

Itinerant curriculum theory: People's theory against the field's epistemicidal ethos

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Abstract

The field of curriculum studies suffers from a glaring theoretical impasse. Much of this impasse has been rightly attributed to the triumphalism of the neoliberal wave that has massacred the educational hemisphere with policies and practices that reduce pedagogy to an instrumentalist praxis directly associated with the thirsty desires and needs of the market. However, another substantive part of this impasse – and not much explored in our scholarly affairs – relates to the apparent breakdown of many critical and post-critical approaches. The combination of these two axes – completely antagonistic – has contributed to the consolidation of the epistemicidal nature of the curriculum. At the core of this article is a clarion call for all the scholars in the field to counter such an impasse, deterritorializing their approaches and commit to an itinerant position to address the world's endlessly different and diverse epistemological traditions, disestablishing the eugenic nature of our field – its theory and development. The article also explores significant drawbacks faced by counter-hegemonic impulses in our field. In doing so, this article unveils the challenges of building a hegemonic critical pedagogical platform. It develops a laudatory eulogy for a collective engagement with an itinerant curriculum theory (ICT) as a just people's theory towards social and cognitive justice.

This essay is a brief, however comprehensive, reworked version of the lecture at the 2022 Charles DeGarmo Distinguished Award, Society of Professors of Education, USA, ceremony at the Society of Professors of Education. The manuscript is an original work, has not been published before, and is not being considered for publication elsewhere in its final form. This piece is dedicated to Tero Autio.

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THE DENIAL OF CALIBAN'S REASON

Empowerment, student voice, dialogue, and even the term critical are representative myths that perpetuate relations of domination.

(Ellsworth, 1989)

Since the beginning of its emergence at the end of the nineteenth century, 'the curriculum studies field has always been an agora of fierce power struggles over its social and political mission'. At the core of these battles relies on 'what/whose knowledge was of most worth' (Apple, 2013; Greene, 1973; Huebner, 1976; MacDonald, 1975; Spencer, 1860a, 1860b; Yandell, 2013; Young, 1971) to be transmitted and evaluated. It was expected that through the design and development of curriculum theory, the educational system would fulfil its 'crucial' political aim – the desperately needed uniformization of a then young nation that was still crawling towards the end of its second century of existence and viewed as culturally torn apart (Apple, 2002; Baker, 2009; Beyer & Liston, 1996; Cremin, 1964; Kliebard, 1995; Krug, 1969; Schubert et al., 1980; Tyack, 1974; Watkins, 1993; Wraga, 2018). The word 'uniformization' is not neutral, though; it concealed – whether veiled or explicit – the eugenic spirit of the struggles for the US curriculum (Selden, 1999; see also Bond, 2023; DuBois, 2023; Washington, 2023) and would irreversibly determine the field's epistemicidal nature (Paraskeva, 2011, 2022a). Eugenics is the field's original sin (see Paraskeva, 2022c) that relies on the core of the struggles that opposed functionalist regulatory hegemonic and emancipatory counter-hegemonic traditions. Furthermore, this became more acute and refined throughout history (Oliveira, 2011; Jupp et al., 2024; Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2018, 2022a), paving the way for 'the curriculum epistemicide' (Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2018, 2022a). These battles would define the curriculum – primarily until the eve of the last quarter of the previous century – as a thriving and vibrant field and at the forefront of critical educational debates.

More than a century after emerging as a field of studies, though, and in despair, one could not avoid noticing not only that our field gradually lost such powerful theoretical capacity but also how counter-hegemonic movements struggled to impose themselves as dominant traditions. Despite a rich plethora of fantastic historical achievements that exalt the revolutionary and emancipatory power of education through curriculum affairs,¹ radical critical intellectuals and approaches that framed the utopia of a counter-hegemonic river (Paraskeva, 2011, 2022a) faced profound setbacks. Such a river – a metaphor I crafted from Vincent Harding's novel *There Is a River* – describes a theoretical ebb and flow of a divergent group of critical scholars; it maps out various critical tributaries that have taken curriculum debates in many different directions. While critical theorists come from several traditions, the river metaphor helps to show how these traditions historically flow together and individually.

Intellectuals associated with such counter-hegemonic river sunk in inconsequential approaches and showed a disturbing inability to at least permanently disarticulate the dominant regulatory and functionalist reason that had been able to saturate the field's common sense hegemonically. Part of this incapability is related to the late devastating dynamics of instrumentalist doctrines with a neoliberal bent that was able to respond directly or indirectly to the overwhelming majority of flags that have been raised historically by hegemonic groups (Paraskeva, 2018, 2021a, 2023a, 2023b, 2024). In doing so, they have been capable

of establishing a deep footprint in the field since the turn of the seventies of the last century – entirely connected with the narrative that emerged with the rise to power of figures such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan (Apple, 2000; Giroux, 2004; Lipman, 2011) that framed education as a commodity (Ball, 2012; Harvey, 2005) Among other issues, the neo-liberal consulate normalized repeated social crises as something perpetual, in such a way that ‘has jolted societies into reflecting critically about themselves’ (Reckwitz & Rosa, 2023, p. 3); it saturated academia with new forms of public management focused on ‘quantifiable research findings, publications in peer-reviewed journals, and acquisition of third-party funding, and it has become increasingly unattractive to write books which are still the preferred format for theory’ (Reckwitz & Rosa, 2023, p. 6). However, this is just one side of the coin.

