

Introduction

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From homogeneity to diversities: an ontological and epistemological journey¹

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First of all, we would like to thank everyone who has made this publication possible. The process has involved authors, reviewers, authorities and members of *Diálogos sobre Educación*. As in any collective task, the presence of each one of them is as significant and important as that of everyone else.

In this introduction we have not aimed to summarize the valuable papers that make up this issue of *Diálogos sobre Educación* but to highlight, in particular, those aspects in which their contributions, under the thematic axis “Epistemologies centered in the subject and production of knowledge in Latin America”, address relevant questions, some of them common to all of them but solved in different ways, and appealing to different worldviews, epistemologies, perspectives, methodologies, research problems and research styles.

The article “The Mapuche relational ontology: insights that can be articulated with school knowledge”, by Viviana Villarroel Cárdenas, Carlos Sanhueza-Estay and Segundo Quintriqueo Millán, presents data collected on Mapuche knowledge associated with the person-nature relationship. To fulfill this goal, the authors conducted a descriptive documentary review of scientific, normative, and both local and international divulgation literature. That knowledge, preserved thanks to family and communitarian education, is what the authors seek to safeguard and reclaim *vis-à-vis* the supremacy of Western Eurocentric knowledge. Relational ontology explains the Mapuche worldview and the relationship established between the human, the material, and the immaterial. This contribution is based on the assumption that there is a diversity of Mapuche knowledge about the relationship of people with their territory and with nature that can be articulated with the teaching and learning processes of school education in contexts of social and cultural diversity. What the article seeks, therefore, is to generate contextualized and meaningful learning within intercultural education. This proposal presents an alternative to the school founded on colonialism under a logic of mono-cultural Eurocentric Western thought

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that determines, recognizes and validates a single form of knowledge, shaping a single way to see the world which therefore invisibilizes, rejects, voids other ways of learning about and conceiving reality. Whereas a dualistic and utilitarian character, which separates the person from nature and translates into a severe deterioration of the environment, predominates in such thinking, relational ontology encompasses the immense web of interrelationships and materiality that arises from the relations between the human and the non-human. Thus, a feature of the Mapuche knowledge is that it has been constructed based on a human-non human relationship that articulates with spirituality. It is precisely the territory, nature, and spirituality, which make up a triad that generates a relationship of reciprocity with the environment. For the authors, the dualistic and universal view, which positions the human as a superior being over everything that is non-human, can be transformed through this recognition and spirituality (in the case of this article, that of the Mapuche) in order to turn obstacles into challenges to work through school education with the knowledge of this autochthonous people. Articulating this relational ontology to primary education would allow us to reclaim the autonomy and validity of this knowledge in order to give shape to pertinent and contextualized teaching and learning processes through a dialog between different forms of knowledge.

Milagros Elena Rodríguez, in her article “Transepistemologies of emergent knowledge with transmethods of inquiry”, analyzes transepistemologies of knowledge that emerge in transmethodical inquiries. The transmethod of inquiry is comprehensive, ecosophic and diatopic hermeneutics. Throughout her presentation, the author moves through analytical, empirical, and propositive moments in which the researcher is present with his/her thinking/feeling as the essence of the transmethod. She not only addresses the need of reviewing the validity of the epistemology of scientific knowledge, with its assumptions of superiority and universality, in order to reclaim lay, hidden, forgotten indigenous knowledge, but also proposes going beyond the methods, revealing their colonial nature and safeguarding the researcher in all of his/her experience and subjectivity. The author sees worldwide de-colonialization as an urgency of complexity as transmethodical. Transmethods are therefore decolonized, infused with the theory of complexity. She highlights contributions from the South to worldwide decolonization that include the decolonialization of thinking, dreaming, expressing oneself, constructing, educating, living. The acknowledgement of a global cognitive crisis comes with an appeal to the ecology of knowledge, conceived as the tasks of the mutual encounter and reciprocal dialogue that support the reciprocal fertilization and transformation between knowledge, cultures and practices that fight oppression. This ecology becomes then a justification and urgency for transepistemologies. It is in transepistemologies where there is openness and meaningfulness is restored to the concept of inclusion, which is complex. This inclusion leads to avoid separating forms of knowledge and preeminencies, whatever their origin may be. It is in inclusion where complexity and transdisciplinary work tear down the borders that separate disciplines,

and it is there where the forms of knowledge intervene to achieve richer ways of knowing in order to, free of pre-eminence, make sense through transepistemologies. It is precisely in the transmethods of inquiry where emergent knowledge is interwoven in knowledge without pre-eminence, and for that reason transepistemologies, being worldwide decolonizers, lead to a complexity in acculturized and transculturized communities whose ways of knowing and the validity of them are fully recognized. Transmethods help to safeguard the thinking/feeling, delimiting, re-linking, un-linking with disciplines by conjoining them, undisciplining the disciplines. It is in transmethods where there is an embrace of multiple forms of knowing. As the researcher says, with transepistemologies there is no other knowledge: there are forms of knowing where both recognize and legitimize.

