



THE PARADOXES OF THE CONTEMPORANEITY BETWEEN CONFLUENCES AND RESONANCES

LAS PARADOJAS DE LO CONTEMPORÁNEO ENTRE CONFLUENCIAS Y RESONANCIAS

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This paper investigates the contemporaneity as a turning point in the politics of time. We are particularly interested in the political and epistemic dimensions that the fracture of the present brings and some of its contradictions, as highlighted, among others, by the Argentine María Inés Mudrovcic, the Dutch Johannes Fabian and the Belgian Berber Bevernage, which are reviewed first. We begin by characterizing the challenges involving the politics of time and then we critically observe two radically different responses to the injunctions of the contemporaneity: those by Hartmut Rosa, and his view of resonance, and those by Antônio Bispo and his notions of confluence and *transfluencia*. This is not about comparing the thoughts conducted by the German philosopher and the Brazilian *quilombola* leader. It seems to us, however, that each one affirms ways of belonging to the world that respond to the “experiential asymmetry” of the contemporaneity.

Key words: Contemporaneity, contemporary, confluences, resonances.

Este artículo examina la contemporaneidad como punto de inflexión en la política del tiempo. Interesan especialmente las dimensiones políticas y epistémicas que engendra la fractura del presente, así como algunas de sus contradicciones, como ponen de relieve las reflexiones de la argentina María Inés Mudrovcic, el holandés Johannes Fabian y el belga Berber Bevernage, que se revisan en primer lugar. Empezamos por caracterizar los retos que plantea la política del tiempo, y luego examinamos críticamente dos respuestas radicalmente diferentes a los mandatos de la contemporaneidad: las de Hartmut Rosa, en su noción de resonancia, y las de Antônio Bispo y sus nociones de confluencia y transfluencia. No es nuestra intención comparar las ideas desarrolladas por el filósofo alemán y el líder quilombola brasileño. Nos parece que cada uno de ellos afirma formas de pertenencia al mundo que responden a la “asimetría experiencial” de la contemporaneidad.

Palabras claves: contemporaneidad, contemporáneo, confluencia, resonancia.

The usual understanding of the term contemporaneity refers to temporal coexistence. In this sense, as a category of historical time, but not confused with it, the contemporaneity aims to project a totalizing notion of experience in time in each present, neglecting the diverse temporalities that permeate it (Heidegger 2015). Thus, the most common understanding of contemporaneity stipulates a historical time of a unified present, in which temporal disjunction is transformed into unity: my contemporary is the one who lives in the same time as me. Ordinarily, the contemporary is routinely given the possibility of existence in coexistence, presence in co-presence in space-time, in a relationship of coevalness, as long as the cultural experience is *the same*. Otherwise, societies, groups and people are named as displaced, in another time.

Although commonplace, this understanding of the contemporary is neither uncontested nor free from political and epistemic implications, as noticed. In principle, the term indicates a kind of “eternal present”, common (and North Atlantic), to which all people, peoples, events and cultures converge or which, at least, would serve as a ruler for all other cultural experiences. The contemporary is thus based on a “discordant concordance”, to use the expression of Paul Ricoeur, whose emphasis is on the first term: that which does not converge to “my time” would be outside the present, generally in the past (Ricoeur 2010). After all, over the last few centuries, with the “Europeanization” of the world, the contemporaneity, assuming this “eternal” present, has effectively referred to a civilizational hierarchy that, starting in the North, turns to the South and is

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invested with impositions and qualifications that turn supposed temporal synchronies into experiential asynchronies, which express modes of ontological, epistemological and power domination.

In proposing critical review of the “contemporaneity”, through the dialogue with distant - epistemologically and geographically - thinkers such as German Harmut Rosa and Brazilian *quilombola* leader Nego Bispo, we seek to highlight some important aspects concerning the very notion of *Western*, and its hegemonic organization of time. As Johannes Fabian (2014) remarkably noted, the usual understanding and use of the term “contemporary” puts Europe and North-Atlantic countries some steps ahead of “the rest of the world” and thus builds some kind of a time hierarchy in which “the others” are incidentally delayed and oriented by the “developed”, “central” States and cultures. If this political usage of the contemporary is decisive in the historical and current processes of colonization, its consequences have been criticized in a broad range of ways, particularly now, when the “Global South” is challenging some usual perceptions commonly taken as “obvious”.

The concept of the West that we are working with - and that Nego Bispo contests - can be traced back to Habermas (2006), who conceives it as having universal normative principles and values, albeit critical ones, that transcend regional and particular contexts. It is worth considering that for Habermas (2006), Western culture has generated normative principles with universal potential, capable of self-criticism and inclusive expansion. However, even though the sociologist’s critical point of view is very important for the moment, he does so from his place and thinking about the European Union and its project. Habermas could not foresee the negative aspects and contradictions within the actual historical experience of the Western -the ones Rosa’s criticize- and could hardly consider experiences from the Global South such as those that help shape Nego Bispo’s thinking.

After the catastrophes of the 20th century and those that affect the planet on a daily basis, as well as the increasingly loud and significant voices of previously subordinated people, contemporaneity is now seen as the face of a dispute based on the importance of cultural difference and diversity and the recognition of temporal multiplicity. Thus, for example, when asking “what is contemporary art?”, Terry Smith (2009) observes that the contemporary brings with it a present that privileges the sense of modernity, without, however, claiming the future as

an essential direction. He then defines contemporary art as marked by the coexistence of multiple temporalities, global and local influences, and as having a commitment to current social and political issues. Peter Osborne (2013), also in the field of art, defines the contemporary as a complex condition characterized by multiple temporalities inherent to globalization and interculturality. This British philosopher sees contemporary art as a practice that reflects and responds to the complexity of the current world, challenging the traditional categories of time, space and culture.