The other side relates to complex challenges facing the very counter-hegemonic movement, of which I briefly underline three – any of them highly complex yet – quite interrelated. First, the clashes between hegemonic and specific critical and post-critical counter-dominant impulses have demonstrated how the latter fell into the reductive functionalist and instrumentalist approaches. Such theoretical aberration triggered over – and in too many constituencies irreparable – discomfort in some intellectuals within the core of the counter-hegemonic river. In their view, the works of a particular radical critical tradition – both with neo-Marxist and existentialist impulses – within a radical critical curriculum river (Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2018, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2023a, 2023b, 2024) – exhibit a ‘functionalist approach and have neglected crucial empirical investigations’ (Liston, 1988, p. 15). Oddly, radical critical approaches produced a functionalist critique of the functionalism they criticized (Liston, 1988). Moreover, radical critical pedagogies lacked a clear definition; such pedagogies pointed to a diffuse and confused path (Liston & Zeichner, 1987) – where anything could go – with very little to offer to the challenges teachers and students face in the classroom.

Such distress and distrust were not necessarily related to the political nature of the radical critical approaches per se but to their blurry path. The radical critical river was defined as ‘historically backward-looking and ideologically reactionary’ (Wexler, 1987, p. 127). They were cornered into conceptual blindness that led them to ignore other crucial curriculum dynamics beyond those that focused on reproduction and/or resistance and to refuse to incorporate post-structural and postmodern tools in their examinations to understand schools and curricula better. There was a need to ‘capture the dangers and gaps in the ongoing struggles for radical pedagogies’ as (Gore, 1993, p. xiii) advocates. There was an urgent need in the heart of the counter-hegemonic territory for a new – theoretical – logic. The very notion of science as an immaculate field was also questioned. Not only ‘Western science had begun to lose its meaning [but also one witnessed]² a turn from science as the single standard of knowledge in favour of a plurality of equality valid ways of knowing’ (Wexler, 1976, p. 8). At the core of the critical terrain – fundamentally Eurocentric – a pitched battle with no possible truce erupted within and between ‘critical’ and ‘post-critical’ intellectuals and movements.

Second, a blatant unsustainable imbalance within the radical critical platform – which emphasized social issues to the detriment of the curriculum knowledge – significantly contributed to diluting its attractive character among teachers. Critical approaches seem to have overlooked the importance of helping teachers answer – unaddressed – questions concerning their daily life in the classrooms, such as ‘What should I do on Monday’ (Holt, 1970). Such one-sidedness exacerbates the reactionary nature of the radical critical project and calls into question the emancipatory aim of its manifesto. Elizabeth Ellsworth’s (1989) approach – incomprehensibly marginalized in our field – teaches us a great deal here. In her (1989, p. 289) empirical *jouissance*, Ellsworth demonstrates how particular concepts of radical critical pedagogy, such as ‘empowerment’, ‘student voice’, ‘dialogue’ and even the term ‘critical’ are ‘representative myths that perpetuate relations of domination’. She (1989, p. 300) advocates for ‘pedagogies of the unknowable’, acknowledging the prominence of the

post-structural and postmodern approaches and denouncing how the term 'critical' operates 'at a high level of abstraction'. Echoing the growing discomfort with the overemphasis on the 'social', Ellsworth (1989) did not mince words, arguing that critical pedagogues

fail to provide a clear statement of their political agendas [and] the effort is to hide the fact that as critical pedagogues, they are in fact seeking to appropriate public resources (classrooms, school supplies, teacher/professor salaries, academic requirements, and degrees) to further various 'progressive' political agendas that they believe to be for the public good—and therefore deserving of public resources. It was crucial to understand 'what/whose' "diversity do we silence in the name of liberatory pedagogy?"

(Ellsworth, 1989, p. 299)

Her devastating critique flagged a massive cavity in the counter-hegemonic crater – one that helped to pave the way for the third aspect that contaminated the counter-hegemonic movement's struggle for the US curriculum. The incapacity to go beyond the reason they were/are criticizing. The inability to go beyond the modern Western epistemological platform, and in so doing, perceiving 'whose diversities and differences have been silenced' or, better say, perpetually produced as 'non-existent' – as Santos (2007) would put it. Counter-hegemonic intellectuals – particularly those directly and/or indirectly committed to the veins of political economy, cultural policies, as well as autobiographical and existentialist impulses – were laboured – and continued to do so – within the same matrix in which the dominant movements operate, a matrix fundamentally based on Modern Eurocentric Western epistemological veins, a matrix that it is abyssal by nature.

It consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms: the realm of "this side of the line" and the realm of "the other side of the line." The division is such that "the other side of the line" vanishes as reality becomes nonexistent and is indeed produced as nonexistent. Nonexistent means not existing in any relevant or comprehensible way of being. Whatever is produced as nonexistent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other. What most fundamentally characterizes abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. To the extent that it prevails, this side of the line only prevails by exhausting the field of relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only nonexistence, invisibility, and non-dialectical absence.

