniques and food production. European imperialists would argue that, among the gracious gifts, these were the ones European empires bequeathed to the colonial world.

As Historian Karen Armstrong underscores, the singularity of Western achievements was in two salient spheres: the first is economic, in which Armstrong points out that in Europe and their American colonies, there was the first radical transformation in the domain of economy that allowed the West to 'reproduce its resources indefinitely' on the basis 'of reinvesting the surplus in order to increase production (Mignolo, 2009). The second transformation was in epistemology. Since the rise of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, epistemology would no longer encompass science/knowledge but would extend to the arts and

other cultural productions of meaning (Mignolo, 2009, p. 41).

Modernity got built on the conquest, exploitation of colonized peoples, the destruction of their culture, destruction or demotion of their knowledge, and, more importantly, the eradication of many of them and their stories.' European breakthroughs in the scientific revolution expandedknowledgedomains and gave them greater control over the environment thananyone had before (Mignolo, 2009, p. 41).However, there is a dark side to modernity,whereEuropean progress and scientificachievements were for Europeans. The only responsibility science had toother races was to record their cultures and collect their artifacts before their inevitable extinction (facinghistory.org).

Since the end of colonialism, there has been a significant effort to restore trust and build meaningful relationships between the former colonies and their European colonizers. Science and technology are two areas where collaboration has been highly fruitful in acquiring skills, knowledge, and intellectual insights from one another (Roy, 2018). However, the legacy of colonialism persists because of asymmetries of power between scientific partners from developed and developing countries; relationships often take the form of dependence, if not subordination (Roy, 2018).

For example, a 2009 study showed that not only were 80 percent of Central Africa's research papers produced with collaborators based outside the region, but the outside collaborators often set the agenda and prioritized the research, rather than encouraging local scientists also to pursue the fuller range of topics pursued in the West (Roy, 2018). An earlier study in 2003 got at the heart of the problem when it suggested that scientists in developing countries often carried out "fieldwork" in their own country for the foreign researchers to encounter epistemic violence. As the study shows, 60 percent to 70 percent of scientists in developed countries did not acknowledge the work of their collaborators in developing countries (Roy, 2018).

The notion of epistemic violence refers to the different ways in which violence of disrespect, the non-recognition of the knower as a knowledge producer or an expert, is exercised in relation to the production and circulation of information, and particularly ofnondominant knowledge. When a marginalized or oppressed group member seeks to address or correct issues concerning historical

oversight of information, address factual misrepresentations of past events or offer an alternative historical perspective, they inevitably encounter epistemic violence. To admit, differently, excluded and marginalized knowledge(s) would necessarily upset the existing power dynamics that benefit the dominant groups (Hall, 2006).

According to the Peruvian sociologist and humanist thinker Anibal Quijano, this is part of a long-standing patternof disregardbased on asymmetry of power and unequal conditions of existence that flows out of colonialism (Martinot, n.d.).Quijanoargues that the habit of marginalizingformer colonial subjectspersistsunder the influence of social institutions, structures, discourses, andpractices that emerged during colonialism and continue to endure in the modernist era (Martinot, n.d.). He calls this matrix of power (the dark side of modernity) emanating through these structures the Coloniality of power (Martinot,n.d).Quijano argues that the power matrix is not only the source of epistemic violence but also constitutes themodern/colonial world and serves as the basis for the "racial" social classification we see in the world population today(Restrepo, 2017).

Coloniality of power emerged as a new power structure, fabricated on the ideas of Western civilization and modernity, that accounts for Euro/American control of the global labor force, wealth, and territories. Coloniality of power continues to endure and perpetuate itself through a multiplicity of interlocking systems of knowledge, labor practices, domains of political administration, and personal life, including reproduction, interpretive frameworks, and sexuality (Martinot, n.d.). Coloniality of power is grounded in another form of control, Coloniality of Knowledge. Colonialityof Knowledge centers on a Eurocentric knowledge system, the epistemic dimension of theColoniality of power (Restrepo, 2017, p. 8).

Aníbal Quijano (2000) coined the term Coloniality of power and defined it as the multidimensional ways modern forms of exploitation, oppression, and domination continue the work of colonialism. In contrast, the Coloniality of knowledge is how the historical foundation for erasing the knowledge and histories emerging from different historical locations worldwide remains at work, silencing the voices of those who still do not count as human beings (Quijano, 2000).Since colonialism, the European knowledge system and ways of producing knowledge have been prioritized

over all non-Eurocentric knowledge systems. This paper will investigate how these two systems, the Coloniality of power/knowledge, have shaped history, structured knowledge, and shaped our identities and ways of being in the world today. This paper will also examine the historical processes that codified the racial differences between the European colonizers and the colonized, which became the basis for biology as the grounds for one group being superior to the other. That history is why, today, some groups have access to economic opportunities and epistemic and representational privilege, while others are not afforded the same opportunities and privileges (Restrepo, 2017,p. 3).