While some thinkers such as Chakrabarty (2007, 2025), Appadurai (2000, 2013, 2019), Latour (2019, 2022), Stengers (2015, 2023); Viveiros de Castro and Danowski (2017), Viveiros de Castro (2024), Leal and Rêgo (2024), Leal et al. (2021), Bertoll et al. (2022), and Azoulay (2024) question not only the European centrality but also the epistemological and temporal constructs it imposed to the world, through colonization, we must bear in mind that “Europe”, and “the West” are themselves a “historical result”, as Norbert Elias puts it. In his central work, *The Civilizing Process* (1939), Elias characterizes the West not as a simple geographical space, but as a particular social formation, the result of a long historical process that emerged above all in Western Europe. For the author, the idea of the West is intrinsically linked to the constitution of a civilization that has internalized patterns of emotional self-control and refinement of social manners, in a context where the legitimate monopoly of violence gradually passes from the hands of private individuals to the centralized state. Elias clearly emphasizes that “in Western society, from the sixteenth century to the present day, standards of behavior have become increasingly rigorous; the threshold of shame and disgust has advanced, revealing the character of civilization as a process of increasing self-control” (Elias 1994:77).

This long journey of the West, according to Elias, is characterized by simultaneous sociogenesis and psychogenesis, in other words, by profound social changes accompanied by individual psychological transformations. The historical construction of Western civilization involves the progressive internalization of social norms that impose on subjects a continuous containment of their drives, whether aggressive or sexual. At the same time, the emergence of the modern state directly implies a progressive centralization of political authority and physical force, resulting in the internal pacification of European societies and the

progressive elimination of private violence, such as duels and vendettas. Elias also notes that this evolution of civilization does not occur in a linear fashion, but rather in complex movements of advances and setbacks, involving constant conflicts and resistance.

Thus, the notion of the West in Elias is not limited to a set of nations or territories, but is defined as a specific historical dynamic, marked by particular emotional, social and political patterns. In the author's words, it is a trajectory marked by "growing social interdependence, which reinforces internalized discipline and multiplies external pressures on individuals, forming a type of personality oriented towards self-control" (Elias 1993:312). In this way, Elias' perspective places the West as a historical result, a civilization with specific characteristics in permanent development, shaped by the continuous tension between social control and individual freedom. It is this "historical result" that is critically reviewed by Rosa and by Nego Bispo, from very distant epistemic traditions.

Within this context, this article investigates the contemporary as a decisive element in the current politics of time. We are particularly interested in the political and epistemic dimensions of the fracture of the present that the contemporary brings and some of its contradictions, as pointed out by perspectives as different as those of the Argentine Maria Inés Mudrovcic (2018), the Dutch Johannes Fabian (2014) and the Belgian Berber Bevernage (2021), reviewed in the first part. We begin by characterizing the challenges involving the politics of time and then critically observe two responses that are, at first, radically different regarding the injunctions of the contemporary: those by Hartmut Rosa, based on his notion of resonance, and those by Antônio Bispo and his notions of confluence and transfluence. This is not about comparing or approximating the thoughts of the German philosopher and the Brazilian *quilombola* leader. It seems to us, however, that each one affirms ways of belonging to the world that respond, from very different perspectives, to the *experiential asymmetry* of the contemporaneity as shaped by Eurocentric modernity.

The paradoxes of the contemporaneity, in Hartmut Rosa (2019), emphasize the importance of resonance, understood in summary as a quality of experience in which the individual and the world affect and transform each other. From a perspective affiliated with the European tradition, especially German, Rosa seeks to propose possibilities of resonance as a path

for societies amidst the chaos of the acceleration of times. For Rosa, resonance is both a kind of horizon of desire for European modernity, which is present in parallel with the processes of occupation and reification of the world, and a counterpoint to the alienation inherent in them. Resonance, as conceived by Rosa, is what allows the integration of the individual into the world, requiring, for this, specific social conditions that sustain it and make it possible. In Rosa, the experiential asymmetry of the contemporary finds a counterpoint in resonance as a connection with the different temporalities that exist in the world.

In Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2015, 2023a, 2023b), a *quilombola* leader and one of those responsible for the expression "counter-colonialism," we come across the affirmation of a way of life and temporal experience whose foundations are far removed from those typically Western. The term *quilombola* is used to refer to the remnants of black communities (called *quilombos*) in Brazil, which were created by enslaved people who fled slavery between the 16th and 19th centuries. Quilombolas have their own historical trajectory, specific territorial relations and black ancestry. They have their own traditions and cultural practices, which can be syncretized with the Catholic religion. Quilombola communities are spread all over Brazil, but are more numerous in the South, Southeast, Northeast and Center-West regions. The 2022 Census by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) showed that Brazil has 7,666 quilombola communities, with 1.3 million people. The 1988 Federal Constitution of Brazil enshrined the right to own quilombola lands. Quilombola communities also won the right to basic education in the countryside, with characteristics that differ from traditional school education.

In his writings and interviews, Antônio Bispo categorically, creatively, and constantly states his refusal to fully adhere to the hegemonic temporal experience of the West, as if telling us something like "I am not and do not want to be of your time." Even though he has to deal with the linear time ("empty and absolute", in Bevernage's terms) of the West, Nego Bispo, as he is known, constantly affirms and reiterates the experience of multiple temporalities, which do not merge into a single timeline. In this sense, two of the most widespread concepts of his thought, one of the seeds he sought to plant, are the notions of *confluence* and *transfluence*, at the same time anchors and points of arrival of his reflections.

By affirming, for example, confluence as a mode of temporal relationship and cultural dialogue, in opposition to linear time and the hierarchies of the colonized world, Nego Bispo gives a peculiar meaning to the term. In our view, there is no suggestion of harmony or integration in his idea of confluence. On the contrary, it seems to us that the term assumes difference as a condition of existence, but not of hierarchy. Both confluence and transfluence point to a dynamic, permanently unresolved and heterogeneous coexistence of temporalities and modes of cultural experience of time.