(Santos, 2007, p. 45)

This segregating corset contaminates counter-hegemonic incursions, cornering the 'counter-hegemonics' in a dead end. Indeed, such an unending 'abyssal spiral' frames the field's epistemicidal nature (Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2022a), normalizing the 'other side of the line' as non-existence, denying any possibility not just of a 'radical co-presence', (Santos, 2007), but of a 'radical co-habitus' (Paraskeva, 2023a, 2023b, 2024) of epistemological impulses 'of both sides of the line', as everything beyond 'this side of the line' has been historically produced not as inferior but as 'non-existent' (Santos, 2007). Under such abyssal reason, the curriculum is a theatre of 'sociological absences' (Santos, 2014) of endless non-Eurocentric epistemological differences and diversities reinforcing the field's 'reactionary, regulatory' and epistemicidal condition. Radical, critical, progressive counter-hegemonic movements and intellectuals labored on a platform from within this 'side of the

line'. They were incapable of realizing that it could never be through a divisive and eugenic epistemological plateau that solutions would be found to face humanity's most significant challenges. A divisive logic will produce a divisive curriculum that counters any possibility of a just education and curriculum apparatus. These diverse array of movements fatally ignored 'that the reason that criticizes can never be the reason that emancipates' (Santos, 2014). The world's complex sagas could not be addressed just from and within a divisive cogito. A just society could never be justly imaginable through an unjust reason.

The struggle for just humanity through relevant education and curriculum would be inconsequential without disestablishing such abyssal logic and erroneously and persistently working only within the epistemological matrix that was the riverbed of the field's historical sin: eugenics. As Lorde (2007) taught us, 'the master's tool cannot deconstruct the master's house'. By working within divisive rationality, the counter-dominant groups produced paths as abyssal as those advocated by the dominant impulses, which they fiercely criticized and tried – without success – to deconstruct completely. It is imperative to highlight that the notion of complete deconstruction does not imply 'to discard everything Enlightenment humanism has given us' (Du Preez et al., 2022, p. 2) and the extermination of a given Eurocentric reason, but the complete disestablishment of its absolutist dimension.

More than helpless to fight triumphantly against the field's eugenic nature – although they tried – counter-dominant groups ended up sinking into a eugenic trap, which they created (Jupp, 2023; Paraskeva, 2018). Crafting on Taliaferro-Baszile's (2010) and Henry's (2000) rationale, I argue that counter-dominant perspectives were never able to recognize the legitimacy of the 'Ellisonian self' entirely – situated 'on this side and the other side of the line' – (Paraskeva, 2016; Santos, 2007) from the 'Ellisonian' pluri-epistemic frame and lenses; the 'Ellisonian self', the oppressed, framed as a 'sub person who is invisible and hypervisible needs to be understood as curriculum construction' (Taliaferro-Baszile, 2010, p. 483). Counter-dominant impulses were never skilful to fully deconstruct the eugenic common-sense which produced such 'Ellisonian self' as 'non-existent' and to grasp the challenges of such 'self' from and within 'Ellisonian eyes' and cognitive matrix. The perpetual denial of recognizing the legitimacy of the 'Ellisonian self' through its very own anti-colonial, non-Eurocentric ethos paved the way to deny the existence of a diverse 'Caliban reason' (Henry, 2000)³ and concomitant perpetuation – through the classrooms – of a Prosperous way of existence and thinking as the only form of 'being' and of 'reading the world and the word'. The Caliban eyes 'are bound to be different because they are trained in another culture' (Santos, 2018, p. 175), which must be recognized.

The despotic creed of totalitarian alternatives was based on the monumentality and totalitarian view of Modern Western Eurocentric reason (Santos, 2018) that refused to accept 'science as a plurality of equality valid ways of knowing', as Wexler insightfully denounced (1976, p. 8). They persistently ignore that in a world so epistemologically diverse, it is impossible to address such diversity from one single epistemological angle situated 'on this side of the line'. They disregard that 'there is no single principle of social transformation, and even those who continue to believe in a future socialist see it as a possible future in competition with alternative futures' (1999, p. 202). There is indeed a 'multitude of oppressions, resistances, agents' (Santos, 1999, p. 204) and struggles against the oppressor and the oppressed – as well as dynamics of oppression within the oppressed by the oppressed. The counter-hegemonic movement – like the critical social theories – has underestimated that they 'emerged within a specific context and speaks to that particular context' (Collins, 2019, p. 9).

Reducing the solution to complex social phenomena – most of them historically rooted in our societies – to a single transformative principle was/is a manifest error that triggered many inaccurate interpretations and misdiagnoses, many of them on many occasions overtly falling 'into processes of fabulation; that is by presenting as fact, certain or exact facts often

invented' (Mbembe, 2017, p. 29). The way our field has addressed the dynamics related to the caste system is the spitting image of such inaccuracies or 'fabulation'. The caste system is either a 'Freudian hysterical silence' (Jal, 2023) within our field's solar system (Paraskeva, 2023a) or, when it is flagged, it is subsumed – and annulled – within categories such as 'class' and 'race', thus projecting a fable around the notion of caste that does not correspond to its historical dialectical existence.