Colonialism, Imperialism, and Coloniality of Knowledge

It is essential, from an analytical perspective, to avoid confusing colonialism (a form of political and administrative domination with a corresponding set of institutions) with another term, Coloniality, which Quijano used to refer to the Coloniality of power/knowledge matrix of power at work in the world today. Colonialism refers to a situation in which a metropolitan administrativeand military apparatus colonizes places and people.

It is the Western domination of human beings, knowledge, and subjectivities, coupled with the extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of the laborforce, under the logic of the expanding reproduction of capital (Quijano, 2000).Colonialism officially ended in many places decades ago, yet globally, coloniality influences continue in less direct forms through economic systems, cultural values, education, and politics (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40). Although coloniality may look different in diverse places, they all share a common global logic, like a thread running through various societies (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40). That common global logicis modernity. Modernity and colonialism are closely linked, with modernity often presented as a story that hides colonial violence and the systems of control that helped shape the modern world (Mayblin, n.d.). Thinkers like Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo have shown that you cannot separate modern ideas from the legacy of colonialism; they are two sides of the same coin (Mayblin, n.d.). In many ways, modernity is a way of thinking or epistemological framework that emerged from Europe's colonial history, and the stories it tells often ignore, excuse, or rationalize colonial violence and exploitation (Mayblin, n.d.).

Modernity is understood as progress, science, and development, and tends to define itself through the exclusion or devaluation of other ways of living and knowing. That is called *ontological othering*, treating some people and cultures as fundamentally different, inferior, or less real (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40). Modernity is not just a list of social, political, or historical events, nor is it a process of excluding selected histories; it is epistemic (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40). That is how knowledge is produced, which determines its value. Far from being a neutral description of history, modernity selects specific histories, interpretations, and perspectives and then convinces people that these are normal, natural, and objective truths. In doing so, modernity as an idea continues to shape social reality.

Once the idea of modernity became firmly established, it reinforced the Eurocentric systems of knowledge and ways of thinking that produced it (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40). Together, these ideas, concepts, and systems of knowledge were used to discredit other ways of understanding the world and knowledge systems, and to erase historical paths that did not fit the narratives of modernity (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40). In fact, the development of modernity and the knowledge systems that support it were closely intertwined with colonial ways of thinking (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40).

This legacy, Tlostanova argues, can still be seen in the idea of imperial difference (2015, p. 47). The concept of imperial difference emphasizes not only the divide between colonizers and the colonized but also the unequal status among empires themselves (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 46). For instance, non-Western empires, such as Russia and the Ottoman Empire, were often viewed as less important or less civilized than Western European powers (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 47). Imperial difference operates at both internal and external dimensions; for example, Russia projected its own sense of inferiority onto its non-European colonies in the Caucasus and Central Asia by adopting the role of modernizer and civilizer (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 47). These colonies were subjected to a dual form of epistemic domination, in that they experienced both Western modern coloniality and its Russian/Soviet variant (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 47). The dual influence shaped internal hierarchies within the empire and informed how the empire positioned itself in relation to other global powers (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 47).

This planetary articulation of Western domination began in the Americas with the arrival of Europeans. For Europeans, the arrival in the

Americas was a"discovery" of a New World; for the indigenous, the discovery of a New World was a European'invention' (Mignolo, 2000).Discovery is the imperial view of history. The Eurocentric perspective of knowledgeoperates as a mirror that distorts what it reflects. It is the version of history taught in schools where all students learn from elementary to high school (Mignolo,2000, p.33). Thisversionof history has become reality (Mignolo,2000, p. 33). Invention(for the indigenous population) is a decolonial responseto the Eurocentric version of history. It opens the door to decolonizing knowledge by telling another story.One that gives voice to those whose voices are silenced and whose history has been erased (Mignolo, 2000, p. 33).

For the European colonizers, the Americas was not just a New World; it was also an encounter with the "*other*," a separate world, where a new set of rules,classifications,and institutionsgetestablished to gain hegemony during the colonial period and is exercised to this day (Salgados et, al,2021).The encounter with the European *other* produced a set of practices, relations, and processes that still"permeates all labor relations in this present moment. Nancy Fraser would later refer to it as "the division between metropole and periphery, exploitation for Europe and expropriation for others"(Quoted in Salgados et, al,2021, p. 207). European nation-states began to conceive of themselves as national communities,'metropolises' citizens,distinguished not only by geography but also by explicit racialization of the colonial subjects in terms of "free individuals versus slaves,"Black versus White," "Europeans" versus "indigenous"(Salgados et al,2021, p. 207).Classification is essential to the ordering of social life. Horizontal classification is the rule for expressing sameness and difference, but vertically (hierarchically), that difference gets expressed as status because the classificatory systems help unite knowledge and also determine whether knowledge is considered "primitive" or scientific by those in charge of setting standards.