Resonance, on the one hand, and *confluence* and *transfluence*, on the other, are not terms that can be taken as equivalent, since they are part of traditions, ways of thinking and inhabiting the world that are radically different in several aspects. However, they affirm theoretical, political and epistemic positions that refuse the disconnection among the worlds that present themselves on the planet, based on understandings about presence, about “being present”. The differences between these positions, in turn, make explicit the challenges that the experience of the present, with historical time, and the contemporary, as a way of organizing it, imposes decisively at the beginning of the 21st century. If contemporaneity is thought to be a mode to deal with coexistence, and is historically a way to articulate cultural differences, Rosa and Bispo, each one through its own perspective, proposes both a renewal of the term and a displacement from its hierarchical bias.

Who Is or Can Be Contemporary?

In his brief essay on the contemporary, admittedly inspired by Nietzsche’s untimely considerations, Giorgio Agamben (2009) presents different images about it and also about the present. In the view of the Italian philosopher, the contemporary splits the present, since it implies a dyschronia and an anachronism, that is, those who live in “their time” recognize the distance that separates them from others, from other times. This is not only in relation to the past and the future, but also regarding other experiences of the present time. Agamben uses the image of darkness to address the challenge of the contemporary: attention to and awareness of times other than the light of “one’s own time.” For Agamben, then, the present is not a homogeneous time, for it has different temporalities and comprehend distinct temporal experiences. He states:

Those who have sought to think about contemporaneity have been able to do so only on the condition of dividing it into more times, of introducing an essential inhomogeneity into time. Whoever can say: “my time” divides time, inscribes in it a caesura and a discontinuity; and yet, precisely through this caesura, this interpolation of the present into the inert homogeneity of linear time, the contemporary puts into action a special relationship with time (Agamben 2009:71).

For Agamben, “(...) the contemporary is not only the one who, perceiving the darkness of the present, apprehends its resolute light”. He also says that it is the one that “(...) dividing and interpolating time, is capable of transforming it and placing it in relation to other times, of reading history in it in an unprecedented way”. The present, seen from the contemporary perspective, for Agamben, has its “vertebrae” broken, as it begins to contain these other times, which constitute the un-lived of the present, of the now. This awareness of relations between different temporalities constitutes contemporaneity, which, as we can see, not only fractures the present, but also articulates it with other dimensions and temporal experiences (Agamben 2009:71).

In the Italian philosopher’s brief essay, the use of possessive pronouns to characterize the contemporary is striking. This is “my” time, the one in which I am, to which I establish senses of belonging. If there is a “time of mine,” there are also other times, to which I do not belong. How do we deal with these others? Agamben does not develop this perception, at least in this essay, even though it is decisive in the history of the West, given the processes of colonization, the contradictions and conflicts of the present day. If Agamben does not advance, in this brief essay, towards the political and epistemic aspects involving the contemporaneity, he makes its ethical requirement explicit by establishing its connections with the “dark,” with the “un-lived,” with temporal diversity. The apparent pacification of time, through linear perspective and chronology – historically dominant in the West – does not, therefore, erase, in contemporary times, the strangeness, the otherness, the challenges involving different cultural experiences of time.

Based on Agamben’s thoughts, a question that arises involves precisely the quality of the relationship with these “others” to which the contemporaneity is articulated. The answer to this question is not

necessarily philosophical, since there are consistent historical records about the ways in which these relationships occurred in the past and occur today. A broad and diverse set of writings focus, from different perspectives, on different phenomena related more or less directly to the question “who is (or can be) contemporary” and its implications (Appadurai 2013; Bevernage 2021; Fornari 2015; Garramo 2008; Santos 1998; Tamm and Olivier 2019; among others). The “Europeanization” of the planet, which materializes in the colonial processes that have been developing in recent centuries, has implied the production of political and institutional mechanisms to delimit who are contemporaries and who are “their” others – some even thought of as “outside of history”.

It is quite significant that alternative perspectives and forms of (re)existence that are even considered “counter-colonial” are getting increasing recognition. These are reflections that arise from those who are not integrated into the Western worldview; from those who, even though they are forced to submit to it, seek to resist, offer alternatives, and affirm other ways of life. Such points of view – some of them in terms that go beyond the typically academic ones – offer us the possibility of understanding the “contemporaneity” from the point of view of someone who is “another”. In Brazil, different social leaders, linked to different traditions and cultural realities, affirm and make explicit other understandings and ways of living in time and on the planet, as is the case of Ailton Krenak and Antônio Bispo dos Santos. In both cases, the political, epistemic and economic weight of global hegemonic forces is not underestimated, but they seek not only a way to point out their limits, but especially to affirm other ways of life and creative resistance to the “the colonizers’ world”.

In a 2018 article, Argentine researcher Maria Inés Mudrovic reflects on the challenges that the notion of the present faces today, after the “crisis” of the modern regime of historicity and based on reflections by thinkers such as François Hartog (2015) and Hans Gumbrecht (2010), among others. Mudrovic articulates this “crisis” with two other terms that, in her view, contribute to demonstrating the complexity of how the present time is conceived and experienced hegemonically in the West. “Politics of time” and “contemporary” emerge as complementary aspects of the transformations that temporal dynamics have undergone and that shape the scenario in which we live “Politics of time” is defined by Mudrovic as a “(...) set of operations that, at once, sanction what is

proper or characteristic of the present and construct an ‘other’ by excluding it diachronically or synchronically from this present; the other is anachronistic. The other is not my contemporaneous” (Mudrovic 2018:14).

The horizon of this understanding is the historical experience of modernity and European colonization, which implied, according to the Argentine researcher, the political centrality of the “contemporaneity”, a term that has significantly fluctuated in meaning over the last 300 years, at least. As Mudrovic points out, “contemporaneous” is generally understood as someone who lives in the same period, but this broad sense has come to coexist with others, at least since the 19th century. One of them concerns sharing a certain present, in this case, the post-French Revolution or the same as that of the “living generations” who inhabit Europe and the United States. The present is then fractured, giving rise to the idea of a “contemporary present,” which presupposes linear, universal, and continuous time, in which this specific moment is the “last of all periods.” Thus, the idea of a “universal time” served, politically, as a way of hierarchizing and even expelling peoples and populations from history. Mudrovic explains:

Vital simultaneity or temporal coevalness does not guarantee political-cultural contemporaneity. The qualification of a linear and universal time necessarily produces a qualitative desynchronization. The epochal experience of contemporaneity arises, in the 19th century, from the exclusion of those who do not share the same political present. Exclusion necessarily occurs because contemporaneity creates a temporal relationship that is in turn the result of a normative decision. The contemporary present excludes the past as “the other”: the “historical past” is the result of this diachronic operation. However, the contemporary present also excludes “others” who live in the same chronological present: the non-contemporaries are the “others” of this synchronic operation (Mudrovic 2018:13-14).