The monumentality of the 'Prosperous reason' that domineeringly saturates our field, inept of comprehending caste dynamics from the perspective of 'the epistemologies from the South' (Santos, 2014), reduces the caste system to two fundamental dynamics crossing Eurocentric Western modernity – 'class' and 'race'. In so doing, such reason 'confesses' an enormous lack of arguments to explain caste-graded dynamics in full and depth from the perspective 'of the other side'. Caste is caste, not class; caste of caste, not race (Paraskeva, 2023a). Caste precedes the Empire (Ambedkar, 2016; Paraskeva, 2023a; Teltumbde, 2018) By continuing to labour ignoring the existence of caste dynamics from the perspective of the dynamics of caste – and perversely subsumed caste as a 'class' or 'race' category – our field is committed to continuing to labour within a theory that lies, a theory that speaks to a reality that does not exist. Our field, our theory, does not speak for millions of 'untouchables'. It offers them a world that never existed and continues not to exist. It ignores caste as a 'chamber of horrors' and the eugenicism of Hindutva reason (Ambedkar, 2016; Teltumbde, 2010, 2018).

Such erroneous interpretations surrounding caste-graded dynamics constitute just one of the many examples of the frail nature of a reductive and exhausted character of Eurocentric abyssal reason – which serves as the riverbed of curriculum counter hegemonic matrix. This condition tainted radical and critical movements. They never recognized the exhausted condition of the Eurocentric epistemological platform on which they operated and attempted to deconstruct the curriculum as a social artefact of power and control. They repeatedly ignored warnings from anti-colonial terrains, such as those produced by intellectuals like Franz Fanon (2001), for whom 'the European game was over and that it was necessary to find something else'. They disregard how Modernity – and its epistemological yarn – ended up being a 'misleading dream', as Sandra Harding (2008) eloquently framed it. They awkwardly reject Thernborn's (2010) concerns that 'the twentieth century was the last Eurocentric century'. Their inability to move beyond the Eurocentric epistemological territory prevented counter-hegemonic intellectuals from challenging the logic of coloniality, the economic and cultural rationale of coloniality, and the actual coloniality power matrix (Mignolo, 2012; Quijano, 1991). Counter-hegemonic reason – by refusing to break free from the fundamentally Eurocentric matrix – has co-opted radical and critical agendas, such as many feminist and anti-racial battles, domesticating them (Vergès, 2019).

Through the curriculum, coloniality imposed – belligerently and bloodthirstily – an upgraded divisive cognitive Eurocentric logic, a way of thinking and existing that historically – quasi irreversibly – contaminated billions of human beings 'with fear, inferiority, complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, and abasement' (Césaire, 2000). The challenge of this logic was doomed to failure since it was supported only by the same epistemological matrix that nourished it. Counter-hegemonic logic, by operating only 'on this side of the line', has never been able to recognize the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge and science from its human counterpart 'on the other side of the line', and the human 'consciencism' (Nkrumah, 1964) beyond 'this side of the line'.

In other words, radical and critical intellectuals who have continuously operated fundamentally within the framework of Eurocentric reason have never challenged the underlying reason for the coloniality of knowledge, power, work, gender and being (Escobar, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2018; Lugones, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2018; Mignolo, 2018; Quijano, 1991; Walsh, 2012). As their intellectual footprint demonstrates, they have never been willing

or able to engage in a non-derivative dialogue with anti-colonial and decolonial avenues opened up by and through a non-Eurocentric reason. The much-desired and needed decolonial shift would not be ignited within such radical critical turf. Eagleton's (2003, p. 2) detailed literary description consolidates the recognition that the 'critical multiple veins' are worn out and obsolete, and the focus is entirely distorted.

Structuralism, Marxism, Post-structuralism, and the like are no longer the sexy topics as they were. What is sexy instead is sex. On the broader shores of academia, an interest in French philosophy has given way to a fascination with French kissing. In some cultural circles, the politics of masturbation exert far more fascination than the politics of the Middle East. Socialism is not out of sadomasochism. Among students of culture, the body is an immensely fashionable topic, but it is usually the erotic body, not the famished body. There is a keen interest in coupling bodies but not in laboring bodies.

This refusal to recognize that its reason was drained prevented the counter-hegemonic radical critical progressive river from having the insight to go beyond its epistemic logic by seeking a dialogue with non-Eurocentric epistemological perspectives. The hegemonic and counter-hegemonic impulses clashed with an abyssal, derivative and epistemicidal raging, which despotically claimed all the solutions to address humanity's challenges. Inadvertently, in their struggle against the epistemicide, they aggravated such epistemicide by crafting a reversive epistemicide (Jupp, 2023; Paraskeva, 2016, 2018, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023a, 2023b; 2024). Such complex magnitude of challenges faced by the counter-hegemonic platform, of which I have briefly highlighted three, and the inability and/or refusal – in many cases denial – to counter the bonds of Prosperous' reason as the only reason theoretically strangled the field pushing it into a 'theorycide'.

