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The majority of Andean peoples living in Bolivia today are Aymara or Quechua, although there are also other populations (particularly Amerindian populations) living in the country. Cusicanqui's text does specify neither all kinds of Andean peoples taking part in THOA nor the precise contexts in which they lived. For this reason we opted for the general terms "Andean populations" and "indigenous peoples" whenever convenient.

FROM IMAGES TO WORDS:
THE PENDULAR METHOD AND THE ANTICOLONIAL
PERSPECTIVE OF SILVIA RIVERA CUSICANQUI

Luana Goulart

In "Sociologia da imagem: instrumento, linguagem e hermenêutica fenomenológica – sobre o des-cobrimento do ser" (2021), I underlined the importance of language, especially verbal language, for the *emergence* of Being according to Heidegger, particularly emphasising the relationship between words – which are the common scope and means of work in philosophical activity – and truth. This served as a background to present another perspective about the relation between truth and Being, taking as a basis the thought of the Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. As I tried to demonstrate there and also in "Acontecimentos apropriativos e redução ontológica em termos de modo de ser, atividade e produto: tecendo conexões entre a Atenas de Platão e a América de Waman Puma" (2023), Cusicanqui makes an important contribution to considerations about the relation between truth and ontology, or even, the relation between language and Being by proposing an interesting method to approach themes concerning life in colonized societies. This method, developed and applied by Cusicanqui while teaching the subject Sociología de la Imagen at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, consists of a movement from images to words, going through the register of the unsaid and the said. In order to understand how this method works, it is necessary, first of all, to present the context and the reasons for which it was developed.

Besides her teaching at the university, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui directed the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA). The THOA was responsible for collecting and transcribing oral histories provided by Andean populations.²With the THOA, Cusicanqui was confronted with two major difficulties of sociological and ethnographic work: that of transposing oral accounts into written form, and that of transcribing accounts of the history of these populations in indigenous languages and translating them into Spanish, within a society marked by colonization. The accounts of the Amerindian participants had the relationship between colonization and the social problems experienced in Bolivia as a point of interest, which thus brought this relationship to the focus of Cusicanqui's work as they were translated by the intermediaries participating in the THOA into the language of the colonizer.

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Thanks to this, by means of the subject she taught at the university, Cusicanqui could contribute to the addressing and understanding of this relationship in an academic environment in which students belonging to populations that fell prey to European colonial domination study in the colonizer's language and in which the main concepts, theories and authors studied were also European, i.e. in which the very process of learning takes place at the heart of a series of crucial unfoldings of colonization.

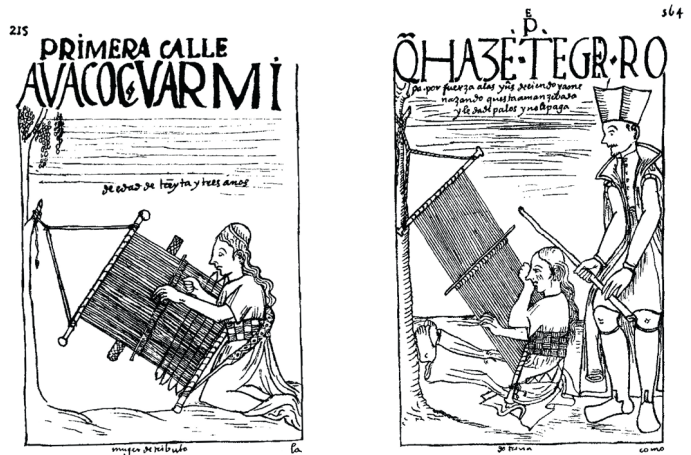
Noticing these issues in the dynamics of learning, Rivera Cusicanqui develops the aforementioned method: a *pendulum method* by means of which students created and identified images that expressed, in some way, things that cannot be expressed through Spanish language. In a second moment, there is an attempt to talk about these images, and with this, some of the difficulties of “translating” and “understanding” these images in the Spanish language are presented and materialized. Thus, with this method, conflicts between the different views of the world exposed through, on one hand, the images, and on the other, the official Spanish language spoken at the university were manifested. The connection between languages and worldviews, as well as the compatibilities and incompatibilities between the different languages and worldviews were perceived differently by the use of this method, which mobilized different languages to try to highlight the *unsaid* and, when possible, bring it to being *said*. These two have an important role within colonial discussions, for according to the author: “Hay en el colonialismo una función muy peculiar para las palabras: las palabras no designan, sino encubren [...]” (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010, 19). In these situations, the images could also function, in a direct analogy with Heideggerian thought but not without a series of criticisms to it, as a means of *un-covering* Being. For Rivera Cusicanqui, we will find in the images the refuge where we will perceive the unsaid. Through the *pendulum method* developed by Rivera Cusicanqui, then, it should be possible to interpret what instrumental historiography itself communicates to us: the ontological multiplicity obscured by centuries of colonization.

Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) takes as a departure point for her analysis some drawings made in the seventeenth century by Waman Puma de Ayala. Here, I will analyse some of these images and their potential contribution to think about colonization. As already described in “Sociologia da imagem: instrumento, linguagem e hermenêutica fenomenológica—sobre o des-cobrimiento do ser” (Goulart 2021) and “Acontecimentos apropriativos e redução ontológica em termos de modo de ser, atividade e produto: tecendo conexões entre a Atenas de Platão e a América de Waman Puma” (Alves 2023), Rivera Cusicanqui selected these images among the more than three hundred drawings of the letter made by Waman Puma between 1612–1615 to the king of Spain, called *Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*. This letter remained virtually in oblivion for a long time and was rediscovered by a European researcher in a library in Copenhagen in 1908. Written in Spanish and containing many expressions, slang and songs in Amerindian languages not translated into the language of the king, its text is

→ Fig. 1
 Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala,
 Primera calle, Auacoc Uarmi
 [tejedora]/de edad de treinta y tres
 años/mujer de tributo. In:
De Ayala 1980, tomo I, p. 150.
 © Public Domain.

