

Editorial

Revista Temas so kindly asked me to write an editorial and, while writing, my first reaction was to give an academic account of the richness and diversity of the topics covered by the articles in this issue, trying to find a common thread approach. Indeed, the diversity of articles shows this common thread, forming by the three pillars on which the journal is based: humanities, social sciences and pedagogy.

However, the other reaction answers to the interpellation felt by the different Peace Research centers in different universities in the world with regards to the transformation of the Colombian armed conflict by peaceful means, in these historic moments. It would be an extension of the arrogant legacy of Spanish colonization to say “we are going to tell you what you should do” (“Metropolitan Shaman” Legacy?”).

In the first place, because there has been so much suffering by so many people over the years that the researcher faces astonishment, stupor, admiration and, almost reverence. These are the senses that Western philosophical tradition understands as the origin of philosophizing and that expresses the Greek verb *thaumazein*. In our Master and PhD programs, we have learned from the students and professors from every part of the world that we need to confront the topics of Peace, Conflicts and Development from the highest academic rigor. But not from a position of academic desire to do something in the best way possible??, but precisely because of the practical concern of transforming, through pacific means, the suffering that some human beings are capable of producing in others. From this perspective, in these historical moments in Colombia, we have to be attentive and to feel challenged and learn from your ways of making peaces.

In the second place, we have decided not to talk about conflict resolution, but conflict transformation. Academically, Conflict Studies has gone through a first phase in which the term “conflict resolution” was used: at that point, it seemed that the conflict was something negative that we should overcome at all costs, including at the expense of justice. There was a second stage in which we talked about managing conflicts, allowing a comprehension of conflicts as negative or positive, depending on how we had to manage it. However, among researchers, this view was too tied to “management” and companies as well as to the wrongly-called “human resources” (I think that resources are coal or oil, but human beings?). In fact, with the current economic crisis caused by neoliberalism, there is a tendency to promote, including in school curricula, the “enterprise” culture and “entrepreneurship”, as if each human being were an individual company and had to deal with the economic crisis economic from their own initiative (“let whoever is able to, save himself/herself”), rather than committing to a social transformation of unjust structures and producing inequality, exclusion and even expulsion from the economic system. The third stage for Conflict Studies is focused on transformation. It seems that conflicts are not solved once and for all, but are transformed: they are positive or negative according to how we transform them and our commitment with regards to this transformation, as the current case of Colombia, through peaceful means. Violent structural conflicts that produce inequalities, marginalization and exclusion are not resolved, but we are changing the ways to tackle them and we observe the possibilities of transforming them.

In the third place, our proposal of Philosophy to make peaces, and since we are realistic, we have learned that human beings have skills and competencies, as we said, to generate a lot of suffering, deaths and all kinds of violence, direct, structural and cultural or symbolic. However, despite the fact that “realists” have made the argument here and say that “we can do nothing” (and consequently their prophecy is fulfilled because by doing nothing, nothing is transformed by peaceful means), we also have capabilities and skills to treat with care and affection, from an interpersonal point of view, and with justice, from a structural and institutional point of view. The two statements are “realistic”; making just one of them as the truth is completely biased. So, in our programs, we like to say that “we, the pacifists are the one that are realistic”, because we recognize the complexity of the skills and competencies of human beings. We recognize that as human beings, we can do a lot of bad things ourselves, but also, many good things, hence we can demand accountability how we do what we do. It would also be dangerous from mediators or from the Centers for Peace Research, in this case outside of Colombia, to “impose” the capabilities or competencies to be developed to transform conflicts by peaceful means. It’s like when

we say we're going to do a project "to empower" for example, this group of indigenous women. The people or groups should be the subjects that look for their own empowerment. What can be done is to create jointly equal opportunities, so that the people can exercise their skills and competencies (that is what is "real") to transform conflicts by peaceful means. It means recognizing these capacities to the people who have suffered and creating conditions for its implementation. We have learned it from the exercise of capacities of using direct violence for so many years but, above all, of the exercise of these capacities unfortunately latent and without being aware of having these capacities: all these social movements, civil society groups, women collectives, groups and local communities. An important clarification about the use of the word "competency": here, we understand it as capacity to carry out an action and not as the "competitiveness" that permeates all the spheres of human life imposed by neoliberalism entrepreneurship.

Another appealing question of the current peaceful transformation of conflicts in Colombia is that it seems that, finally, we are learning that "there is no violence that ends all the forms of violence". When I was a teenager in the 60s of the past century during the Spanish dictatorship, we were idealizing the emergence of Latin America and Colombian guerrillas, and even the priests who used to radicalize their Christian faith to take weapons: the structural violence, marginalization, misery and exclusion produced by capitalism were so important and generalized that it seemed there were "no other remedy" but to take up arms against the oppressive system. At that point, it was still not question of cultural or symbolic violence, but of the necessity of "awareness" of oppression, of standing on the side of the oppressed, understood as a kind of "just war". We have learned, after so much suffering, that there is no violence, although as a response or reaction, that ends all other forms of violence. Violence always begets more violence.

Unfortunately, the change in the ways of addressing the structural violence of oppression and attempts of legitimization by cultural violence, do not "relieve" violence. Instead, they reduce the direct suffering from direct violence, but not the original structural violence that may be more subtle, coated with cultural violence justifying marginalization, exclusion and even expulsion of so many human beings. Even, from neoliberalism, these forms of violence are giving the feeling that they are "exercises of freedom". Expelled and excluded versus individual entrepreneurs who, from their freedom, can individually succeed because they are competitive (now yes in the sense that we reported above). For expelled and excluded, cultural arguments are used to justify violence under the banner of "there was no remedy", or as "bad luck" or, worse, that "these people are lazy". They are "human waste", "garbage", "leftovers" and are completely expelled from the economic system.

The peaceful transformation of conflicts as a way to make peace is no utopian naiveté. On the contrary, it subverts the notion of courage and bravery, and tries to transform the subtle cultural violence in cultures to make peace, from our own abilities and skills. Courage is not about using guns, but about compromising ourselves in the creation of other type of cultures, ways of cultivating the relationships between human beings while being attentive to the marginalized, excluded and expelled. To do so, we need to learn from oppression based on gender, which opens our eyes to understand other forms of oppression, learning from the discipline of nonviolence exercised by the various social movements.

We are anxious about learning of the processes of peaceful transformation of conflicts from the proper capacities of the communities, social movements and various actors, in this case, in Colombia.

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