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Sensible Thought, Coexistence, and the Revolutionary Impulse to Love

Pensamiento sensible, convivencia y el impulso revolucionario de amar

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RESUMEN

Este ensayo ubica el concepto de sentido pensante o sensible "thought" dentro de los recientes acontecimientos históricos de la pandemia de coronavirus para plantear la pregunta sobre los sistemas de producción de la epistemología. Invita al lector, ante la insistencia de Raúl Fonet Betancourt, a indagar con incisividad en nuestra actual realidad enmascarada de consentimiento fabricado, a cultivar la convivencia, y a abrir espacio a una trinchera de ideas para el florecimiento de un amor revolucionario en nuestro tiempo.

Palabras clave: agonismo; amor; convivencia; epistemología; tecnocracia.

ABSTRACT

This essay locates the concept of sentido pensante or sensible thought within the recent historical events of the coronavirus pandemic to ask the question on the systems of production of epistemology. It invites the reader, at the insistence of Raúl Fonet Betancourt, to incisively investigate our current masked reality of manufactured consent, to cultivate convivencia, and to make room akin to a trench of ideas for the flourishing of a revolutionary love in our time.

Keywords: agosnim; coexistence; epistemology; love; technocracy.

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INTRODUCTION

“The question of what we consent to when we understand and affirm ourselves as “producers of knowledge,” “owners of knowledge,” or “transmitters of knowledge” must be asked. What state of affairs do we attest to in ourselves and in the world, when we appropriate the knowledge that is available today? And to what forms of knowledge or of knowing, are we unable to give our consent? These questions, I believe should be a part of our task today. In the context of epistemological violence, we should ask about what we want to know. We must ask how, with whom, when, and for what purpose we want to know what we should know” (Fornet-Betancourt: 2013, p. 44).

Most of us are aware that our consent “to be governed” can be manufactured particularly by the mass media without there being overt signs of coercion. Under the guise of neutrality and objectivity, even the inclusion of scientific data, and by a continuous influx of information, consent can be systematically puppeteered by corporations. In Clockwork Orange style, the human will slowly surrenders when the mind becomes fatigued by the constant flows of information (especially via violence to produce fear). An orchestrated effort to manipulate all means of communication, including the private spheres of family and friends, produces obedience. As Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky have argued, for example, the market gives shape to opinions and gains control over governments and media outlets via contributions, donations, and advertising (Herman y Chomsky, 1988). It sinisterly acquires authority and becomes a producer and gatekeeper of information that appears unquestionable.

With the pressing situation of the coronavirus (COVID 19) and handling of information, there has been a move towards suppressing dissent. Measures imposed on populations rise to the level of “the unquestionable” since consent appears sensible and communitarian (e.g., masking, isolation, and now vaccination). Amid this epistemological dilemma, Raúl Fornet-Betancourt has sounded the alarm. He judiciously calls for an intellectual rigor that questions the unquestionable, “the epistemological violence” that is afoot via the spread of “scientific-based” information.

How to assess the shape opinions take when manufactured by agents of control of information? When the laws put in place to provide safety and ensure global health could be also guided by the sinister authority of the market economy? According to Fornet-Betancourt, answers can be found in Plato’s well-known Allegory of the Cave. Parallels exist between the projection of images on the wall and the corporate puppeteering over governments and health agencies intended to control human consciousness and social consent to be governed.

I am referring to the brief article of Fornet-Betancourt titled “Cautivos de las sombras?” where he compels us to question the masking of reality and to take steps towards creating a truly sensible reality. Here he compares the current reality with Plato’s Allegory of the Cave and states that:

Recalling the well-known allegory of the cave, narrated by Plato in his work *The Republic* - which significantly bears the subtitle “or of justice” - the emphasis I have highlighted on the help that, in my opinion, philosophy should provide in our situation can be summed up in the following sentence: To let see through the shadows of the hegemonic world the light of freedom that is born from the discovery and acceptance of what gives truth and full meaning to life (good and justice), so that today’s man is encouraged to leave the cave in which he is the captive of his own civilized obfuscation (Fornet-Betancourt: 2020, p. 2).