→ Fig. 2
 Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, Padre/
 Que hace tejer ropa por la fuerza a las
 indias, diciendo y amenazando que está
 amancebada, y le da de palos y no le
 paga. In: *De Ayala 1980, tomo II*, p. 11.
 © Public Domain.

structured on a cornerstone: the notion of *Mundo al Revés*. This term refers directly to the transformations caused by colonization in the life in the Andean territory which the letter of Waman Puma concerns. In his drawings, it is possible to perceive part of the significant changes that occur with the submission of this territory to Spain. We see in the images made by Puma crucial aspects of the social organization of this territory, of which it is worth mentioning the distribution of groups with different social functions or *class* in accordingly different streets, as well as relations between time and rites that permeate productive and religious activities. Through Waman Puma's letter and especially through his drawings, we can understand important aspects of his view on what and how the Inca world, in what is nowadays Bolivian territory, was portrayed from the already colonized Andean world in which he found himself. To give the reader a more concrete experience of the reach of Rivera Cusicanqui's method, some of the images of Waman Puma's letter were selected to be presented here. They are analysed in greater level of detail in the works already cited, among them "Sociologia da imagem: instrumento, linguagem e hermenêutica fenomenológica – sobre o descobrimento do ser" (Goulart 2021) and "Acontecimentos apropriativos e redução ontológica em termos de modo de ser, atividade e produto: tecendo conexões entre a Atenas de Platão e a América de Waman Puma" (Alves 2023). (They are in order: Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3 and Fig. 4.)



Regarding the social transformations portrayed by Puma, the first two images selected show the case of the women weavers. In the Inca world described by Puma in his letter the weavers occupied a place of social prestige and high degree of respect (Fig. 1), while in the world transformed by colonization their place changes radically (Fig. 2). The issue of colonization is presented with contrasting images in Puma's drawing: in it we see the ancient practices, values and social meanings that formed and structured the Inca communities modified and re-signified in the colonial world, that is, in what he calls *Mundo al Revés*. It is interesting to note that Puma not only talks about this transformation, he also draws it. It may seem that the two forms of language are redundant, or

perhaps reducible to the same meaning, but, as Rivera Cusicanqui argues, this is not the case.

In turn, Fig. 3 addresses the encounter between two different, possibly incompatible ways of living. The question that appears in the image can work as a background for the possibility of thinking and trying to understand how language itself is implicated and implies different worldviews and ways of living. From the image, it is possible to think not only how language itself manifests these differences, but how it can also lead to misunderstandings, confusion and present itself as a symptom of incompatibilities. In particular, it should be noted that verbal speech is only one of the elements that make up Puma's image. The exercise of thinking about this image with, and, contrarily, *without* verbal speech invites the possibility of thinking about the encounter between these two forms of life in different ways, based on the perception that the image manifests possibilities that cannot be exhausted in verbal speech. The difficulties involved in discussing encounters such as this one, in which signs and meanings are transformed and translated back and forth between different languages – body, gesture, sound –, and how they are often manifested in details – in clothes, looks, feelings – without often becoming manifest in words, is something that shows in the image itself. How to account for the ways in which one deals with food, housing, the divine, i.e. with the most diverse elements of a life that is not like ours and that, more often than not, escapes our effective understanding, or, even when it is understandable, cannot be put into words? Following Rivera Cusicanqui's directions, this is one of the tasks we can try to accomplish by recourse to Puma's images.

→ Fig. 3

Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, Conquista, Guáyna Cápac, Candía/ Inga/ español/ cay coritachu micunqui [¿comes este oro?]/este oro comemos/ en el Cuzco. In: *De Ayala 1980, tomo I*, p. 267. © Public Domain.

→ Fig. 4

Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, Corregimiento/Que el Corregidor convida en su mesa a comer a gente baja, indio mitayo, a mestizo y mulato, y le honra/provincias. In: *De Ayala 1980, tomo I*, p. 375. © Public Domain.



Finally, we should also draw attention to the fact that there are multiple possibilities of understanding or, at least, of thinking about each one of these images, and the contrast between different such interpretations can be better understood from the points we will raise with the last image presented in this article (Fig. 4). As Rivera Cusicanqui tells us in *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (2010), a first look could lead us into thinking that the figure of the little Inca

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in the image could refer to an Inca child serving European adults, for example. This kind of interpretation could suggest that the image portrays some kind of child labour abuse, something recurrent in Spanish colonisation. But this mistake could be easily avoided by those who know a little of the Aymara language, because it is clear that the idea most akin to that of humiliation and oppression is expressed verbally by using words like “belittlement” or “diminishment”. Therefore, Puma’s drawing indicates, when we place it within its specific context, interpretive paths very different from those one devises from European perspectives and languages. For those who experience colonization from a perspective linked to an Andean language, the image gains other contours of meaning when compared to those who experience it or try to understand it in the interpretive frames determined by a European language.

It is possible that the images drawn by Puma help us to perceive, recognise and deal with the differences and difficulties in understanding life in as much as it is conditioned by the encounters, clashes and transformations of worlds affected by colonization. The difficulty of approaching, understanding and dealing with this theme finds in Puma’s images and in the method developed by Rivera Cusicanqui a new horizon to try to help us depict and deal with life and experiences in a world pierced through by colonization.