Juvenal Tiberio Corrales Andrade and Sergio Gerardo Málaga Villegas, in "The reality of knowledge through genesthesia and the sense of transcendence", believe that the principles of the notion of genesthesia allow us to articulate the dynamics of an inclusive and potential perception of reality, an awareness of the experience of the encounter with the holistic meaning of the world, but also an experience of its apprehension. The insight they offer is based on an introspective dialog between the experience of intuitive perception itself and that of its retrospective awareness. The authors raise a number of questions, among them why not go beyond – or perhaps behind – a single "legitimized" way of knowing to consider worldviews or ways to perceive and producing knowledge that seem to have been systematically ignored, or what would be the implications of a transcendent vision that focuses its sight not only towards but also from the human, as an expression of his being in the diversity of interactions with the other one and the other (science, teaching and learning processes, and even daily life). They claim that ways to conceive reality are as diverse as the ways to perceive it, and that the characteristics attributed to it are as specific as the multiple sciences, schools of thought and traditions that approach it. Arriving at the Meaning or Being of reality requires, therefore, going beyond the rationally habitual to the genesis of the circumstances in which it is perceived, apprehended and expressed, to the space known here as Genesthesia: an environment of essential wisdom, natural, innate, awareness of the origin, provenance and orientation of knowledge. What has been called genesthesia, say the authors, leads to the observation and perception of expressions of reality by sensitive, emotive, intellectual, intuitive and spiritual means, as if they were of the same nature and level. Thus, the term alludes to that higher state in which the experience leads to an intuitive awareness of a sense of the world, but also to recognize that other levels of knowledge through which reality is expressed and apprehended are involved. The authors share, over and over, questions with opportunities of reflection that invite us to adopt, through genesthesia, a conciliating, inclusive and virtual way of thinking for the development of an emancipating awareness that makes it possible to express the Being in its diversity and complementariness with the other.

The article "Environmental formation: the possibility of being an *other* in the world", by Alicia del Carmen Hernández Villa and Beatriz Olivia Camarena Gómez, belongs to the field of knowledge of research on environmental education for sustainability. The authors agree with the demand of reinforcing environmental formation to support civilizing paradigms in favor of the environment, a task to which all educational institutions are inescapably committed. They propose the category "subject in the process of environmental formation" with the aim of contributing to the theoretical construction of environmental formation. This category is expressed in a constructive and interpretative methodological approach in which the setting for the production of knowledge is defined by the processes that take place within the framework of the concrete subject and the theory. At the same time, such a category implies an epistemological position on the subject who through that process becomes an active expression in the experience. On the one hand, the researchers underscore the urgency of shaping civilizing paradigms centered in the benefit of the natural, social, and human environment, and on the other hand they call attention to the marked absence of a theoretical identity of environmental formation, as this theoretical construction is the condition to advance toward the formation of a subject required by post-modernity.

The results of their inquiry show the difference between the formative and the educational, the direct relationship between formation and environment, the properties of environmental formation as a process in itself, situated in experience, and the "human" that can be modified to be an *other* in the world and produce an effect on it and on himself. According to the data gathered, this being *other* in the world is linked to utopic possibilities of a different and better future since environmental formation, thanks to its continuous and permanent character, binds together past, present and future, shows the process of identity transformation of whoever takes responsibility for and makes a commitment to the fields of action that correspond to them to encourage and/or achieve changes in favor of their natural, social and human environments. Thus, environmental formation has the potential to orient human and collective intentionality towards a new interpretation of the surrounding world, a reinterpretation of *being in the world* as active expression, acts of presence, intentional actions of positioning and valuation in favor of the environment as a whole.

Citlalli Melissa Segura Salazar, Yschel Soto Espinoza, Willelmira Castillejos López and Jessica Badillo Guzmán, the authors of "Indigenous women: experiences and meanings about the university", inquire into *a)* the motives that led female indigenous students to study a major at Universidad Autónoma Chapingo (UACH), *b)* the characteristics of their enrollment in college, *c)* the personal and academic obstacles they found on their journey through the university, and *d)* their personal and professional expectations. Their research is qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, and conducted from a phenomenological perspective. Through in-depth interviews and life stories, the authors analyze the experiences of nine young indigenous female university

students. The researchers point out that few papers have addressed aspects of ethnicity, gender and schooling in higher education, and that indigenous women in college are a social group that, despite its relevance, has remained practically invisibilized and scarcely studied. The interviews show that the financial and welfare support (scholarship, meals, dormitory) provided by Universidad Autónoma Chapingo play a fundamental role in the choice of enrolling at that university, added to motivation of their family and friendship networks to do it. Studying at a university has been a challenge for female indigenous students because of the distance from their families – that adopts different forms – and other historical aspects marked by exclusion and marginalization. The researchers' data show that these students rely on multiple resources to deal with the obstacles along their way, as well as to adapt to the teaching and learning processes. Their personal and academic expectations are also diverse: while some hope to make a contribution to their communities of origin, others want to broaden their education or help their families. As often happens in qualitative research, diversity and difference play an important role in the analysis of experience and the meaning given to that experience by those who participate in the inquiry.