The challenge before us, therefore, is the location of the knowing subject as an assessor of places of truth that shine forth light through ideas in order to overcome the technocratization of human relations. One cannot help but to recall a similar warning made by Walter Mignolo on how the technological revolution has created a new type of knowing subject bound to a limited set of technological options from which to choose. These

are “packaged options” which favor the minority with the “privilege and the benefit” that can guarantee not only their enjoyment, but also their covert demands for submission (Mignolo, 2011).

For Mignolo also, one major sector is the pharmaceutical industry that has maintained a powerful grip on humanity’s sources of knowledge. Corporations have overtaken the health sector, as he explains, via the displacement of eugenics with biotechnology (Mignolo: 2011, p. 14). So now the focus is on the healthy minority that “have been converted into ‘consumer entrepreneurs’ of their own health by the uses of biotechnology complicit with pharmacology” (Mignolo: 2011, p. 14). With a technocracy of biotechnology in place and as citizens become health-consumers, the corporate world can exercise control over bodies. The “politics of life itself” becomes a byproduct of what he calls the “medical mafia” (Mignolo: 2011, p.14). On this one cannot avoid recognizing that *farmakos* is not only meant for healing, but also depends on poison and makes use of sacrifice.

So this article, in agreement with Fernet-Betancourt, challenges the manufacturing of consent via constructs of reality elided of an intellectual body that questions the technocratic powers. Being incapable of exploring diverse ideas, society also tends to suppress dissent, which perpetuates the vicious cycle of parroted ideals. So to further elaborate on how sensible knowledge can emerge even from systems of technocratic control, I place the views of Fernet-Betancourt within the broader discourse on the meaning of reality as profoundly argued in the works of Ignacio Ellacuría and Jose Martí, two thinkers that Fernet-Betancourt draws from in his analogies to Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*. I do so, to expound on the critique to reality given shape by the current situation that has been emerging from the dominant narrative on the pandemic of COVID 19 and offer responses to this global crisis of knowledge.

BOUND WITHIN THE CAVE OF PLATO’S ALLEGORY

To enter the cavernous reality that has been confronting us these past few years and to reflect as members of an intellectual community that places itself at the margins of dominant discourse, one must first review some key principles of the Platonic cave. The allegory of the cave in Plato’s *Republic* (514a–520a) is an allegory of human life that portrays the exit out of a dark cave as an arduous ascent towards the bedazzling sun. While primarily narrated through a third person, the story is told as if being perceived by the eyes of one who has been enslaved then set free from the shackles of a world of shadows. The once prisoner confined within an underground and cavernous chamber becomes progressively aware of the nature of shapes and sounds as his eyes and ears slowly adjust to the immediate surroundings. The once prisoner becomes progressively adept at identifying the true form of the figures outside the walls of the cave as well as the sources of illumination, from minor to major, culminating with the sun.

With regards to our present reality given shape by the COVID 19 pandemic, what can the cave be illustrative of? The world of shadows or manufactured opinions puppeteered by the producers of consent? Perhaps could it also be the bedazzling light of a “scientific based” informational flow that blinds the intellect? If both, how to confront both manufacturing systems of control of knowledge?

This allegory can represent freedom from oppression insofar as it points to processes of awakening to and embodying possibilities for questioning the unquestionable. On the one hand, therefore, the allegory points to liberation from structures bent on producing a prefabricated *habitus* or habitual patterns of social behavior. For Plato, the movement and shapes of shadows projected unto the wall of the cave and the echoes of voices and sounds bouncing within the cavernous chamber are but an illusion, “foolish phantoms,” while the *real* world unfolds before the eyes of the freed prisoner who slowly turns towards the light and steps outside the cave (515-516a). Progressively, the freed prisoner becomes skillful at identifying the objects he perceives in the *upper world* in comparison with the cavernous shadows and sounds.

So, the allegory calls for the perception of structures of social conditioning that produce the kind of knowledge to which all should submit as a first step in creating new *habits*. In our contemporary situation, the media, including the news syndicates and advertisement, similarly can be assessed regarding the creation of

a warped sense of reality. Accordingly, in becoming adept at identifying the production of opinions one could also cultivate the skill of thinking otherwise, meaning, thinking the unthinkable. Such awakening can be described as arising from desire, for the allegory speaks of “a faculty residing in the soul of each person, and an instrument enabling each of us to learn” that connotes inward movement towards liberative and flourishing conditions (517d-518c).

