Review of *Decolonizing Enlightenment. Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World* by Nikita Dhawan (ed.), Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2014, 335 pp., $42.58 (cloth)

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What should be done with the seductive and monstrous weight of colonialism called Modernity? The theoretical project of decolonization which first emerged in 1990s Latin America from the creative space of battles and bets that this question presupposes, seeks to radicalize how we think about ourselves, based on the assumption that all of our official history, our structures of government and language, our collective imagination is a product of our colonial inheritance. This perspective argues that the Enlightenment, an integral part of the European colonial project with "the Man" and reason at its center, acquires the form of an epistemic flag of imperial policy. Throughout the twentieth century, the decolonial project has become part of a vast intellectual repertoire concentrated on contesting violence, ignorance, colonial, imperial and royal regiments as well as the experiences of European/Enlightenment/capitalist origin from the heart of Europe to the so-called Non-West.

It is in the reflection about this encounter and the electric shock between decolonialism and Enlightenment Nikita Dhawan's book gains relevance. *Decolonizing Enlightenment* seeks to offer tools to think – and use – Enlightenment as a repertoire of modification of the global power relationships. A framework of historical, epistemological and philosophical tension of the relationship between (de)colonialism and Enlightenment, understood by the book's organizer as *entangled legacies*, is profiled in the four articles that compose the first part of the book. The authors of these first chapters (Dhawan, Hosteller, Mascat and Castro Varela) focus on the tension between concepts and canonical Enlightenment authors. In their re-reading from a post-structuralist, deconstructivist and post-colonial feminist

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perspective, they create a space from which to access a myriad of authors, positions, tendencies and critical arguments that reorganize the corpus of political theory from the "post-colonies." A brilliant example of the kind of empirical "decolonization" of political theory possible can be found in Jamila Mascat's chapter that shows how Fanon, Céssaire and Glissant (intellectuals from Martinique) would have "cannibalized" Hegel to produce their own line of thought from the "Black Atlantic."

The *entangled legacies* are divided into three fields of analysis, each of which corresponds to the book's sections on transnational justice, human rights and democracy. In each of these, interested readers can find a complete meta-critical reflection from positions declared "de" or post-colonial/post-structural and feminist for each of the specific fields. The section dedicated to transnational justice begins with the historical participation of African-American Mary Church Terrell in the 1904 International Women's Congress in Berlin (Hamman). In this section, the link between feminisms, racial politics, and theories of subalternity and coloniality gain relevance. The authors' goals are to think about theoretical possibilities for constructing new principles and mechanisms of global "justice" that would permit the reconfiguration of the structural asymmetry between dispensers and receivers of justice from perspectives that are neither masculinist nor Eurocentric (Hamman, Kargupta, Heier, Millan & Yildirim).

In section three, which focuses on human rights, the authors dive into the production of justice and the law in the global colonial and post-colonial arena from the disciplinary perspectives of history and international relations. An analysis of the imperial, colonial, Enlightenment and gradually "modernizing" definition of "human" occupies an especially important place in the historical field, where it was defined in terms of gender, race, use of reason, obedience to the law, religious configurations and the productive use of land and property – its universalizing principle and political expansion tied to the idea of law/civilization/modernity (Suárez-Krabbe, Schacherreiter). This historical construction of humanity, of rights and the distribution of justice are correlated with the contemporary and transnational forms through which

human rights discourses operate in relationship to international courts and with the uses of sovereignty and cultural relativism discourses (Zhang, Cowell).

The final section of the book, composed of three chapters, focuses on the theme of democracy. In it, the authors (Ossome, Kumar, Zafer & Millan) take on the challenge of thinking about possibilities for democratic projects within the "de" and post-colonial deconstructions framework while also taking into account the strong historical and epistemic marks that such a project holds in history and the contemporary reproduction of violence and colonial inequalities. At some points in the authors' analyses, "democracy" is clearly unable to escape the economic, political and administrative structures of the colonial/capitalist project, being left with only a minimal space for liberal "negotiations". In other analyses of empirical cases, that are more proactive than descriptive, the possibilities for expanding the democratic project come from "pedagogic strategies", resistances and the "consensuses" between particularisms and universalisms.