However, one can ask: if one looks at the meaning of 'indigenous,' one will find that the word is an adjective referring to those 'born in a country, native'; so, if Europeans are not indigenous, where did they come from (Mignolo, 2017)? Which is an example of how the virus of Coloniality infects our minds and makes us believe in the ontology of North Atlantic's 'universal fictions' that Europeans in Europe are nationals and that the people who inhabited the land before thearrival of Europeanintervention are 'indigenous' (Mignolo,2017, p. 39). With the emergence of the enlightenment, the nation-state, and the revolutionary ideas of the 'Rights of Man, liberal democracy, and of the Citizen', gave rise toborder walls, justification,since then doors were closed forthe lesser Man and non-citizens, that is, 'non-nationals' (Mignolo,2017, p. 39).

From the European imperial perspective, one of the primary features of colonialism wasthe invention of the idea that superior people could derive their well-being from the sacrifice of another human being because they were inferior.The treatment of Africans, as disposable commodities, for example, during slavery and the expropriation of indigenous land exemplifies the European bourgeois national statethat placedEuropean nationals over all other human beings to secure economic gains.First, from theBritish colonial perspective, this was part of a constellation of imperial practices in which, after 1698, every Englishman's fundamental and natural right was to engage in the slave trade (Mignolo, 2021). Secondly, as dispensable populations,Europeans banishedenslaved Africans from the community of humanity. Thirdly, once enslaved, the person's humanity vanishes; only the body counts; therefore, once it loses its usefulness,it becomes disposable like any other commodity (Mignolo, 2021, p. 133).The economic classification life"did not exist before the 16th century for the simple reason that racism that motivated human dispensability did not exist"(Mignolo,2021, p.132).

Fourthly, this process would follow Europeans the world over, where the bourgeois elites, thebeneficiaries of the Glorious Revolution, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution, consolidated political and economic control and deprived and dispossessed millions of natives around the world of their freedom in the name of liberty (Mignolo,2021, p. 156).

Given the ontological and epistemic differences thathave come to structure the social imaginary in the colonial world, where profits are more important thanpeople, it should be no surprise that disposable populations are necessary to secure the economic well-being of nationals over the concerns of others.

Moreover, the lasting impact of colonialism continues to shape the underdevelopment of African states. In the post-colonial era, many African nations sought to

establish entirely new systems of governance as part of their nation-building efforts (Wu,2024). However, despite being labeled as "new states," they largely inherited the institutional frameworks, administrative practices, and governing norms of the colonial regimes that preceded them (Wu, 2024, p.1). Crawford Young argued that colonial rule created a powerful, centralized government that tightly controlled local communities (Wu, 2024, p.1). This system didn't disappear after independence; instead, it left a deep mark on the political structures of many African countries (Wu, 2024, p.1). The new post-colonial governments often carried forward this authoritarian spirit, trying to maintain control by presenting themselves as the only source of legitimate political ideas and authority over their societies (Wu, 2024, p.1).

Robinson argued that the colonial "divide-and-rule" strategy fueled ethnic rivalries, making it difficult to build a unified national identity (Wu, 2024, p. 1). Colonial borders ignored existing ethnic landscapes, further complicating national cohesion (Wu, 2024, p. 1). Mamdani added that colonialism also strengthened the power of chiefs and local customs an influence often overlooked by post-colonial African states, which mistakenly viewed tribalism and authoritarian chieftaincy as inherently African rather than products of colonial rule (Wu, 2024, p. 1).

The colonial "divide-and-rule" strategy created and deepened tensions between ethnic groups in Africa, making it harder for communities to come together (Wu, 2024, p. 3). The goal was to prevent cooperation that might lead to stronger resistance against colonial rule (Wu, 2024, p. 3). For example, in what is now Uganda, the British relied on the Nubians to help control the Akoholi people as early as the 1870s, showing how colonial powers deliberately used ethnic divisions to maintain control (Wu, 2024, p. 3). This approach also encouraged the separation of African communities along tribal lines, worsening the physical and social divides between them (Wu, 2024, p. 3). It is a root cause why many Africans struggle to build a strong sense of national unity (Wu, 2024, p. 3). Without a shared language, common history, or unified cultural traditions, it became difficult to develop the collective identity needed for a stable nation (Wu, 2024, p. 3).

The central obligation of imperial subjects was to obey a supposedly superior race and the imperial center (Arneil, 2024, p. 156). The primary objective was to enhance the empire's economic and political power, not to uplift local populations or develop the land. However, in the nineteenth century, imperial rhetoric increasingly began toemphasize these humanitarian justifications (Arneil, 2024, p. 156).

Colonialism, by contrast, is driven from the start by an internalized and productive form of power. Colonizers live among the colonized, who are seen not as inherently inferior but as "backward," physically idle, or mentally constrained by tradition and irrationality (Arneil, 2024, p. 156). Rather than demanding mere obedience, colonialism aims to reform these supposedly idle bodies and irrational minds by encouraging industriousness and promoting the abandonment of "backward" languages, customs, and beliefs. This transformation is pursued through education, labor, and training (Arneil, 2024, p. 156).