In this allegory also the descent into the cave is a significant step towards concretizing a disavowal of structures that prefabricate reality and instantiate oppression. The return to the cavernous chamber symbolizes the development of a capacity to identify one’s oppressive/oppressed mindset as well as an impulse to transform realities of bondage. Especially, the allegory can offer a sharp rebuke to current state practices that thrive by creating a regime of terror by which to keep citizens in check and under the fist of totalitarian and draconian measures.

On the other hand, however, as with Platonic idealism, the allegory of the cave also portrays reality as an opposite of illusion, particularly, in contradistinction with the world of flesh. For instance, the outward journey to the upper region—the original source of light, the sun—represents an ascent of the soul into “the intellectual region.” For the true source and aim of contemplation on “all that is bright and beautiful” can easily dispense “immediately and with full authority, truth and reason” that sets the paradigm for wise actions privately and publicly (516e-517d). If the encountered with the sun parallels the efficacy of dispensing scientifically based knowledge “for the sake of knowledge of what externally exists, and not what comes for a moment into existence and then perishes,” then all source of deliverance would be deemed unquestionable and the learning experience ends there.

At this juncture, Mignolo’s analysis of the “zero point epistemology” can helpfully assist in understanding the technocratic impulse behind a Neoplatonic concept such as the upper world (outside the cave). He refers to this zero point as “the ultimate grounding of knowledge, which paradoxically is ungrounded, or grounded neither in geo-historical location nor in bio-graphical configurations of bodies” (Mignolo: 2011, p. 79). The similarities are striking in that as he further argues, a zero point epistemology, while being always present, “hides its own local knowledge universally projected” and manages “the universality to which everyone has to submit” (Mignolo: 2011, p. 80). An example of zero point epistemology, for him, is Adam Schmidt’s book *The Nomos of the Earth*. It firmly proposes the establishment of an international law that lacks consideration of its effects for peoples of Africa and Latin America. His hope, similar to Fernet-Betancourt’s, lies in that a zero point epistemology “shall be recognized in its splendors, it shall be recognized in its miseries and arrogance” (Mignolo: 2011, p. 81).

For the above reasons, can one place one’s safety solely on the reality exterior to the cave? What if, rather than a space for the free flow of ideas, what we encounter is a “zero point epistemology” or a bedazzling totality that suppresses inquiry instead? If truth is not founded in concrete and embodied reality, but solely in the world of Reason mostly ascribed to the mind, very little room is also left for a wise assessment of on-the-ground experiences of reality.

My suspicion is that Fernet-Betancourt does not ask the question of epistemological violence purely from neither side of this platonic duality. So, the way forward into the quandary of knowledgeable consent does not lie in the dematerialized forms of perception but rather in the need to disrupt the doctrine of separation of powers that results in surrendering one’s capacity to think and one’s desires to be freed from the shackles of authoritarianism. The blinding light of the empirical and rational sun, if eclipsing personal inquiry via bedazzlement, can easily overpower intuitions and unique desires. The effects, especially when prolonged, can enforce behavioral patterns that readily yield to dominance. In such instances, the byproduct of a sun’s rays of light is as much an act of imposture as a cave’s shadows that often establish and maintain a status of superiority by means of mental exhaustion—the surrender or enslavement of all intuitive desire.

Similarly, the phenomenologically *real* must account for modes of freedom from imperializing ideals that would expose even those clothed with an empirical garb. While a materiality can verify a significant amount of truth, images that have been imposed as types of social worship (idol) can be revoked within human consciousness also through human intuition—keen sense based also on what is desired. And even when

undoubtedly “life determines consciousness” (Marx y Engels: 1982, p. 75) contrary to what Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argue, consciousness, even more, unconsciousness, can also aid in determining life. In particular, when pursuing authenticity in the construction of subjectivities, the subjective experience itself can be a source of transformation. How else would the deprived perceive that which appears to be readily at hand?

