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The ethics in the knowledge

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“Ethics, knowledge, responsibility and non discrimination”

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To talk about ethics, knowledge, responsibility and diversity force us to perform a historical exercise and several political questions. In this communication I will start with a reflection in order to propose later on several questions, for which I believe everybody presently here is collaborating to provide the answer.

What are we talking about when we speak about the difference? In what way are we forced by the differences in culture, gender, age, physical appearance, among others, to think about our individual and collective responsibility to the different challenges proposed by our living together and the globalization?

What we call difference is not something new. In the history of humanity we found thousand of examples of the ways that different groups have considered themselves different from others due to some characteristics.

And these “external” designations, since few times the ways of designation of the own group were considered, were made under different ways of violence. The “external” to the own community was considered “barbarian” or “savage”: characters of non-proper behaviour for the invading or receptive group.

In this sense, the religious beliefs promoted catalysis of the discriminatory common sense notions, as well as the self-organization of the excluded groups at the time to resist the rejection, the discrimination and the repression. In this context, the discriminated groups along the history because of religious, ethnic, gender, sexual or any other reason, tend to place in brackets the universal pretensions of the groups or nations that believed to fulfil the catalogue of “real” or “true” human that for centuries coincided with the image and resemblance of a god.



In this context, we believe that the difference is not a data from reality, but a construction made, based in ethical and knowledge values and crossed by the relations of power. With this I do not pretend to say there are no real differences in the world, but what is definitive at the time of thinking politics or ethics, we must attend to how we read these differences, in other words, how we help to build these differences.

As an example we have the way that afro descendents groups have designated themselves starting from the accumulation of fights for their rights along centuries of slavery, poverty and exclusion. As we all know, the descendents of the African continent were designated “externally” as blacks. Nevertheless, if we want to be realistic, this designation is wrong, since the colour of their skin is not exactly black, since Africans vary the colour of their skin with tonalities of brown. It was around this pseudoscientific description about the blackness that racism built a discursive device that was able to convince millions of persons about the existence of “real” differences that in fact were merely the ethical-political construction to justify the racism and with it, the colonial exploitation and the expansion of several western empires. The biologist racism is a finished expression and luckily today under discredit, of violent gnoseological conception that imposed and still imposes in minority circles, series of prejudices that justify the exclusion.

In the historization of the afro argentine community, Pablo Solomianski speaks to us about the “inverted epistemologies” as those ethical-discursive constructions in which those that have the word to define the diverse groups are not the persons affected by that designation, but the dominant groups in that knowledge relation. In this sense, the “inverted epistemologies” are true systems that build and justify the asymmetric ways of relation among social groups. Considerations around the labour capacities, intellectual level, sexual uses or behaviour habits should not be considered as aseptic categories in the anthropological, historical or ethical discourses, but as notions that belong to the economies of the oppression speeches within the frame of the colonial, imperialistic companies and other forms of exclusion that legitimize the order of social, political and economical power

This is how we can read in the so-called foundation text of the argentine literature, *El Matadero* (the slaughter house), a description of supposedly afro descendents fighting among themselves for entrails of cattle. A whole literary operation, which reflects several cultural and ethical considerations of the dominant group, which despises the popular sectors due to its identification with the banners of Rosas in the Buenos Aires of the XIX century.



Different social groups reacted against these “inverted epistemologies” that justify and reproduce the violence based in thegnoseological and ethical construction. In these resistance strategies was and is necessary to think again the relation among knowledge, ethics, diversity and responsibility, since as civil servants, but also the civil society as a whole: teachers, investigators, social and political activists, and citizens; we need to learn to acknowledge that among our relations with the so-called others, there are prejudices interfering and we work against them.