CURRICULUM THEORYCIDE

There is no future without death.

(Saramago, 2009)

The battles between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic traditions in our field fuelled what I would call, drawing from José Gil (2009), a 'curriculum involution' – a deadlock. In such sometimes-ruthless struggles, neither the dominant nor the counter-dominant platforms were able to claim total victory; thus, both platforms keep facing an increasing void between, on the one hand, the absence of the consolidation of a fully segregated curriculum – we do have countless examples of counter-dominant accomplishments – and, on the other hand, the complete lack of the emergence of the 'new human being'. Moreover, within such an impasse, the epistemicide and the reversive epistemicide (Paraskeva, 2016, 2018, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c) keep being perpetuated. That is, neither the 'old human being' died, nor the 'creation' of the 'new human being' was/is fully materialized. Neither the old social order remained safe nor did the new social order emerge; that is, 'the old is dying, and the new cannot be born' (Gramsci, 1999, p. 276). Crafting on Gil's (2009) framework, these battles represented no 'real' tragedy as they were stripped of their tragic dimension. Instead, a curriculum 'involution' occurred – as Gil (2009) would have put it – which, in too many ways, points to a 'regression'.

Moreover, our field's epistemicidal nature aggravates the impairment of the critical that contaminates the whole and its parts. Its historical metonymic character/capacity should have pushed our theoretical field and critical theorists into a permanent short circuit with

the real. By taking the part for the whole, if such a part results from a divisive construction, the whole is contaminated. The absence of an irreversible short circuit maculated the metonymic character of 'the critical'; it muzzled its unquestionable theoretical wealth that could allow the critical to maintain its hegemony within the counter-hegemonic sphere.

Moreover, such involution and imparity intensified the field's deadlock. Revisiting Pierre Bourdieu and Zygmunt Bauman helps us a great deal here. The concepts of 'immigration' in the former and that of 'strangers' in the latter are crucial to our argument. Critical curriculum theory – which we all owe so much – is far from a nightmare for the hegemonic bloc; long ago, it ceased to produce 'strangeness'; it ceased to be a 'strange' thing created by 'strangers'; it became predictable. Given its epistemological predictability, critical curriculum theory is no longer a threat. It cannot continue to 'mutilate or eradicate' (Bauman, 2005, p. 7) the dominant thinking theory and way of building the world. Critical theory even ceased to be the theory of mutiny (Saramago, 1999, p. 43). Thus, it ceased to be a producer and conductor of the 'immigration of new ideas' (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 7), and even what is intended as new remains reductively tied to an onto-epistemological corset incapable of going beyond the Eurocentric modern western platform. Critical theories are exhausted with a 'Eurocentric conception of time, space, number, causes' (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 9) that somehow abdicates from a radical epistemological co-presence of the 'other side of the line' (Santos, 2014).

The incapacity to overcome such involution and impairment is clear evidence of the curriculum's *capitis diminutio*, which triggers its *hypertrophica theoricae*, paving the way for the *theorycide*. The belligerent battles that opposed hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements and also the struggles within such movements promoted a kind of theoretical *coup d'état*, an attack on the space and time of theory, a theoretical mope, a *theorycide*, paving the way for a dangerous anti-intellectual intellectualism one of the enzymes of the de-skilling of educators. Intellectualism is becoming a rare collectible in school settings (Paraskeva, 2013).

A 'non-theoretical' atmosphere reigns. This is the theory, that is, the theory of 'non-theory'. The theory is, indeed, the absence of theory. Non-disquiets conquered the field. The utopia of theoretical hysteria was buried. We live in an 'atheoretical' moment, a plague that has contaminated the various areas of our field like rust and settled down with all its belongings in the velvet armchairs of our academy. Our field suffers from the same disease that Reckwitz and Rosa (2023, p. 2) diagnosed in the also vast field of sociology, that is, 'a lack of desire to produce a [just]⁴ theory of society'. The *theorycide* peppers the commonsense, which is not necessarily the absence of a theory but the yoke of a 'non-theory theory' momentum. The hunting season for theory and theorists was normalized. There is no theoretical trepidation in our field. We are experiencing paralysis. Worse than theoretical stagnation, we face the 'non-existence' of any theoretical turbulence. The roaring theoretical fires of the past – of an even recent past – are long gone. Our field is no longer theoretically combustible within the vast social sciences arena.

Using a seismographic image, on one hand, one could craft our field's emergence as a crater of a live volcano reflecting a permanent shock – sometimes more intense, sometimes more dormant – of a disorganized multitude of 'dominant and counter-dominant' tectonic plates that try to overlap one another through disorganized and messy successive replicas; a crater that throughout last century has been metamorphosing – consolidating, erasing and conquering new territories – as the lava projected itself uncontrollably and randomly in the most disparate directions; on the other hand, however, it looks like it seems that with the passing of the last century, such volcano lost the vigour and theoretical boiling that once enjoyed. Today, we do not feel the same intense seismic activity that occurred throughout at least the first three-quarters of the last century. Looking at the seismograph's records, we can say that the tectonic – that is, theoretical – tremors diminished sharply towards the end of the previous century and, in many respects, have entirely subsided. This is not to say that

there are no theoretical movements today; however, such movements do not show the same lava – that is, theoretical robustness and centrality – of the past. The absence of theoretical debate does not mean that the theoretical questions have been resolved, though.