Coloniality and Knowledge

Colonialism also shares some of the Enlightenment ideas and thetranshumanist notion of "the human" that elevated the white European male as the only fully human subject,while excluding and oppressing women and non-white peoples. The Enlightenment was a European intellectual movement that emerged during colonialism in the 17th and 18th centuries (Duignan & Britannica Editors, 2025). Ideas involving God, reason, nature, and humanity were integrated into a worldview (Duignan & Britannica Editors, 2025, para. 1). This worldview sparked revolutionary progress in art, philosophy, politics, and celebrated human reason and rationality. The humanist tradition, which claimed to speak for all of "humanity," actually rested on a narrow, exclusionary standard: white, Western man(Roessler & Steeves, 2025), These transhumanist ideas, then as today were presented as a universal "human" that was, in fact, revealed to have never been genuinely universal in practice; it privileged white, Western males and excluded others from full moral or political recognition.

That is especially important; ideas of "the human" were constructed and weaponized to marginalize women and people of color in the context of colonialism, which relied on such hierarchies to justify domination. The very concept of the human has been entangled with, and often supportive of, practices that deny many groups full recognition, rights, and moral standing (Roessler & Steeves, 2025, p.3). Colonialism continues and

shape shifts by maintaining these C hi hierarchical distinctions, redefining who counts as fully human in ways that still privilege some lives while rendering others disposable.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the ideas of colonialism and imperialism evolved and took on new meanings (Arneil, 2024, p. 158). The shifts usually reflect broader global changes happening in the world at the time (Arneil, 2024, p. 158). During this transitional moment, colonial powers began to rely less on imperial dominance and military conquest (Arneil, 2024, p. 158).

They began to rely more on soft power and narratives of civilizing missions, developmental progress, and democracy (Arneil, 2024, p. 158). This shift reflected a colonialist ideology focused on "improving" populations labeled as backward (Arneil, 2024, p. 158).Also, colonial expansion led the West to establish itself as a global concept, the point of reference for the rest of the world, advancing the universality of itsknowledge and the supremacy of its values (Mignolo, 2000). During the years of colonial expansion, the West not only helped structure the modern world but also left a profound mark on many disciplines, none more than in epistemology.

Although epistemology can be defined as the domain of intellectual inquiry concerned with the source and status of knowledge, such as what is truth, justification of beliefs, and addressing questions concerning good and valid arguments. However, as Gunzenhauser and Gerstl-Pepin (2006) argue, what is equally important for this discussion is that epistemology can also be defined as "a theory of *what gets to count as knowledge,*" with the emphasis on who does the choosing?As Gurminder Brambra and John Holwood (2021) remind us, if one particular worldview or knowledge is privileged over others, it devalues other knowers and excludes theirknowledge.Viewed from the perspective of the excluded and discriminated against:

> The historical record ofcolonialism and patriarchy is full of institutionalized,
> harmful lies. It is a record of social regulationin the name of social emancipation, appropriation in the name of liberation, violence in the name of peace, the de-
> struction of life in the name of the sanctity of life, violation of human rights inthe name of human rights, …. constitution of sub-humanities in the name of humanity…. racism in the name oftolerance,

constitutional wrongs in the name of constitutional rights, ontologiesof inferiority in the name of Immanuel Kant's Was ist die Aufklärung (Quoted in Santos,2016).

As the West increasingly came under the sway of Cartesian philosophy andthe scientificmethod, there was also a significant transformation in the structuring of ideas andknowledge.The implication of this shift had a profound impact on the Western world's understanding of reality.By applying the Cartesian method, Descartes attempts to prove that sensory perceptions—such as sight, hearing, and smell—are reliable tools for analyzing the world, thereby justifying objectification as a valid path to knowledge and laying a foundation of certainty for scientific observation and empirical laws(Frame, 2014). In other words, if he cannot trust information obtained from his senses, how can he confirm the existence of an external world?Descartes believes that he discovered away out of this dilemma:

> Cartesian rationalism rests on the assumption that reason alone can provide the path to truth and knowledge. Descartes's foundational proof that truth can be discovered by reasonis summarized in this "famous phrase 'I think therefore I am' (Barker & Jane,2016). Descartes's view was contested by philosophers who call themselves epicists, whose views directly opposed Cartesian rationalism becausethey believed that knowledge is based solely on what can be confirmed with the senses. Immanuel Kant's third-way transcendental philosophy reconciles the two-opposing conception of reality by more or less combining the two camps. Kant's transcendental philosophy argues that we do not have access to the natural world. Humans encounter the world only through the phenomena of representation (cultural productions) in our human cognition (Jackson,2018). Knowledge is not something that exists in the outside world that gets introduced into an open mind; knowledge is instead something created by reason (Tim, n.d.); in other words, we are not just receivers of ideas, information, and perceptions. The mind is deeply involved in shaping our inferences about the world.