Faced with this set of historical transformations and their political implications (and also epistemic and ethical ones, we should emphasize), Mudrovic wonders if there is an alternative, if we can “prevent this type of politics of time” that generates alterities,

hierarchies and exclusions. Her answer may seem desolate: “I don’t think so”, she states. Mudrovic explains her perspective by considering that “whenever a norm is introduced into a linear chronology that claims to be universal, the present is inevitably constructed as a referent that discriminates against the other as “more backward”, as “anachronistic”, as non-contemporary (Mudrovic 2018:14). For “norm”, the Argentinean researcher understand a comprehensive array of historical agents, such as the modern state, and cultural values as, for example, the glory of times gone by, the lost youth, and so on.

The apparent hopelessness of the Argentine researcher, as we can see, is based on two cores: the weight of the norm, always established based on a specific group, collective or society that holds power, and the understanding of time as linear and universal, that is, as the “same” for everyone. It is precisely there that, perhaps, hopelessness vanishes. Other policies of time can be conceived if one opts for worldviews that recognize and anchor themselves in the diversity of cultures and temporal experiences, including other chronologies. Perhaps this “thread” of hope is utopian. After all, the hegemonic forces that, according to the image created by Milton Santos (1998), establish the “single clock” for the planet, are in full swing, even producing “current affairs” (Araujo and Pereira 2019) impositions and interventions in temporalities (Rêgo 2025) based on technologies, platforms and digital processes of entertainment and (des)information. In any case, Mudrovic’s reflections, powerful in our view, are in close dialogue with others that, “from within” universities and research institutions and aware of the political and epistemic implications of this historical process, seek to critically review some of its central aspects.

A fundamental contribution in this sense was the seminal critique made by Johannes Fabian in 1983 of Anthropology, the Western science most explicitly dedicated to knowing “others” (Fabian 2015). For Fabian, who recovers the institution of linear time in the conformation of the Western historical experience, a constant denial of coevalness persisted in Anthropology, in contact with other peoples and cultures distributed throughout the planet. In Anthropology, such contact implied the presence of the researcher, the ethnographer, *in loco*, in the lived and shared space of these other cultural realities, thus being based on a communication that, despite the various differences, occurred on a daily basis, face to face. In other words, even though they

were from different “worlds”, Europeans and non-Europeans were together, sharing, despite mistakes and other difficulties, time and space. However, when reflecting on these other peoples, researchers generally situated them in a different time, linearly placed in the past. This operation, which Fabian calls “allochrony,” concretely materializes the refusal of such “other” people to live in the time of the Western agent, who thus preserves “their time” of diversity and difference. In other words, Fabian observes that the relationship with others, constitutive of the contemporaneous, has been historically shaped via hierarchy, exclusion, and dehumanization.

For this author, the denial of coevalness by researchers created an artificial and hierarchical division between the anthropologist and the researched subject, reinforcing stereotypes of backwardness and primitivism of the cultures studied and, consequently, linking the construction of a single temporality to the dynamics of domination and the structuring of power. Fabian considers that the aforementioned denial of coevalness ends up becoming a way of exercising power over the researched subjects, positioning them in a technologically and civilizing-wise inferior timeline, which would justify colonial and post-colonial actions. Therefore, as the author reveals, this type of temporal construction is not neutral and carries with it impositions of power that aim to shape the representations of cultures and societies that diverge from Eurocentrism (Fabian 2015:69). In the Dutch thinker’s reflections, he locates the “contemporary” within broader temporal relations, which he covers with the term “coevalness”. There is an empirical emphasis on this option, as there is also a dense theoretical effort to, at that moment, make the contradictions of Western thought in relation to the Other (as Fabian spells it) explicit. Thus, he says, “coeval”, even because it is less used, allows us to observe “... that all temporal relations and, therefore, contemporaneity, are embedded in culturally organized praxis”. Fabian then ponders:

To a large extent, Western rational disbelief in the presence of ancestors and the efficacy of magic rest on the rejection of ideas of temporal coexistence implied in these ideas and practices. So much is obvious. It is less clear that in order to study and understand ancestor cult and magic we need to establish relations of coevalness with the cultures that are studied. In that form, coevalness becomes

the ultimate assault on the protective walls of cultural relativism (Fabian 2015:69-70).

Among the “protective” mechanisms provided by the cultural relativism that affirms allochronies, Fabian identifies what he calls “typological” or “mundane” time, that is, resources that serve to establish temporal distance. Some examples: the identification of something as “archaic”, “ancient”, when certain countries or regions have a “stone age” economy, when ways of acting or thinking are considered “barbaric”, “primitive”, “outdated”, etc. Fabian warns that not all resources for typifying time and establishing distance are explicitly temporal, as is the case with expressions such as “mythical”, “ritual” and “tribal”. Such classifications are seen as “objective” by those who practice them, because they supposedly promote precise ways of identifying and relating to people, peoples and phenomena. Such mechanisms are incorporated into the daily life of the Western world and are not exclusive, as we can see, to scientific thought.