Another theory is essential – admittedly itinerant – which can only be achieved with another theorizing, another epistemological logic, and which, faithful to the ethical principles of epistemological justice, helps us to ‘arrange the words’ in another way (Saramago, 1999, p. 86). There is no future without death, as José Saramago (2009) would say. Critical and post-critical theories, in general, and critical educational and curricular theory, in particular, as we have thought and talked about it, must die (Paraskeva, 2018, 2021a, 2022a, 2022b). It is crucial to ‘hospicing modernity’ veins of ‘the critical’ – as Oliveira (2021) would frame it. This is not the end of critical theories and pedagogies. It is a way to produce truthfully a pluri-diverse non-derivative supra-disciplinary critical approach to address the endless diverse onto-epistemological challenges of the world. After all, as Deleuze and Guattari (1984) remind us, ‘it is not death that breaks [the itinerant theorist]⁵ but seeing, experiencing, thinking too much life. It is organisms that die, not life’ (p. 143).

While provocative, the challenge is not begging for an end in Eurocentric terms. It begs something radically different. It begs ‘the otherwise’ (Paraskeva, 2022c). We must fight collectively so that, as Gil (1998) would say, ‘critical theory does not become petrified as a tribal theory’. An excellent way to address such insufficiencies is to commit to an ‘exfoliation processes’ (Gil, 1998, pp. 127–128.9), which dismantle the current divisive ‘complicated conversation’ (Pinar, 2004). It attempts to deconstruct, decolonize, and decanonized such conversation – not complicated at all, but epistemicidal; it attempts to ‘des-epistemicide’ such complicated conversation, which is itself epistemicidal (see Huebner, 2002; Huebner & Paraskeva, 2022). Although these concepts are not synonymous, they express common trends in the battle against the nature of the epistemicidal reason that dominates our field. One of these common trends is recognizing the legitimacy and existence of infinite epistemological perspectives beyond the Eurocentric platform. Decolonization involves a deconstruction of the dominant reason and the dismantling of the absolutism of the Eurocentric canon. Such a ‘complicated conversation’ has been epistemicidal as it has occurred fundamentally within the parameters determined by Eurocentric reason. As Le Grange (2018, p. 7) argues, ‘complicated conversations are learning spaces in which power can be negotiated and actualized in productive ways’. Such learning spaces must foster non-derivative conversations, recognizing the legitimacy of the world’s endless epistemological perspectives.

This is a battle of the infinite, a battle for the endless and within the infinite, yet not an infinite battle. The ‘infinite is then the possible’ (Pessoa, 2006, p. 56), a present possible ‘as the only reality is the eternal present, the undying now’ (Pessoa, 2006, p. 47). Critical theories and pedagogies need a new logic for a possible utopia of a just world. We must put ‘theory back’ at the epicentre of curriculum debates – another theory, however. A non-derivative, non-abysal, a just one for a decent life, as Santos (2018) would advocate.

PEOPLE'S THEORY AGAINST THE FIELD'S EPISTEMICIDAL ETHOS

ICT is an epistemology of liberation that can persistently challenge structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life.

(Darder, 2016)

Sentient of the field’s gridlock – and deeply influenced by anti-colonial and de-colonial non-Eurocentric approaches – I have proclaimed the epistemicidal nature of the field (Paraskeva, 2011) and advocated the need for a ‘frontal’ confrontation with its historical

epistemicidal reason. I argued for the need for a deterritorialization *tout court* and to assume an itinerant theoretical curriculum (ICT) standpoint (Paraskeva, 2011, 2018). Curriculum reason is divisive, eugenic in its hegemonic and counter-hegemonic Eurocentric platforms and it is crucial to move towards a non-derivative non-abysal attitude (Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2018, 2021a, 2021b; Santos, 2014), a deterritorialized one, a decolonial one, an itinerant curriculum theoretical path (Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2021a, 2021b). 'Reinventing the curriculum' to counter, among other issues, 'the moribund state of affairs of the field' (Priestley & Biesta, 2018, p. 6) implies a commitment to an itinerant approach. While Priestley and Biesta (2018) aimed to disestablish Scotland's late curriculum policy compass, the diagnosed symptoms uncovered cross the field at local, national, and international levels.

Such confrontation challenges the field's historical sociological absences (Santos, 2014), questions the institutionalization of the visibility and existence of the absolutism and monumentalism of particular forms of knowledge – fundamentally Eurocentric – at the cost of infinite invisibilities and non-existences created, pushing curriculum theory and the field's history out of the colonial zone. I called this momentum 'the epistemological turn', a decolonial one (Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2018).