Kant's transcendental philosophy denied us access to the natural world except through representation and cultural production; culture became the domain of the knowable by reason, self-reflection, qualitative analysis, and distant from nature and a key signifier by which include/exclude,

legitimate or delegitimate of others (McNulty, 2022). The Kantian turn also represented a philosophical and ontological shift where humanity gave reason ever greater significance; that emphasized quantified conceptual representations more than reality itself (Lea,2017, pg.1-2). This view aligns with the scientific method that requires a hypothesis getting tested with observation and measurement.

This preoccupation with conceptual representation and mathematical models has had considerable influence in the field of economics. Under the influence of quantitative analysis processes, scientific methods, and mathematical modeling, modern economics seeks to make itself a universal science like physics (Martin et al., 2022). Since it emerged as a social science field, economic thinking and logic have been numerous consequences. Economic logic is now the dominant feature of modern social life; human beings are thought to be calculating, self-interested, and rational machines guided by instrumental reasoning. Social relations between individuals in a capitalist economic society also assume the form of economic transactions.

These philosophical, scientific, and intellectual developments profoundly affected thought and knowledge. What could not be subject to or seen as resistant to qualitative analysis, like indigenous knowledge systems, are relegated to just a series of myths and fairy tales because they do not rise to the level of European knowledge (Ndlovu,2018).Nevertheless, as Julius Evola stresses, such thinking means that science has freed itself from sensory experience and common sense (Lea,2017, pg.2).Since the rise of scientism, all that lies outside the realm of science has been made invisible, is excluded from reality, and gets vigorously demeaned (Lea,2017, pg.3). Evola suggests that such epistemic territorial practicesmean that everythingthat has a direct relationship with reality that surrounds and envelopes us has been rendered unreal and irrelevant (Lea,2017, pg.3).

Also, Cartesian ontologyis flawed in that it privileges dualism, the mind-intellects over the body, spiritual over the material, and mental work gets favored over manual labor (Restrepo,2017, pg.5). However, from the decolonial/embodiment of knowledge point of viewpoint, the Eurocentric conceptions of a de-subjectivized, disembodied knowledge are just an illusion (Restrepo,2017, p.5).

The separation of the mind from the external world as set forth by Descartes, as well asKant'sclaim that the subject is capable of reasoning in a mode free from the forces of tradition, like the Ptolemaic cosmological system, was beautifully conceived but it too is a misrepresentation of reality. Knowledge is always anchored in and embodied by the subjects that produce it (Restrepo,2017). Knowledge is also entangled in the subject's unique histories and trajectories (which do not operate only in the mental register) but also gets inscribed in their distinctive forms of knowledge production and diverse ways of knowing (Restrepo,2017, p.5).

Descartes' famous phrase, for example, 'I think; therefore, I am, isproblematic on multiple levels. Firstly, it minimizes language's role since thinking about an independent object world is to do so in language (Barker & Jane,2016, p.269). We express our thoughts in representative form through language; in other words, representations mediate between thought and reality (Barker & Jane,2016, p.269).Another commonly heard objection to Substance dualism is the interaction problem, first raised by Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia in her correspondence with Descartes. Dualism says that the soul and the body are substances of contrary nature yet somehow causally influence each other.

Based on this mechanistic understanding of physical and nonphysical, the nonphysical cannot interact with or cause events in the physical. Thus, Cartesian Dualism cannot account for causality and must be false (Gaschen, 2018).According to Ryle, Descartes' belief makes a "category mistake" by putting "the mind and body in the same logical type or category when they actually belong to another" (Ryle). Ryle believes that although the body exists in space and time, the mind only exists in time, not space (Guo,2014).With its methodological orientation toward theoretical and mathematical modeling to rationalize individual behavior, economics has had considerable consequences for economists. Neoliberal economics, on the whole, tends to favor severing the economy from social realities and thereby constructing, in reality, an economic system conforming to its description in pure theory (Bourdieu, 1998) rather than to the world.

However, instead of treating the economic model as a basis for comparing practices and processes across the world, the model is taken to be the world.

Thus, the model is assumed to effectively represent reality and how people
behave. Asad Zaman captures this radical shift in economics beautifully,
citing "Krugman who writes that the profession (of economists) as a whole
went astray because they mistook the beauty of mathematics for truth"
(Zaman, 2020). In other words, "what is known and experienced as social
reality is to a great extent representation or the product of representation"
(Quoted in Miller & Nowacek, 2018).

Coloniality of Power

The Eurocentric conception of a de-subjectivized, disembodied knower isthe fundamental way we understand the world, our place in it, through the taken-for-granted practices, and the habitual patterns in which we conduct our business and, more importantly, ourselves (Ng,2018, p. 36). That version of reality results from five hundred years of colonialism and the presence of Coloniality of power/knowledge matrix. Between (1500 and 2000),Europeans successfully managed to violently strip the indigenous population of their ways of being in the world by depriving them of their knowledge, languages, traditions,histories, social, cultural, economic, and political practices.