As Berber Bevernage (2021) observes, these mechanisms of temporal distancing identified by Fabian show “a spatial distribution of humanity” articulated with an “evolutionary sequence” that makes non-Western cultures be seen as “archaic” or “behind” in time. And this is to say that the institution of allochrony becomes – and has historically been – a condition for, and instrument of, domination. Fabian’s choice of the term “coevalness” is thus linked to two complementary movements. On the one hand, it seeks to avoid the traps embedded in the regular use of some words, as is the case with “contemporary”. On the other, it aims to account for broad temporal relations, in which “contemporary” occupies a specific place. On the other hand, it aims to account for broad temporal relations, in which the “contemporary” occupies a specific place. Fabian (2015) states that:

The unusual *coeval*, and especially the noun *coevalness*, express a need to steer between such closely related notions as *synchronous/simultaneous* and *contemporary*. I take *synchronous* to refer to events occurring at the same physical time; *contemporary* asserts co-occurrence in what I called *typological time*. *Coeval*, according to my pocket Oxford dictionary, covers both (“of same age, duration, or epoch”). Beyond that, it is

to connote a common, active “occupation”, or sharing of time (Fabian 2015:31).

Less than terms linked to a “neutral” or “impersonal” time, therefore, “coevalness”, “synchrony” and “contemporary” are modes of temporal “occupation”, that is, they are articulated with specific cultural, political and epistemic practices. The distinction, made by Fabian, between “synchronous” and “contemporary”, in this sense, seems to make explicit the political, historical and ethical burden contained in the latter. Bevernage (2021) notes that Fabian’s reflections serve as a warning against the “unconditional” or even enthusiastic acceptance of the “non-contemporary” and “differential time” and that, even more, they make us see that the West’s own contemporaneity “with itself” must be criticized and revised. For the Belgian historian (Bevernage 2021:246), there is yet another consequence, even more decisive: it is necessary to “...explicitly deconstruct any notion of time that acts as a container time and that pretends to be the measure of all other times”. This “container” time to which Bevernage refers is that “empty, absolute and homogeneous” - and linear – one of European modernity, whose allochronic mechanisms materialize a “politics of time” with drastic consequences for the entire planet.

Resonances

Frankfurt sociologist and observer of the present, Harmut Rosa, has been making allegations for more than a decade about the direct implications that the uninterrupted advances of technology and its adherence to life in digitally included societies have brought about. This author observes that technological acceleration imposes a consequent increase in the pace of life at an individual and collective level. This process includes transformations in relationships (Bauman 2021), in permanent availability for work (Crary 2023), in sociability and affections (Han 2017), and, mainly, has been sold as irreversible from the platformization of life (Poell et al. 2020) being part of the package of the new stage of capitalism in the 21st century. The general idea is one of permanent pressure to do more and more tasks in less time, requiring a greater commitment to work or greater availability to compete for permanent and ubiquitous attention on digital platforms, which, in addition to the exploitative process of surveillance neo-capitalism

(Zuboff 2020; Rêgo 2025), can lead to exhaustion and physical and mental health problems (Han 2017).

Harmut Rosa (2010) conducts his analyses in a context of late modernity, in which political and, mainly, economic power structures promote acceleration as a way of maintaining competitiveness and innovation, aiming at increasing profitability. This process has demonstrated the failure of the modern project and caused a greater social abyss, excluding large and growing multitudes of individuals who remain on the margins of the so-called human rights of the declaration drawn up in the 1940s. For Rosa, acceleration shapes the current contemporaneity and ends up creating a fragmented and disorganized temporal experience, with alienation as its main consequence. For this author, individuals find themselves trapped in a fast temporality that imposes a frenetic and constantly changing pace of life, which leads to a temporal disconnection. There is no relationship with the past, nor are there conditions for planning the future. This condition imposes a constant and stressful present (Rosa 2010). This acceleration is in the social formation of European modernity, according to Rosa, which:

(...) is defined structurally by the fact that it is capable only of dynamic stabilization, while its cultural program aims at systematically increasing the participation in the world of both individuals and cultures. These two elements are, of course, mutually determining and mutually reinforcing. Dynamic stabilization means that the basic institutions of society - the capitalist organization of the economy, the democratic or representative politics, the research-oriented academic work and science, the organization of the welfare state, along with the educational institutions and the artistic field - are capable of being reproduced and maintained only in a scaling mode, which means that they systematically depend on economic growth, technological and cultural acceleration, political activation and, relatedly, constant innovation in order to stabilize their status quo and maintain their structure... To summarize this view in a single image, modern society is characterized by constant growth and dynamization, which necessarily increases its kinetic energy (Rosa 2010:20).

According to Rosa, the entire modern European project consisted of an effort to put the world “at hand’s reach”, expanding its presence on the planet. This effort, in Rosa’s terms, reveals itself as an “anxiety”, given the fear that this same world will become mute, hostile, ossified. This effort, today, in this Western, digital, platformized and technological context, would be permeated by a profound disconnection with people in relation to themselves, to others and to the world. In short, by alienation, a term that, for Rosa, “(...) denotes a specific form of relationship with the world in which the subject and the world confront each other with indifference or hostility (repulsion) and therefore without any internal connection (Jaeggi 2014:25). “Alienation”, as Rosa understands it, can be defined as “a relationship of absence of relationship”, and indicates a state in which the world cannot be “adaptively transformed” and therefore always appears cold, rigid, repulsive, and unresponsive. Resonance therefore constitutes the “other” of alienation—its antithesis.

Depression or burnout refers to a state in which all resonance axes have become mute and deaf. A person may “have” a family, job, work, social clubs, religion, etc., but they no longer “speak” to them. The subject is no longer able to be touched or affected and has no sense of self-efficacy. Thus, the world and the subject both seem lifeless, dead, empty. To counter this reality that could be seen as dystopian, but which has been situated in the realm of reality, Rosa proposes the concept of resonance, which he believes is still unfinished, but which would be a “philosophy of the good life” and the basis of a social theory. For him, the parameters that define what is a full or good human life cannot be measured by financial assets, nor even by the few moments of leisure that can generate instant happiness, but must consider resonance with the world, with oneself and with others. For Rosa, resonance is not something that can be obtained, because, on the contrary, it is a way of being in the world, a primordial condition. For while capitalism measures the good life by financial and material accumulation, which limits, and to a certain extent leads to alienation, resonance would allow a greater relationship between the subject and the (subjective, objective and social) world. Rosa thus synthesizes resonance:

Resonance is a type of relationship with the world, formed through $a \leftarrow$ effect and $e \rightarrow$ motion, intrinsic interest and perceived self-efficacy, in which the subject and the world are mutually affected and transformed.