ICT has been embraced by scholars within and beyond the United States (Jupp, 2023; Paraskeva, 2024) committed to what Enrique Dussel (2013) calls an analectic – or anadialectic – approach to breaking the abyssal rift produced by hegemonic and counter-hegemonic modernist / post-modernist wrangles which persistently produces the Global South as non-existent. ICT places the theoretical struggle against the epistemicide and reversive epistemicide as 'center of gravity' of a new utopian logic, one that is committed to being a performative utterance (Austin, 1962), that is, a 'theory – itinerant, I reinforce – that does something by saying it'. ICT is responsive to the world's epistemological diversity and difference. Echoing Deleuze (1994), ICT counters the representationalist thought that has subjugated our thinking and does not capture the global scale of difference. The *ICTheorist* is an epistemological pariah – a just political take deeply committed to social, cognitive and intergenerational justice.

To do that, critical and post-critical theories and pedagogies – the way we have been thinking and doing – need to end; they need to deterritorialize; these theories and pedagogies need to radically delink from their own oppressive epistemological Western Eurocentric matrix without renegading it and commit to a non-derivative co-habitus of multiple difference and diverse epistemological traditions within and beyond the Eurocentric matrix, thus disestablishing the abyssal thinking and being (Paraskeva, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2024; Santos, 2007). Crafting on Du Preez et al. (2022, p. 3), ICT is a 'post-humanist itinerantology' that 'evokes why not everything Enlightenment humanism has given us should be abandoned, while at the same time arguing for a posthuman perspective of humanism that can enable us to rise to the challenges of our times'. As Zhao (2019, p. 27) states, 'ICT is a form of decolonial thinking that recognizes an ecological co-existence of varying epistemological forms of knowledge around the world paying attention to knowledges and epistemologies largely marginalized and discredited in the current world order'. ICT is a new conceptual grammar (Jupp, 2017) that moves itinerantly within and beyond '(a) the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being; (b) epistemicides, linguicide, abyssality, and the ecology of knowledges; and (c) poststructuralist hermeneutic itinerancy' producing a new non-abysal alphabet of knowledge (Paraskeva, 2022a, 2022c).

ICT aims towards 'a general epistemology of the impossibility of a general epistemology', as (Santos, 2007, p. 67) would put it. It is a human rights theory, as Santos (2009) would undoubtedly frame it. ICT implies a different theorist who challenges and is challenged by a theoretical path that is inexact yet rigorous; such ICTheory(ist) 'runs away' from any unfortunate canon; ICT is a call to decanonize the field (Paraskeva, 2015); it implies a theorist who is committed to moving towards an 'abyssal' epistemological

terrain, provoking abstinence of theoretical uniformity and stabilization. The ICTheory(ist) is a volcanic chain that shows a constant lack of equilibrium and is always a stranger in his/her language. It is not a sole act, however; it is a populated solitude. ICT challenges any form of *indeginestoude*; that is, it challenges any form of romanticization of indigenous cultures and knowledges, and it is not framed in any dichotic skeleton of West-rest (Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a).

ICT, as Darder (2016, 2022, p. 12) argues, is 'an epistemology of liberation that can persistently challenge structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life must be cultivated, nurtured and embodied within the blessed messiness and unwieldy chaos of everyday life within schools and communities'. *ICTheorists* de-link from myths of the myths of Eurocentric science (Harding, 2008; Paraskeva, 2018; Popkewitz, 1976; Smith, 1999).

ICT, as inherently an exfoliation metamorphosis, a 'sill of infinite mourning' (Couto, 2008, p. 105); it challenges the 'occidentosis vertigo' – as Al-L-Ahmad (1984, p. 31) would have argued – that crosses the field, a plague from the West, an illness like tuberculosis that saturates the field through an 'occidentotic' reason normalizing myths and dogmas which gives white reason a superior ethos (Al-L-Ahmad, 1984). ICT counters such 'occidentosis' echoing diversity and difference as the 'hallmark of freedom' (Al-L-Ahmad, 1984, p. 113); it departs from the so-called 'mechanotics' – to rely on Al-L-Ahmad (1984) terminology – or what I call the 'sepoys' of coloniality (Paraskeva, 2018); that is, those within the Global South who assume an unacceptable subservience to a reason that has historically oppressed them, and subjugate themselves to the Eurocentric matrix to explain and counter the deplorable dynamics of segregation they have faced historically.

ICT is 'not merely invocation or evocation though; it exemplifies how ideas can be added powerfully to the sources of curriculum studies by substantially including Works' (Schubert, 2017, p. 10) above and beyond the Modern Western Eurocentric epistemological dominant and counter-dominant traditions. ICT is a full-blast, non-derivative curriculum integration (Beane, 1997), differentiating it from all dominant and counter-dominant theoretical approaches.

Its 'itinerant' nerve fosters one of the crucial characteristics of the field, which has been historically repressed by the absolutism of the Eurocentric reason: the potential of its infinite capacity for epistemological malleability. The curriculum is much more than a territory where specific epistemologies flow. It is always a starting point and a point of intersecting confluence of diverse epistemological rivers. Such malleability is insightfully crafted by Priestley and Philipou (2018). Curriculum development, they argue, unfolds

across multiple sites, in interaction and intersection with one another, in often unpredictable and context-specific ways, producing unique social practices in a constant and complex interplay, wherein power flows in non-linear ways, thus blurring boundaries between these multiple sites.