That history of violencewas set in place five hundred years ago to subjugate and control theconquered and the enslavedcontinues through present-day policing practices, salvationist and civilizational rhetoric (Restrepo,2017, p.2).Aimé Césaire argues that the violence visited upon the subjugated today cannot be separated from the colonial violence upon which European empires were built (Restrepo,2017, p.2).Western modernity has not disavowed its practices of violence and oppression. The surveillance, relentless cruelty, normalized violence, and the techniques of domination and social controlof non-European populations continue long after colonialism.

According to Quijano (2010), colonialism was never just a matter of European subordination, repression, and control of the non-Europeans. Colonialism also repressed all modes of cultural production, producing perspectives, symbols, and modes of signification (Quijano,2010, p.23).This repression extended to the colonization of the imagination, power schemes, and cultural repression, albeit in differing intensities and depths

(Quijano,2010, p.23). Quijano describes this form of cultural repression, epistemic violence, and cultural imperialism as a "Coloniality of power" (Quijano,2010, p.23).Coloniality of power 'refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged from colonialism. It defines the culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations' (Malik,2019).Moreover, Coloniality [of power]at its core is the foundation of the hegemonic structures of knowledge of the modern capitalist system and the logic of colonial domination that successfully produced one history out of the many (Mignolo,2005).

The logic of Coloniality is at work in multiple domains of human experience, at the epistemic, the subjective, and personallevels (Mignolo,2005, pg.15). The logic of Coloniality was at work disarticulating the diverse histories of the colonized to create the one universal history based on that of the discoverers, conquerors, and colonizers (Mignolo,2005, pg. 15).The modern world system is maintained by the power relations established during the colonial conquests (Mignolo,2000, pg.54). The five hundred years of European imperialism produced racialized classification schemes,the domination of all knowledge sources by Eurocentrism, bydiscarding the mythical and spiritual knowledge of the indigenous in favor of the rational, empiricalas the sole reliable source of knowledge (Mignolo,2000, p.54). Then afterhaving been stripped of their historical identity, knowledge, and memory, the indigenous were subjected to learning from their colonial masters and their ways of knowing, seeing, and being in the world (Mignolo,2000, p.54).

In the next stage in the region's devolution, following the cultural repression, the colonization of the imaginary was accompanied by the massive extermination of 65 million natives in fewer than 50 years (Quijano,2007, p.169-170). The cultural repression and massive genocide together turned the previous high cultures of the Americas into illiterate, peasant subcultures condemned to orality (Quijano,2007, p. 170). Thus, they are deprived of their formalized, intellectual, or visual expression patterns. The Europeans then convinced the indigenous population that they were part of the old world of the past while presenting Europe as the future (Quijano,2007, p. 170). Since colonialism, Quijano maintains that all of history, perspectives of knowledge, and intellectual production associated with the written word, merged into one point,

Eurocentrism, and from that point established Europe as the center of civilization (Quijano, 2000)."Coloniality survived colonialism because it is kept alive in schools. Schools do not only control people; they also help control meaning. Since they preserve and distribute what is perceived to be 'legitimate knowledge:

the knowledge that 'we all must have,' schools confer cultural legitimacy on the
knowledge of specific groups. However, this is not all, for the ability of a group
to make its knowledge into 'knowledge for all is related to that group's power in
the larger political and economic arena. Power and culture, then, needto be seen
not asstatic entities with no connection to one another but as attributes of the
existing economic relations in a society. They are dialecticallyinterwoven so that
economic power and control is interconnected with culturalpower and control
(Apple, 1979,p. 63-64).

Epistemic Violence

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that there is an aspect of Coloniality that functions as epistemic violence, in which the knowledge of the indigenous, their concepts, and ways of being in the world are overwritten by Western forms of knowing (Valoyes-Chávez, Andrade-Molina, & Montecino, 2023). Social, scientific concepts and categories of the European or colonial ways of looking at the world get incorporated into their consciousness.Epistemic violence is also a form of epistemicide. Epistemicide refers to the destruction of existing knowledgeand the uprooting of the "non-western, this un-naming, to inscribe them in a system of classification as the other, the backward, the savage, the primitive other" (Vazquez,2011, p. 32).Epistemic violencegets expressed in the production and circulation of knowledgethat, on the one hand, renders marginal groups invisiblewhile, on the other hand, renders them highly visible through stereotyping tropes (Hoagland, 2020).

Allie Bunch (2015) classifies epistemic violence into three categories: *discriminatory, testimonial,* and *distributive*. Each presents a distinct way that epistemic violence is exercised by the in-group in the process of othering:

Discriminatory epistemic violenceoccurs primarily through the
dehumanization of the out-group…. This often arises when the in
-group perceives the out-group to be inferior, both essentially and
morally, thus casting them as subhuman…. Testimonial epistemic
violence comes in two forms: reduced credibility and silencing.
When credibilityis reduced through epistemic violence,prejudice
operates on the part of the listener to discredit the information they
are receiving from the *othe*r, despiteany expertise they may have.
…... The audience… fails or refuses to recognize the (out-group)
speaker as a knower. Distributive epistemic violence refers to the
refusal of resources for the out-group….. The perception of these
communities asundereducated only further divides them from the
in-group and prevents them fromengaging in and contributing to
the larger epistemic community(As Quoted in Bunch,2015, p.13).