Resonance is not an echo, but a responsive relationship, which requires both sides to speak with their own voice. This is only possible when strong evaluations are affected. Resonance implies an aspect of constitutive inaccessibility.

Resonant relationships require that both the subject and the world be sufficiently “closed” or self-consistent for each to speak in their own voice and at the same time remain open enough to be affected or reached by each other.

Resonance is not an emotional state, but a mode of relating that is neutral with respect to emotional content. This is why we can enjoy sad stories (Rosa 2019:n/a).

Rosa’s resonance has three main axes. One of them, the *horizontal* one, implies the connection with other people through gestures that summon affections such as love and awaken friendship, and they can extend to an ethical-political sense manifested by a sense of democracy. The *diagonal or material* axis has to do with the materialities, tools and technologies that connect us to the spaces we move through in our daily lives. Finally, the *vertical* axis that leads us to a connection with nature, with life, with the universe, which can be achieved through art, culture, religions, access to nature. These axes show that resonance is not just an individual circumstance, being made possible or conditioned by different social conditions and practices. In this sense, the concept, as Rosa (2010) himself recognizes, is both descriptive and normative, since resonance, for it to happen, involves both individual aspects and peculiar historical-social conditions.

It is quite interesting to note that Rosa (2018) understands that European modernity, in its kinetic energy, its dynamization and constant reification of the world, was paradoxically characterized by the ever-renewed promise of resonance. This contradiction, which Rosa identifies from German Romanticism and by revisiting different sociological perspectives, from Marx to Durkheim, from Simmel to Adorno, considers that the modern process of individualization - which shelters and stimulates personal and particular situations and circumstances, in terms of education, political orientation, religion, lifestyle, etc. - is “culturally motivated, beyond its natural and structural causes, by the promise that everyone can and is allowed to find their own place of resonance”. This promise is broader than freedom and autonomy, as it suggests that the individual can “... find the appropriate complement to this

freedom: a segment of the world that speaks or even sings” (Rosa 2019:n/a), that is, that can be taken, inhabited, understood as one’s own, one’s home, one’s house.

In this historical process, European modernity understood that this resonance would only be possible between equals, between similar people. This mistaken perception of resonance, which confuses it with harmony and homogeneity, would be, along with other elements, at the heart of the colonization promoted by the North Atlantic empires. For Rosa (2018), this confusion between resonance and harmony is present today even in intimate relationships, in which people expect their relationships to be more successful when they are with others who are similar to them. Rosa states:

However, this behavior can also be read as an indication that individuals, under the conditions of late modernity, tend to turn away from what is genuinely other. They seek harmony and consonance and avoid dissonance—although at the price of confusing harmony with resonance and thus losing the possibility of adaptive transformation. Not unlike those potentially depressive types who keep their homes immaculately clean and smelling of flowers, they risk living in environments that are beautiful but do not speak (Rosa 2019:n/a).

In Rosa’s critique of European modernity, whether in recent centuries or in its “late” stage, there is, on the one hand, the paradox of a dynamic, constant reification of the world, which is articulated with the desire for belonging and contact; on the other hand, there is also the understanding that this resonance is confused with harmony, that is, it is required that the “other” (people, things, the world) be elements of identification, which function as a mirror. Rosa’s defense of the notion of resonance thus presents itself as a counterpoint to the alienating acceleration that perpetuates and accentuates both the reification of the world and the increasingly unattainable promise of a home in which everyone is effectively similar, identical, technically reproducible. If our understanding of Rosa is correct, it is not a matter of claiming another resonance, but of taking it in its complexity, including what it transforms us to and forces us to adapt to. In this sense, “resonant experiences” do not reduce the space-time horizon, but rather expand it. According

to Rosa, they can be understood as open vertices, in which the dialogical co-presence of presents, pasts and futures occurs.

Confluences and Transfluences

In one of the poems in “Colonização, Quilombos: modos e significação” [Colonization, *Quilombos*: ways and meanings}], probably his best-known book, Nego Bispo contrasts the lifestyles of the European colonizer and those of the *quilombola* peoples, of whom he was one of the most eloquent voices. The concise language of the poem makes the difference between the two ways of life clear: one, hegemonic, which expropriates, is monotheistic, monistic and linear; and the other, *quilombola*, which maintains a different relationship with the land, worships more gods and divinities, recognizes the plurality of ways of life and thinks about time in a non-linear way. The cosmogony (which includes elements of a chronosophy) established by Nego Bispo, therefore, presupposes the diversity and coexistence of ways of life, including temporal experiences. The counter-coloniality he asserts, then, is characterized by making (re)exist, amid the pressures of hegemonic forces, this perspective that is at once plural and hospitable. The poem (Bispo 2015:17) ends like this:

We extract life from the earth
They expropriate the earth from life

Polytheists!
Pluralists!
Circularists!
Monotheists!
Monists!
Linearists!

In his review of the historical process of colonization of the Brazilian territory, Nego Bispo, after critically rereading documents from the time, such as papal bulls and the Letter by Pero Vaz de Caminha to the Portuguese Crown, observes the efforts to destroy and demean indigenous and African people, who were then classified as:

(...) inferior, religiously considered to be soulless, intellectually considered to be less capable, aesthetically considered to be ugly, sexually considered to be objects of pleasure, socially considered to have no

manners and culturally considered to be savages (Bispo 2015:35).

This configuration of these “others” is linked, in Nego Bispo’s terms, to two distinct cosmogonies. On the one hand,

The monotheistic Euro-Christian people, because they have an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God, therefore unique, unattainable, deterritorialized, above everything and everyone, tend to organize themselves in an exclusive, vertical and/or linear way. This is because when they try to see their God they only look in one direction. Because this God is masculine, they also tend to develop more homogeneous and patriarchal societies. Since they believe in a God who cannot be seen materially, they cling very much to objective and abstract monisms (Bispo 2015:38-39).