(Priestley & Philipou, 2018, p. 154).

Drawing on Collins (2019, 2000), ICT responds, deepens and improves the field's epistemological malleability, instigating an itinerant intersectionality aware that no category or social agent enjoys a homogeneous standpoint; it is sentient that as 'mental structures shape the way we see the world' (Lakoff, 2004, p. xv) human beings exist, grow and think within endless different and diverse ways of reading the world and the word; thus, *ICTheorists* know fully well that there is no social justice without cognitive justice. The radical co-habitus of multiple epistemological perspectives would be a reality through such malleability. ICT is thus a commitment to a non-derivative 'transcritique' (Karatani, 2003; Paraskeva, 2024). That is, the *ICTheorist* avoids exploring 'dialectical syntheses of opposites and antagonistic positions' (Žižek, 2004, p. 121) and reads the word and the world 'neither from one's

viewpoint, nor from the viewpoint of others, but to face the reality that is exposed through difference (parallax)' (Žižek, 2004, pp. 121–122; Karatani, 2003).

ICT provides a non-derivative dialectic 'itinerantology' (Paraskeva & Huebner, 2023) that paves the way to delink and decolonize (Smith, 1999) – while honouring the legacy of the critical path, taking it to a different level; it is also a decolonial attempt to do critical theory (Kellner, 1989, p. 2). In so doing, an itinerant curriculum theory rethinks utopianism and responds to Habermas's (1981) challenge of modernity as an incomplete project committed to decolonizing. It helps one to understand how it is crucial to question the accurate epistemological colours of our battle for a just education and society. Our task is not to 'shoot the utopists' (Santos, 1995) – those within the so-called generation of utopia (Paraskeva, 2023a, 2023b) fought tenaciously for a just curriculum towards a world we all wish to see (Amin, 2008) – or the utopia that inhabits within us and bubbles out of the debris of modernity.

Unsurprisingly, ICT causes concern in dominant and counter-dominant hemispheres. The itinerant theoretical commitment implies radically altering historical grounds of epistemological comfort; it means recognizing that the South exists, going to the South and learning from and with the South – as Santos warns us (2014). It also implies admitting that one cannot understand and explain the world's endless diversity and difference and its challenges only through the limits constructed by the English language – 'an enzyme of coloniality'. Why must the oppressed explain their oppression in the oppressor's language and within the oppressor's epistemological terms? ICT reacts against 'exceptional thinking in normal times, and it is committed to thinking of the exception in exceptional times' – as Santos (2009) would have put it.

As educational scholars, our task is to delink and decolonize it, a crucial commitment towards a ruthless critique of every existent epistemology as a *sine qua non* condition for a just curriculum theory. This is undeniably the very best battle we can engage to open up the Western Eurocentric canon of democracy (Santos, 2007) and, in doing so, pave the way for a non-abysmal and just society through a non-derivative curriculum theory. ICT is an onto-epistemological declaration of freedom and independence. It is the people's theory that goes much deeper than the Henry (2000), the 'wretched of the earth' (Fanon, 2001) defined and constructed in Eurocentric terms, echoing the world's epistemological difference and diversity. In that sense, ICT will always be an uncertain manifesto for a manifesto of uncertainties. ICT is a theory now, against the field's epistemological ethos!

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Endnotes

¹ A vast array of intellectuals and movements in the United States and the United Kingdom, working fundamentally within a Eurocentric matrix, have given us significant critical inroads challenging dominant curriculum traditions. For this purpose, it would be worth examining the contributions of Dewey (1916), Addams (2023), Bode (2023), Counts (2023), Rugg (2023), DuBois (2023); Adams and Horton (1975) Bell et al. (1990) Pinar (1974), Apple (1979), Giroux (1981), McLaren (1986), Greene (1973), Huebner (1976) Young (1971), Young and Whitty (1977), Bernstein (1977), Kirkwood and Kirkwood (2011), among so many others.

² Parentheses mine.

³ I crafted on William Shakespeare's terminological dichotomy, 'Prosperous' vs. 'Caliban'. The latter is decanted as subhuman, dysphoric, abject, the colonized, while the former is crafted as human, superior, the colonizer.

This terminology serves as a matrix to countless past and contemporary intellectuals in various areas, from literature to philosophy, political science, and sociology, such as Ernest Renan (1878) *Caliban, suite de "La Tempête"*, *Drame Philosophique*. [Caliban, sequel to 'The Tempest,' *Philosophical Drama*] Paris: Calmann Lévy; Roberto Fernández Retamar (1974) Caliban: Notes Towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America. *The Massachusetts Review*, 15 (1), pp. 7–72; Manuel Ferreira (1997), *No Reino de Caliban, [In the Kingdom of Caliban]* Lisboa: Plátano; Paget Henry (2000), *Caliban Reason*. New York: Routledge and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2003) *Entre Prospero e Caliban. [Between Prospero and Caliban]* *Novos Estudos, [New Studies]* 66, pp. 23–52 respectively.

⁴ Parenthesis mine.

⁵ Parenthesis mine.

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