Eurocentric epistemic domination rests on claims to "legitimate" knowledge in Western academia, while reproducing colonial and racial hierarchies by relegating the extensive theoretical work of racialized and Indigenous scholars to mere "experiential insights" or "stories" (Almeida, 2015).Ladson-Billings (2000) and Pascale, (2008)provide a searing example of epistemic violence at work when prominent African American intellectuals and scholars W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter Wilson both challenged thedominant European paradigm and interrogated society's contradictionssimultaneously as the members of the Frankfurt School (Almeida,2015,p.83).

However, the members of the Frankfurt School, likeMax Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, rose to prominence and got taken seriously. In contrast, Du Bois and Wilson's worksget ignored because they were seen only as "Negro" intellectuals, having "Negro" concerns with the "Negro" problem (Almeida,2015,p.83).Critical race theory is another instance of how race-critical research gets devalued for identifying U.S. social institutions like the criminal justice system, education system, labor market, housing market, and the healthcare system as being laced with racism

(Ray & Gibbons, 2021). Critical race theory argues that racism is embedded in the laws, regulations, rules, and procedures that lead to differential outcomes by race (Ray & Gibbons, 2021, p. 1). Critical Race Theory does the deep theoretical work demonstrating how race-based epistemologies shape the social world, contribute to the racialization of reality, and support systems of domination and oppression (Ray & Gibbons, 2021, p. 1).

Epistemic violence also operates throughracialized knowledge systems that function as regimes of truth. It is responsible for ordering institutions and determining which people, arguments, and knowledge types get accepted as 'true' on racial matters(Meghji,2021). Race is the instrument; it is a critical driver in the ideological struggle for shaping the way we see, think, and the kinds of practices that we are engaged in, and determines the epistemic status of one's beliefs.

The relationship between episteme and one's social identity has long been part of the Western and ancient traditions. In ancient canonical writings, epistemic credibility was tethered to one's gender, age, status, the kind of work one engaged in, and ethnic identity (Alcoff, 2008).

Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006) explain that this is the way of thinking about knowledge today and forms the basis of how we learn and work in areas such as business, science, and education. However, this system is shaped by a colonial past that continues to support structures that manage knowledge in ways that favor certain cultures and viewpoints over others (Mignolo&Tlostanova, 2006, p.207).

Knowledge is intimately tied to language and communication and helps shape our identity and understanding (Mignolo&Tlostanova, 2006, p. 207). Knowledge is not just a tool we use but a core part of who we are, shaped by our bodies, our histories, the memories of people, and the places we come from (Mignolo&Tlostanova, 2006, p. 207).That has serious consequences for those who grow up using different language systems, such as Aymara, Hindi, or Russian (Mignolo&Tlostanova, 2006, p. 207). They face real challenges when they have to use imperial languages like French, English, or German, which are entirely different to learn, and work within systems of knowledge that were designed around those languages and their ways of thinking.

They must deal with a structural gap when forced to adopt and operate within knowledge systems built on a different epistemic framework (Mignolo&Tlostanova, 2006, p. 207). That gap is not experienced by those already formed within the imperial languages of modernity. Ultimately, Mignolo&Tlostanova (2006) argue that these asymmetries reflect deeper colonial and imperial differences that continue to shape knowledge production and subjectivity (p. 207). That is not because other cultures lack intellectual, cultural, and social depth and sophistication, but because colonial history has systematically excluded other languages from being recognized as legitimate sites of global knowledge production (Mignolo&Tlostanova, 2006, p. 207). It is a reminder that epistemic injustice involves not just ideas, but also the conduits (languages and systems) through which ideas are circulated and establish authority.

Since the modern period, racialized features have been incorporated in assessing epistemic competence (Alcoff,2008, p.21). Social classifications, according to Mignolo (2021), are presented as "representations" of a given ontological social and "natural" order, organization, or hierarchy (p. 97). What are these representations? They are inventions, concepts, cognitive, and emotional categories that operate through language, institutions, and belief systems that make us believe they "represent" something that exists, when, in fact, they are epistemic categories (Mignolo, 2021, p. 97).

As Humberto Maturana would say, we do not see what is; we see what we see. As decolonial gnoseological assumptions hold, names and classifications do not refer to what there is but frame what we perceive (Mignolo, 2021, p. 85, 130). In other words, what we see depends on where we are, and we speak from where we stand regarding our social andepistemic locations (Elicor, 2020). As Walter Mignolo famously observed:

Race was an epistemic category regarded as having an ontic status …. due to the confusion in Western epistemology between what one sees and what there is.[So], when "race" is seen as having material existence (ontic) rather than being merely a discursive (logos) topic,the transparency of the discourse (logos) is accepted as merely a "representation" of what is there…."race" is an epistemic category; it is not a representation of what there is but a modulation of what is "seen" and projected into what is "there." In other words, there is not a "reality

to be "represented," but the modulation of what is taken for granted as there…
We do not see what there is; we see what we see (Mignolo,2021, p. 129-130).