In this sense, *Decolonizing Enlightenment* is a very useful resource for those who, especially in countries in the Anglophone North, want to familiarize themselves with the authors, discussions, conflicts, possibilities and limits of subaltern, "de" and post-colonial feminist theories in relationship to the Enlightenment hegemony. It is important to highlight that the book's disciplinary approach is primarily from the study of political ideas, international relations, philosophy, and law "from a post-colonial feminist perspective" (p. 10).

Within the collection, two ideas particularly stand out. The first is the idea of "paradox", evoked in diverse ways and in diverse moments to imagine how despite all of the post-colonial deconstructivist and post-structuralist critiques, Enlightenment/modernity might be the basis for conditions that make critical action and thought about the world possible (pp. 66-69) – but which thought, and which actions for what worlds? As such, the book is engaged "with the contradictory consequences of the Enlightenment for the postcolonial world" (p. 9). The second idea involves the pragmatic political hypothesis, expressed in diverse ways, that the

"Master's tools" could potentially expand democratic participation and strengthen powers "from below" in a way and form that would favor decolonial or "social change" processes. This second idea is exactly what provides the book's name and objective.

However, despite the apparent unity, the book features an important diversity of paths of analysis and positions - an entire argumentative arsenal - to confront the question of what to do with the Enlightenment legacies. One of the volume's richest qualities is exactly this; despite it having unifying questions (a decolonial criticism of Enlightenment principles) and widely read authors— Spivak, Foucault, Derrida, Chakrabanty, Fanon, in addition to those who are considered decolonial theorists such Quijano, Dussel, Lugones, Mignolo, among others— the authors' projects do not necessarily coincide, and even find themselves in direct tension. The collection offers positions that go from a frank and irreconcilable criticism made in an "against-Europe" spirit, to positions more interested in enlightening decolonization than decolonizing Enlightenment, passing through the cannibalism of Césaire (named this way by his wife and poet), the liberalism of Benhabib, the super-used Spivakian "ab-use", sabotage and "reconfiguration/negotiation."

In fact, while in some of the chapters there is a clearly defined criticism of the more romantic versions of decolonial proposals— that, among other things, naturalize the origin of evil, violence and injustice as products of the European colonial project— in others it is possible to perceive the foundational "paradox" of the relationship between decolonialization/Enlightenment coming apart. This movement evidences the violence and global inequalities that persist as an effect, that is not at all paradoxical, of Enlightenment principles that remain firmly tethered to the form of its *critical* matrix. This effect risks updating itself in intellectual efforts to be an Enlightenment thinker today, thereby producing the "paradox" and sustaining the inevitability of Enlightenment as a foundational myth of democracy, law, reason, and criticism.

In this sense, studies of cultural history as well as social anthropology, especially those produced in the global south and engaged with a situated, ethnographic, and long term understanding of the logics, economies and forms of local thought, can assist in completing the rich panorama offered by *Decolonizing Enlightenment*. What are the forms of thought, criticism, government and power that emerge in peasant, mining and Indigenous communities in Latin America, or of female prostitutes or young people in the peripheries of cities that are profoundly and currently colonial? Anthropological projects such as the classic *Savage Mind* (Levi-Strauss, 1962), the "indigenization of modernity" (Sahlins, 1999), or the more contemporary and Amazon Ameríndio "perspectivism/multinaturalism" (Viveiros de Castro, 2002; 2015), serve as an interesting counterpoint to postcolonial critical theory. On the other hand, it is important to take into consideration the already extensive work of recuperation and reflection of "feminist thoughts of non-occidental basis" (Gargallo, 2012) in dialogue with the post-colonialities and post-modernities to think that, perhaps, paraphrasing Bruno Latour (1994), we have never been enlightened.

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