THE SENSIBLE THOUGHT

Based on the above inquiry on Plato’s allegory, Fernet-Betancourt’s call for us to reflect on the production of knowledge requires careful analysis. To begin with, his use of two seemingly paradoxical intertwining terms, *sentido* (sense) and *pensar* (to think), integral to his phrase *sentido pensante* or sensible thought, holds the key to his understanding of reality.

The term *sentido* in Spanish is associated with *sentir* (feeling), which meaning derives from the senses and the physical world via a combination of external and internal stimuli. Another aspect of it is the capacity to recognize and judge the surrounding reality that one has. By exercising *sentido*, one gives meaning to existence (*razón de ser*) and to one’s ways of relating to the environment or world.

Pensar similarly connotes the use of judgement in arriving at opinions and intentions that can result in action as well as to the capacity to combine ideas. Here I want to highlight the importance of integrating deep feeling, as in the *feelings* that come from one’s entrails (Gk. *splanchna*) into the judgment of complex *ideas*, including perspectives different from epistemologies that appear to be unquestionable.

I focus on these two aspects, for in doing so, one can ascribe feeling to truthful forms of knowledge, hence beyond Plato’s views on the Real. Take for instance, an analysis on how *pensar* depends on *sentido* from an Ellacurian perspective. Ignacio Ellacuría, one of Fernet-Betancourt’s foundational thinkers, proposes that intelligence is biological and points to *sentience*, hence *sentir* and *ideas* are not contraries, but rather paint a picture of a reality that is already defined by its *placeness* or incarnation. Meaning, *bodies* and *placeness* (rather than solely an abstract set of ideas) assume kindred roles.

On the part of the human who seeks to exercise her *sentido pensante*, she would be not only apprehending reality, as if reality was inert, but would also be confronted by the real things in her reality. For Ellacuría, this would be a threefold dimension of reality. The knowing subject is “in the reality of things” hence being *weighted* by reality, shoulders reality since it is too impossible to evade, and assumes such a burden by acting on a commitment to respond to reality¹. For this reason, for Ellacuría, awareness or contemplation of reality leads to action or praxis since intelligence and apprehension can result in an ethical stance from which praxis emerges. Since *sentido pensante* corresponds with placing oneself within the ambit of responsibility and ethical action for what is known, the knowing subject is likewise the human who makes history by altering reality.

This form of intelligence as embodied and grounded interrogate placeness regarding the marginalization of knowledges since sensible thought involves discernment. Intuitions put to good use can result in judgments that are deeply felt when carefully scrutinizing reality. These could emerge as emotions, even as dark moods such as melancholy and angst. They can point to a reality gone awry and, as in the case of technocracies, that continuously clash with the gut-knowledge (*vientre*). It can manifest itself as an emotional *insurrection* that while deemed inferior and perhaps suppressed can be embodied in the form of *sentido*.

Oppression of ideas thrive within totalities that obliterate differences. Technocracies benefit when enslaved minds and bodies come under their service. Thus, this form of *sentir* can be at odds with the production of *techne* and disciplining of the mind: conditioning towards the production of a civilized society

¹ See Ignacio Ellacuría, “Hacia una fundación filosófica del método teológico latinoamericano,” in E. Ruiz Maldonado, ed. *Liberación y cautiverio: debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina*, las comunicaciones y los debates del Encuentro Latinoamericano de Teología, Mexico City (August 11-15, 1975), 626.

and citizenry, education systems that are purely external, and dominant webs of information. As stated above, knowledge purchased by the pharmaceutical enterprise offers an example of the benefit of systemic enslavement of bodies and minds. Submission is reinforced by powerful forces employed to exercise control through biotechnologies.

For this reason, the tension that the term *sentido pensante* holds must not be too simplistically untangled as if ascribing to an abstracted metaphysical reality in one's understanding of knowledge. For in the first instance, Fernet-Betancourt is calling us to locate ourselves in the concrete reality and the realm of feelings, and on the other, to grasp transcendence within this reality and to birth reality through ideas and the realm of thought. For this reason, it is not pure coincidence that he explicitly refers to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, while implicitly interlacing a dark interiority with sunlit exteriority according to an agonistic bond of seeming contradictions.