On the other hand, the inferiorized peoples,

(...) worship several pluripotent, pluriscient and pluripresent goddesses and gods, materialized through the elements of nature that form the universe, that is, because they have territorialized goddesses and gods, they tend to organize themselves in a circular and/or horizontal way, because they can look at their goddesses and gods in all directions. Because they have goddesses and gods, they tend to build heterogeneous communities, where matriarchy and/or patriarchy develop according to historical contexts. Because they see their goddesses and gods through the elements of nature, such as water, earth, fire and air and other elements that form the universe, they cling to subjective and concrete pluralisms (Bispo 2015:39).

Faced with the historical processes of destruction of their culture and identities, these peoples have as a resource precisely this pluralistic vision, which has provided them with ways of resignification, resistance and creativity. In these processes, as pointed out by Martins, Bona and Mbembe, among others, the Afro-indigenous or Afro-Pindoramic (an expression more suitable according to Bispo) populations, as Nego Bispo demands, faced with the

expropriation to which they were subjected, relied on resources usually disregarded by the colonizers, such as the body, bodily practices and orality (Bona 2020; Martins 2021; Mbembe 2020, 2021, among others). Nego Bispo, in this sense, remains faithful to this tradition: his thought, even when published in book form, maintains an oral diction, or, in the terms of Leda Martins (2021), of “oralitura, which can be translated as “oraliture”, from a combination of “oral” and “literature”. As Nascimento and Ruffino (2023) observe, orality becomes a fundamental resource for resistance and counter-coloniality:

More than an opposition to writing, orality is positioned as this process that, whether recorded in writing or not, inserts us into the continuity of what is possible to think and do together, by the community, collectively. Orality presupposes a world of differences and multiplicities, a plurality of voices. But it also presupposes some mysteries and silences, which as knowledge and/or weapons of defense, gave meaning to many movements in the struggles, which cannot be burned by colonial rage (Ruffino 2023:327).

In this sense, as Maria Sueli Rodrigues de Souza points out in the afterword to this 2016 book, Nego Bispo observes that the transformation of the plurality of indigenous and African peoples into unity was configured as a strategy of domination by monotheistic European colonizers. Counter-coloniality thus reveals itself as the planting, cultivation, valorization and dissemination of diversity and difference, as a counterpoint to this continuous and historical effort of occupation and subjugation of territories, peoples and cultures. As Nascimento and Rufino define, counter-colonization, in Nego Bispo’s “*mandigueiras*¹ words”, is “...a way of countering the logic that claims to be unique” (Bispo 2023:326).

For Nego Bispo, this counter-colonial movement involves the play of redefining or displacing the vocabulary of the dominators. In his latest book, published in 2023, he explains this process of political and epistemic struggle through concepts and words. Thus, while the dominator speaks of development (*desenvolvimento*, in Portuguese), Nego Bispo emphasizes the “negative” element of the term, marked by the prefix “de” and then affirms what appears as its opposite, involvement (*envolvimento*, in

Portuguese). And so he continues, against “sustainable development”, *biointeraction*; “...for “coincidence”, we brought *confluence*; for synthetic knowledge, *organic knowledge*; for transportation, *transfluence*; for money (or exchange), *sharing*; for colonization, *counter colonization*...” (Bispo 2023a:3-4).

From this vocabulary, one of the terms that proved to be relevant was “confluence”. Inspired by the dynamics of water in nature, the term also explains the thought about time contained in the propositions of the *quilombola* leader. As different readers of Nego Bispo’s work observe, his view of temporal experience is one of the key points of his thought (Borges and Guedelha 2023; Nascimento and Ruffino 2023; Souza 2015). Taís Garone (2015:143) observes that already in the introduction to “Colonização, Quilombos: modos e significação”, “...Nêgo Bispo presents us with the spirit that animates his writing: a searching look at time, where the past, present and future merge and split into a singular theorization about the lived and what is vivid – ontology of the present!”. The complementary notions of “confluence” and “transfluence” are some that mark this view of time. “Confluence was a very easy concept to develop because it was just a matter of observing the movement of water through rivers and across the land. Transfluence took a little longer because I had to observe the movement of water through the sky” (Bispo 2023b:13). The terms seek to capture the processes of dialogue, sharing, and movement that characterize knowledge, experiences, and temporalities. For Nego Bispo,

Confluence is the law that governs the relationship of coexistence between the elements of nature and teaches us that not everything that comes together gets mixed, that is, nothing is the same. Therefore, confluence also governs the mobilization processes arising from the pluralistic thinking of polytheistic peoples.

Transfluence is the law that governs the relationships of transformation of the elements of nature and teaches us that not everything that mixes together comes together. Therefore, transfluence also governs the processes of mobilization arising from the monistic thought of the monotheistic people (Bispo 2015:89).

We can observe, in the excerpt above, at least two important aspects in both notions. First, the idea that “not everything comes together” and that this, instead of being a problem, constitutes a possibility of existence. The lack of mixing, which impedes or prevents synthesis, in Nego Bispo’s thinking also invalidates hierarchies, since it is a positive quality, which is a condition of human existence and also for relationships of sharing and dialogue. Transflow thus is presented as a confluent, undoubtedly subversive way of apprehending and moving the colonizing thought. This “non-adjustment”, which affirms the reality of horizontal coexistence with differences, also brings with it the idea of movement, that is, of a temporal experience that coexists with others and that is not constituted as a linear movement from one point to another. This understanding of time is made explicit at different moments in Nego Bispo’s work in the form of “beginning – middle – beginning”, that is, of a continuous process of creation, transformation and reinvention.

The term “confluence” thus speaks of

(...) energy that is moving us towards sharing, towards recognition, towards respect. A river does not stop being a river because it flows into another river; on the contrary, it becomes itself and other rivers, it becomes stronger. When we flow into one another, we do not stop being ourselves, we become ourselves and other people – we yield. Confluence is a force that yields, that increases, that expands. That is the measure. In fact, confluence, this germinating word, came to me at a time when our ancestry held me in their (Bispo 2023a:4-5).