As an example, the way the majority of the movement of the African Diaspora, reconsiders their self-designation. As you know, the *World Conference against racism, xenophobic and connected forms of intolerance*, held in the south-African city of Durban decided to re-name themselves as afro descendent movement, except the movement in Brazil and USA that was able to re-signify in their countries the notion of “blackness” and reevaluate the term this way. In our country, the organizations choose the notion of “afro descendent” as a way to force to think about the relation that is held with them, as well as the different ways of discrimination that are exerted in a systematic and daily way. The decision of the afro movement places as priority what we are discussing today here, in other words, the relation between the ethics as value systems and the justifications that reproduce behaviours.

At this point, it is evident the individual and collective responsibility that concerns to us: the relation with the other from the very moment that it is mediated by the word, it is already marked by a device of valuation and exclusion. And it is here where the State, as executor of public policies must watch over for the inclusion of the groups, vulnerated along history in order to grant their recognition, visibilization and exercise of their rights. This also implies to scrutinize about their estimatizations that negatively value a group and that takes away considerations of their rights, exhibiting them starting from a supposing naturality or ability while simultaneously hiding their real conditions of existence made by the exclusion, the discrimination and in many cases even death.

The “mercantilization of the difference” is the reverse of the currency of discrimination. This strategy is common to mass media of communication, where people are usually exposed depending on their ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, but in parallel, their existence conditions are hidden, marked by the exclusion and discrimination. It is not odd anymore to access through TV to life histories, testimonies or fiction characters that belong to some damaged group, but in that exhibition little is spoken about



the real and concrete situations of poverty and marginalization that said groups are exposed.

Depending on these considerations the National Plan against the Discrimination (PNcD) prepared and presently applied by the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI) run by the Ministry of Justice, Security and Human Rights of the Presidency of the Nation, carried out a diagnosis starting from considerations of the own discriminated groups. In other words, both in the diagnosis as well as the collection of proposals, there was an attempt to invert the device of “inverted epistemologies” giving voice to the own groups.

In our opinion it would have been necessary to go deeper in this strategy thinking in quotas of discriminated groups for the development of the National Plan against the Discrimination. However, the Plan constitutes an excellent tool that works on the facts as the “minimum level” from which we are thinking the anti-discriminatory politics in our country and grants a theoretical foundation from where the action of the public politics of the State can be based. Nevertheless, the INADI deals with diverse and ample problematic of discrimination and for each subject we have forums of the civil society that accompany our procedures and that are led by members of the vulnerable groups, passive actors of the process of social and cultural transformation.

This operation apparently simple, of granting voice to the own affected people, is not a simple enterprise from the moment it demands an effort in dialogue, reflection and contraposition of positions. In this sense it is vital the contribution of a thinker as Habermas, who in his reflections around the ethics of dialogue and responsibility, summons us to take as starting point of any individual, collective, public or private action the dialogue about and with those that we impact in a direct or indirect way.

Under this frame, the contribution of social movements, groups and any form of grouping turns vital, even more bearing in mind that recently the political speeches have privileged the production of socio-political movements that take the cultural, gender and sexual differences as base point for demand agendas.

This “granting a voice” must be accompanied with another strategy that we are implementing: “empower and open the procedure”. We are convinced that the articulation of the decision places with the expertise, the capabilities and real as well as effective participation of the groups, opens the



possibility to put into action ethical forms of marrying the State with the civil society.

Here we have as an example that our Institute included in the Argentine Delegation in the negotiations of the Revision of the Durban Conference, afro descendant and native people for the first time in the institutional history of our country. And this was not only a gesture, but the results can be seen in the agreement reached by Latin-American to review the Conference enlarging those reached by this international instrument and including discrimination typologies that were not previously considered.

Due to the above we can conclude that the relation among knowledge, responsibility, non-violence and diversity is part of a formula that demands from us a dosis of political courage, creativity, listening and self-transformation as a way to start designing this society and this nation where to live in equality and together in diversity will not be a remote wish, but a part of a dialectic daily construction built with joy. The new concepts of democracy and participation are today completed, enriched and benefitted with the inclusion of new social actors that historically were made invisible and that today are beginning to exercise their just rights and occupy their spaces for the construction of a non-violent, inclusive, participative society... for all.

Thank you very much.