AGONISM

The *disciplining of the sensible* as instrument being used via structures of isolation and deprivation of human relations must therefore be questioned. The here and now provokes an inquiry on the *lack of sense* (numbness and perhaps apathy) that overrides any fruitful intuition and perspective of a civilization guided by true human touch and genuine exchange of ideas. Due to the deprivation of placeness of the self, particularly, because isolation prevents the kind of knowledge that assumes shouldering reality, there is no burden and no commitment for being in solidarity with peoples of diverse cultural and ideological backgrounds. Considering such human deprivation and technocratic control (if not torture), no wonder entire populations have consented "to be governed" under such extreme conditions that hold captive their *libre albedrío* (freedom to reflect, deliberate, to choose, and act in solidarity with others).

For Fernet-Betancourt, reality itself is being masked. In other words, a symbolic order of a masked existence is exemplified in the various state *mandates* used to hide the oppressions produced by the market. So, an imposed restriction established as a prevention of the infectious spread can serve as a symbol of how the production of capital operates in society in the form of disguise—as a benevolent savior. Particularly, places of truth in the world can be buried underneath a façade of wellbeing paid by the high price of silencing dissent. For him, the facial masks with their covering over the mouth serve as a symbol for "the mask that falls over the world and converts it as a cave." (Fernet-Betancourt: 2020, p. 2). The main point at hand is the symbolism of it and how to find places of truth when differences are over shadowed and held captive as in a cave.

Such disciplining corresponds with the colonial enterprise and its suppression of "epistemological plurality" which, especially since the colonial period, has sought to preserve control over forms of knowledge (Fernet-Betancourt: 2013, p. 29). If all knowledge can become the same, meaning *one*, then all cognitive diversity can be held captive or *masked*, if not eradicated. Peoples can be stripped of their "epistemological dignity" and be violently controlled by the mechanization and industrialization of the human senses and thought (Fernet-Betancourt: 2013, p. 31). What is gained by occluding meanings of "the world as nature" and of "the organic relationship with it as an infinite connection of relations?" (Fernet-Betancourt: 2013, p. 40). Isolation can result in fear of the other and lack of touch which is major as source for overcoming fear.

For this reason, one call is to reflect on the *place* particularly of the academic intellectual as the *place* where thought can ground itself and emerge as an embodiment of *convivencia*. Meaning, the locus of *sentido pensante* is that of human touch conducive for philosophical and theological reflection. *Convivencia* is not the same as uniformity. Rather, it is essential to incarnating a concrete totality or unified whole by making room for differing views and for an interexchange of selves in the process of deliberation. To draw from Ellacuría, reality is "intramundane" and "*constitutes a single physical unity that is complex and differentiated in such a way that the unity does not nullify the differences and the differences do not nullify the unity*" (Ellacuría: 1981, p. 54). So even "contradictions, oppositions, and negations" are not obliterated for the sake of the unified

totality. For each of the “differences” are intrinsically constituted by one another, hence they are relational (not atomistic) and contribute to the dynamism, process, and change of an intramundane reality.

With regards to knowledge arising from a totality of which differences are not subsidiary but rather intrinsic, Fernet-Betancourt defines knowledge as a “thinking that is conscious of what it thinks and knows, as the object of its knowing.” (Fernet-Betancourt: 2013, p. 29). This knowledge does not emerge in isolation, but rather as a “knowledge cultures” that arrives at truth via “reasoned arguments” (Fernet-Betancourt: 2013, p. 29). To know consciously the object of one’s knowing refers to “constellations of knowledges” or “social formations” created through the use of various modalities of knowing, the overlapping of experiences, and via movement, communication, and “mutual complementarity with others” (Fernet-Betancourt: 2013, p. 30). Meaning, knowing is a process that depends on many ways of knowing, which if applied to the concept of *sentido pensante*, points to the multiple ways of arriving at truth, a truth that is not singular nor the same.