As Nascimento and Ruffino (2023:317) observe, the notion opposes accumulation, as it “presupposes that the world is in movement, in flux” and this flow “...would be the fundamental movement of existence, which, when well-managed, promotes these confluent alliances”. They synthesize the articulations of confluence with other key terms in Nego Bispo’s thought by considering that “the confluence movement creatively resists cosmophobia”. As consequence, it allows to invent “...potential alliances that strengthen people and the movements themselves, promoting biointeraction, in which life becomes the guiding center of what is thought. In this way of thinking, according to Nascimento and Ruffino, what is done,

what is done by thinking, what is thought by doing, enables to see vital encounters “...in which difference is not exactly a problem, but part of this fluency, which when brought, in an enchanted way, promotes expansion and vitalization and not a cosmophobic mortification that ends up de-evolving humans from nature (Nascimento and Ruffino 2023:327).

This movement, characterized in the form of “beginning-middle-beginning”, as we can see, is not presented as linear or as producing a synthesis. In the opposite direction, it is presented as something diffuse, since it presupposes interaction with other existences, including temporal ones, and it affirms a movement that “does not go anywhere”, but is vitally nourished by the difference and creativity it produces. In this sense, the temporal experience that is affirmed in this articulation is seen as “circular”, given its clear inspiration in the cycles of planting and harvesting and of water. However, it seems to us that the words “beginning” in the expression do not designate either the same moment or even similar moments. The perspective of constant movement, sharing and interaction points not to a circle, but to a spiral temporal experience, in which presents, pasts and futures are overlapping, articulated and in constant articulation.

Confluences, Resonances and the Fractures of the Present

In Nego Bispo we find strong resistance to naturalized coloniality, to the trade of synthetic knowledge and to the imposition of monotheistic religions. Nego Bispo stands out as a voice of *quilombolas* in the countryside of Brazil and in this scenario he develops concepts and works on counter-colonization methods, or as he himself says, seeking to “(...) transform the weapons of the enemy into defense, so that we do not transform our defense into weapons. Because, if we transform our defense into weapons, we will only know how to attack. And those who only know how to attack, lose” (Bispo:2023b:14). In Nego Bispo, the concept of confluence focuses on the encounter between different cultural, social and historical flows, involving the idea that knowledge and practices are the result of multiple contributions and influences and should not be commercialized. Furthermore, the concept is characterized by the dynamism and mutual transformation of confluences, which coexist without merging. Transfluence, of rivers that flow through the air, refers to ideas, practices

and knowledge that transcend barriers, borders and limits. In transfluence, affectation also manifests itself and, therefore, transformation is the agenda. However, this affectation is of an “independent interdependence”, because “not everything that comes together, gets mixed”. Nego Bispo’s concepts, as we have seen, are rooted in contexts of resistance and cultural transformation, particularly in the context of Brazilian Afro-Pindoramic communities.

In Harmut Rosa we see the critique of Western “late modernity” that imposes on digitally included societies an enslaving temporal acceleration that alienates its individuals. Rosa’s resonance is developed as a necessary counterpoint to the alienation caused by modern acceleration and seeks to focus on reciprocity between individuals and with the world. The main aspect of resonance is a condition of belonging, of presence, through mutual and transformative relational vibrations. This belonging is possible through the affectation of the parties that relate to each other on the horizontal, diagonal and vertical axes identified by the German thinker. In this sense, the concepts of confluence and transfluence, as well as resonance, involve a dynamic and transformative interaction. The idea that the entities involved affect each other is central to both ideas. However, the nature of this transformation differs significantly.

Nego Bispo’s confluence focuses on resistance, while Hartmut Rosa’s resonance seeks belonging in a world out of sync. In Rosa, the notion of resonance emerges as a response, undoubtedly a counterpoint, to the alienation promoted by economic and technological acceleration. In Bispo, confluence and transfluence establish horizontal modes of coexistence with cultural difference. While the German philosopher focuses on the relationship between the individual and their surroundings, seeking to construct a social theory; the *quilombola* leader asserts a communal perspective, strongly poetic and essayistic. While one is critically integrated into the Western world, the other does not hesitate to assert himself as counter-colonial. Both thoughts, in their qualities and differences, point, each in their own way, to the challenges that displace the

usual notion of contemporaneity, affirming temporal multiplicity and assuming the politics of time as something necessary, but distinct from the uncritical submission to a hegemonic temporality.

In Rosa, resonance establishes a co-presence of pasts, presents and futures, expanding the historical experience beyond the idea of progress and a utilitarian view of the world. In Bispo, the present is full of temporalities and, even more, coexists with other cultural experiences of time, without getting lost in them or integrating into them. While Rosa affirms the importance of presence and a non-reified relationship with the world, things and people, Nego Bispo starts from his condition of belonging, from his *quilombola* experience, and from his exclusion by the “other” who wants to assimilate or extinguish him and his own. It is from this sense of belonging that the ways of living with others, with cultural diversity, become horizontal, in a flow that is not necessarily harmonious or productive of syntheses or integrations. Despite their differences, Rosa and Bispo characterize the contemporary as a bundle of multiple relationships, in which asymmetries do not converge into hierarchies, in which “other” temporalities are not placed outside the present. In their own way, they affirm the need for a multiple present, open to diversity, coexistence and transformation. Dealing with “the historical result” that shapes the West alongside the “rest of the world”, both thinkers refuse some of its features, which have important consequences for the cultural comprehension of time. While one resists, creatively, the other proposes, critically, and both, without necessarily converging, seek to offer other modes and rhythms for human lives, and, doing so, to find some ways to postpone the end of the world.

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Note

¹ “Mandingueira”, from “mandinga”, has no obvious translation to English. The word, which refers to an African language, is used in Brazilian Portuguese meaning both the enchanting aspects of language as well

as its capacity of ambiguous, deceitful rituals, behavior, and use of any sign. “Mischievous” and “trickster” are some English terms that are close, but no equivalent, to “mandingueira”.