Far from being part of the natural world, race, racial knowledge, and representations have less to do with the "reality," its power is in its ability to structure the visibility and invisibility of the seen and unseen; it enables the detriment of others'specific representation of reality. That matters because what one believes about individual bodies will determine what is seen (visibility), how it is seen (empathy or contempt), and how it is understood. Race can become the basis for exclusion; for example, African Americans are not treated differently because of their race; instead, because they are black, they get treated differently. So then, identity is not merely a matter of who you are; equally, it is about who you are not (Brown, 2001).Racial knowledge does the deep cultural work in constructing racial identities.In a bifurcated society,race is also a determinant forwhich populationswill count as rights-bearing subjectswhose lives get safeguarded by the state(Butler, 1999).

As for those whose lives it abandons, it works hard to ensure that the injured are never seen or heard.As Foucault reminds us, knowledge and truth are not independent things but are inextricably related to the exercise of power (Foucault, 1978).This relationship is not simple; knowledge is not independent of power, and power is always a function of knowledge (Foucault, 1978).Foucault argues that the construction of knowledge and power strategies mutually emerges in and through one another (Potts,2011).Truth, according to Foucault, is not a thing in the world; in fact, knowledge and truth get determined by power (Foucault, 1977).

The idea of race, as a modern concept, according to Quijano and Ennis (2000), does not have a known history before the colonization of America. However, what matters is the new historical and social identities it creates. Indians, blacks, mestizos, and those who came from the geographic region of Europe became white (Quijano & Ennis,2000, p. 534). In her book on racialized and gendered bodies in institutions, Nirmal Puwar (2004) states that colonialism is where whiteness comes to be associated with the mind, enlightenment, and scientific knowledge as opposed to ignorance of indigenous knowledge, folklore, and

myths (Kincheloe,1999, p.2). During the colonial period, whiteness became an imperial construction that emerged as a naturalized, universal entity operating as more than a mere ethnic positionality (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 2).

Before its conquest of theAmericas, Europeans were poor people inhabiting the rural peninsula on the western edge of Asia that was of little value to the world economy (Martinot, n.d.). The European conquest of the Americas and the subsequent massive influx of wealth (gold and silver) into the European treasury provided it with the opening into the world's economy and its eventual domination of the trans-Atlantic commerce in agricultural goods and enslaved people(Martinot,n.d, p.2). The accumulation of wealth from their colonies from around the world allowed the English and Dutch to control the shipping trade from the North Atlantic to the east (Martinot, n.d., p.2). The dark side of European success is:

In 200 years, the indigenous population of the Caribbean region,and much of
Mexico and Peru, had been decimated, and the slave trade that replenished it
with Africans had become the most profitable industry in theentire Atlantic
economy. The so-called age of enlightenment opened and flourished with the
dark groans of dark men and women in the unlit holds of ships, carried to a
darker destiny, whilepouring untold wealth into thevaults of Europe. It
shiftedthe center of the world economy to the Atlantic.It was not Europe that
put America on the map. It was the Americas – the land of the Americas, the
seizure and transformation of that land into European property, the destruction
of the societies that had livedon thatland, and the seizure of African people to
be enslaved on that land – thatput Europe on the map (Martinot,n.d., p.2).

II.   Conclusion: Coloniality, Neoliberalism, and Epistemic Violence

Coloniality remains an active, structuring force in the world. One that shapes knowledge systems, forms our subjectivity, and is embedded in our political and socio-economic arrangements. What began with domination through conquest has not been abolished but reconfigured under the regime of neoliberalism. Today, neoliberalism

operates as the political-economic manifestation of coloniality through normalizing market logic and reducing complex social relations to measurable, monetizable units.

Within this knowledge framework, epistemic injustice becomes a mechanism of control in neoliberal coloniality. Under this regime, knowledge that cannot be translated into market value is rendered irrelevant. The struggle is to liberate the cultural field from the grasp of Eurocentric/Western-centric, monocultural universalism, toward a trans-epistemic knowledge paradigm (Mignolo, 2010). The point of this exercise is not to dethrone unprecedented Western contributions to the expansion of human knowledge, but rather to rid it of its domineering universalism in favor of a more progressive, multicultural, and inclusive approach (Mignolo, 2010, p. 11). There is a need for a new sociology of knowledge and a new language that reconnect humans to nature (Mignolo, 2011). We need a knowledge system to help us see that nature and the planet are not just other resources to be exploited and commodified (Mignolo,2011, p. 11). We want a language that allows us once again to talk about nature, not in terms where "nature" exists as a contradistinction to "culture"; as something outside the human subject; instead, as the Amaras and Quechuas people do, seeing themselves in it (Mignolo,2011, p. 11).

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