Processes of “cognitive interchange” can re-contextualize the constellations of knowledge, assess the epistemic violence, revise the relations marginalized by the dominant constellation, and activate epistemological plurality. For this, access to plural forms of knowledge must be opened so that the networks of relations upon which we depend for the overlapping of experiences and mutual exchange can lead to *convivencia*. Rather than becoming superheroes as individuals or falling into despair due to desolation, *convivencia* can promote the natural rhythm of human reflection and deliberation found in internal and external sources of life and of disobedience to technocratic strictures of socialization. Rather than knowledge becoming an instrument of social power, in particular, of the making of capital that benefits the very few, un *sentido pensante* can nurture the human organic connection to the strings of wisdom and cosmic connectivity.

REVOLUTIONARY LOVE

Per the insights of Fernet-Betancourt, another option is to defy the entrenchment of ideas by entering the trench of ideas itself, what Jose Martí calls the *trincheras de ideas* as the organizing principle of revolutionary thinking and feeling. The very trench created by the wounding and isolating systems of control of knowledge can be the spaces for an agonistic analysis of epistemological violence. The liminality of the trench as the locus for shouldering reality makes way for acting on a commitment of communal wellbeing that does not abrogate intellectual and sensible thinking vital in the exchange of differing voices. It is real in that it welcomes logic and reason while concretizes bodily sense of perception that is being deeply felt.

From World War I (1914-1918), one can draw from the metaphor of trenches to reconceptualize our divided reality. Trenches were dug so that those engaged in the struggle could protect themselves from their enemy forces. *La trincheras*, as I presumed Martí viewed it, is a transformative *placeness*. For the divided line becomes the *place* suitable for a close engagement of ideas rather than for seclusion and sheltering oneself against a foe. Also, while originally meant for face-to-face combat, rather than today’s technological advancement of remote forms of embattlement, the trench is meant for an *agonism* of seeming opposites.

Agonism differs from face-to-face combat in that placeness welcomes active forms of mutual listening and of collaborative creation of solutions. Agonizing over multiple views in the deliberation and exchange of ideas also minimizes reductionism as well as compromise—both forms which caricaturize differences.

Marginalization can be addressed and can be overthrown when entering spaces that split populations and divide them into ideological camps. Lastly, by widening options that arise from differing opinions, there can be a greater chance for freeing the human will. By implication, for the progress of a reality founded on democratic participation in its approach to transformation, dissent within the trench can be a tool of negotiation against the epistemological violence set forth by technocratic biotechnologies aiming at controlling intellectual exchange and the bodily occupation of spaces.

But listening and engaging differing ideas would not be enough to transform reality and make history. The concept of the *trincheras*, in comparison with some of Martí’s statements in his excursus on *trincheras de ideas*,

arises from within a historical backdrop of the movements of independence in Latin America, in particular, from within the Cuban revolution. Implicitly, Fornet-Betancourt, as a Cuban philosopher, also locates his thinking within a revolutionary discourse that is historically located and relevant. His stance is meant for the engagement of revolutionary ideas with which to transform realities of enslavement.

We are called, therefore, to enter the *warfare* of oppressive ideologies. The warfare against oppression focuses on the root issue of epistemological violence for revolutionary thought cannot be indifferent to the plight of the oppressed. So, the warfare is meant as a struggle-with the “silenced masses of indigenous peoples, the noise of the struggle between the book and the candlestick, over the bloodied arms of hundreds of apostles” (Martí: 1972, p. 11).

The inspiration and passion for justice rests on love which for Martí is “the only truth of life and the only strength” (Martí: 1972, p. 13). Without love, the struggle for justice cannot continue. For love sets justice free of categories that seek to limit it (e.g., people groups, time in history). Furthermore, the task only ends when there is no trace of injustice in our reality. The purpose is the transformation of a world bound by oppressive systems for “just as the brute stone shines after many blows, so does the people attain a prosperous life after suffering the onslaught of the revolution” (Martí: 1972, p. 13). For these reasons, the call remains for a trench of ideas more so than of stones. Ideas that are honorable and generous can purify reality. Like trees, they can grow roots in the soil and prosper. A revolutionary love in the pursuit of justice can triumph.