In "Research into Special Education Policy in Argentina (1993-2013): reflections on a methodological and epistemological path", Marina Chaves enunciates the central aspects of her research subject and refers to the studies and intersections that precede it. She analyzes especially studies focused on social sciences and disability, as well as those focused on education and disability. She concludes by reconstructing the different decisions, methodological and epistemological focuses throughout her inquiry. The author elaborates on insights from a doctoral dissertation oriented towards problematizing on a historical-political key the continuities and ruptures of the paradigm of *normality* in Special Education policies in Argentina, particularly in the province of Entre Ríos. Her study problematizes the normative passage of Special Education from a special regime to a modality of the educational system, recovering the voices of the political subjects who at different times and in different instances went through this passage, and also asking a number of questions. As for these political subjects, she seeks to retrieve their experiences of struggle, their emotions, as well as the questions and meanings during that passage. When retrieving and examining both the contributions centered in social sciences and disability and those centered in education and disability, she noticed a common trend to call into question the notion of normality. They all highlight the fact that the lack of recognition linked to disability is founded on discourse, practices and models of cultural values that construe certain categories of social actors as normal and others as abnormal. In this respect, they underscore the struggle for the recognition of the social movements of people with disabilities associated, precisely, to the critique of the paradigm of normality. She proposes a dialog between the contributions of different social sciences as a means of generating theoretical instruments capable of rethinking the notion of recognition in order to promote the

analysis of the struggle of people with disabilities, as well as problematize the way in which they have been recognized in the construction, implementation and evaluation of Special Education policies. Among her conclusions is an emphasis on the potential of social sciences to conduct research on Special Education policies through and with the voices of political subjects in order to construct possible horizons of recognition.

Reading the different texts that make up this issue of *Diálogos sobre Educación* has allowed us to reflect on some aspects in which they coincide and that could make each one of these contributions parts of a whole in which, gathering and honoring the difference between them, they can be linked around two very important issues that are interlinked and are, to a greater or lesser extent, present in each one of the articles: questions and proposals.

The questions that explicitly or implicitly underlie many of the texts orient their presentation and open the way for different proposals. These questions range from the scope of some notions such as, for example, that of “normality”, examining the consequences of its use, to the nature and foundation of the validity of the epistemology of scientific knowledge and its assumptions of superiority and universality.

In this respect, there is also a refutation of the recognition of a single legitimized way of knowing linked to the prevalence of the monocultural Eurocentric Western thought that consequently leads to the presence of forms of knowing, perceiving reality and producing knowledge being repeatedly ignored, resisted, forgotten, banned.

The rejection of these forms of knowing and producing knowledge is the same one that has been suffered by social groups – such as indigenous communities and their members – who have been marked historically, socially, politically and economically by exclusion, marginalization, abandonment, and exploitation.

The questions mentioned above translate into proposals, such as the following: *a)* revising the concepts, notions, assumptions, and theories that usually mediate the process of knowledge, *b)* starting a fruitful and reciprocal dialog between disciplines as well as between forms of knowledge, *c)* promoting the participation of social actors in research processes, *d)* learning more about diversity, *e)* respecting diversity, *f)* articulating the teaching and learning processes of education in contexts of social and cultural diversity, *g)* generating contextualized and significant learning within a framework of intercultural education, reclaiming the autonomy and validity of the knowledge of aboriginal communities and peoples, *h)* recognizing, embracing, considering the worldviews and forms of knowing and producing knowledge that have been regularly expelled, cast out, displaced, set aside, and condemned, *i)* promoting a decolonial education, *j)* contributing to the theoretical construction of environmental formation, and *k)* recovering the linkage between knowledge and the spiritual and between knowledge and spirituality.

Thus, in this publication we hear a polyphony that, in their differences, harmonizes the need to turn the truths of science and public policy into porous spaces so that the greatest va-

riety of voices and perspectives, historically and culturally silenced under a totalizing so-called progress, can find a way in. This need, of immediate ethical consequences, has nevertheless an epistemological origin based on a genuinely scientific – that is, experimental – criterion of validity. The patient and methodical task of recollection, reflection and analysis of the huge variety of ontologies and ways of signifying life, the world, and what is human, represents nothing but the effort to resist and oppose totalitarian positions that try to explain and appropriate the enormous diversity of the human and the world by only paying attention to a limited set of abstract knowledge assumed as true, good, and never called into doubt despite the sad consequences of their implementation.

How long has the world of science been confused with the imposition and the universalization of a way of understanding and signifying the world for and against others? This question, which will very probably brings us face to face with the intimate link between *truth* and *justice* must perhaps change into “How long are we going to put up with this?” understanding, at the same time, that the beginning of the end of such tolerance will denounce – as do the articles that make up this publication, from diverse and unexpected perspectives – the arbitrariness through which the limited and violent nature of the hegemonic Western worldview has sought to monopolize the discourse of science and historical progress.