So why enter the trench of ideas? Simply put, for the sake of a freedom grounded in being-with and agonizing with one another. The locus of revolutionary thought aims at attaining freedom which guarantees are no other than an enduring love in the pursuit of justice. And since the flourishing of existence depends upon a loving justice, one must take an interest in restoring and propagating freedom whenever and wherever it has been denied. Meaning, one must overcome indifference and apathy, and explore the possibility of revolutionizing thought so that freedom can take root and grow in and through human consciousness and the social imaginary.

To capture the true essence of Martinian thought in Fornet-Betancourt, several statements are worth including in Spanish along with their translation:²

Todo hombre de justicia y honor pelea por la libertad donde quiera que la vea ofendida, porque eso es pelear por su entereza de hombre: y el que le ve la libertad ofendida y no pelea por ella, o ayuda a los que la ofenden, no es hombre entero. (Every man of justice and honor fights for liberty wherever he sees it being offended, because it means to fight for the whole man: and the one who sees liberty being offended and does not fight for it, or helps those who offend liberty, is not a whole human.)

La libertad cuesta muy cara, y es necesario, o resignarse a vivir sin ella, o decidirse a comprarla por su precio. (Freedom has a high price, and it is necessary, either to resign oneself to live without it, or to purchase at a high price.)

El mundo tiene dos campos: todos los que aborrecen la libertad, porque solo la quieren para si, estan en uno; los que aman la libertad y la quieren para todos, estan en otro. (The world has two camps: those who abhor freedom, because they want it only for themselves, are in one camp; those who love freedom and want it for everyone, are in the other.)

El vil no es el esclavo, ni el que lo ha sido, sino el que vio el crimen, y no jura, ante el tribunal certero que preside en las sombras, hasta sacar del mundo la esclavitud y sus huellas. (Vileness is not the enslaved, nor the one who has been a slave, but in the one who witnesses the crime, and does not swear before the tribunal of certainty that presides over the shadows, until slavery and its trace is uprooted from the world) (Martí: 1972, p. 38).

The call of Fornet-Betancourt to join this struggle might seem subtle. But in drawing from Martí the appeal clearly demands careful thinking, feeling, and action. Freedom for everyone even when it might demand taking an unpopular stance is worth the struggle. In such places that provide truth amid structures of repression of

² Translation is mine.

freedom to reflect on reality and revolutionize epistemological violence, life and survival are interwoven. There is where the *sensibilidad pensante* (sensible thinking) locates itself since it is rooted in the *sobrevivir* or survival of the people, which literally translates as “living above” in the sense of overcoming constricting circumstances. This concept of survival for Fernet-Betancourt points to places that incarnate truth and that can provide freedom in the here and now.

AFTER THOUGHTS

So where do we go from here? How to consent freely after scrutinizing the producers of knowledge? Intellectual life in the here and now might make room once more for the gut-level impulse to be proximate, not so that individualizing freedoms are upheld, but so that freedom to dissent, deliberate, to choose, and to arrive at comprehensive options—true democratic processes—can be restored.

Interestingly, we are facing a period in history in which without *convivencia* and revolutionary love, the foundations of our consent could remain bound to structures of slavery. Fernet-Betancourt’s appeals to a “compassionate reason” are vital in counteracting the radical desolation that we are witnessing today. Rather than blindly supporting isolating and exclusionary measures put in place due to the COVID 19 pandemic, why not create spaces for *convivencia*? Why not make room for a revolutionary love? As Ellacuría puts it, the simple truth is that “love produces hope, and great love produces great hope.”³

Without asking “how, with whom, when, and for what purpose we want to know what we should know” (Betancourt: 2013, p. 44), eventually, humanity can lose its capacity to question the status quo and the will to set itself free from the shackles of dehumanizing structures. Indeed, there is a dimension of potentiality, yet within this world reality, needed to bring about newness and transformation in one’s existence. One way for such newness to become incarnate is in the exchange of differing viewpoints and systems of information intended to overcome indifference and to take stance for the freedom of everyone.

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³ See Kevin F. Burke, “Ignacio Ellacuría: The Love that produces Hope,” *Budhi* 3 (1997), 79; direct quote from Ellacuría.

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