

## Critical Research Ethics as Decolonial Praxis: A comment and responses

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# Critical Research Ethics as Decolonial Praxis

## Current Debates

Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo

In the auditorium of a prominent university in Europe, with several Filipino and Indonesian colleagues, I watched and listened with anger as a White male professor delivered a keynote on the Philippine elections at a conference on Southeast Asian studies in summer 2022 . He was given the prestigious platform despite his lack of research on the Philippines. Based on a three-week visit during the elections, he aimed to explain why the son of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos won. Without engaging with works by Filipino knowledge makers nor with the country's complex political history, he argued that Marcos Jr., who is from Ilocos in the north, won the elections by consolidating votes in the north and south of the country through his partnership with vice presidential candidate Sara Duterte, daughter of outgoing president Rodrigo Duterte, who is from Mindanao in the south.

Lacking any political, theoretical or methodological insights, he instead showed the audience photos and videos of his trip, cracking one joke after another about electoral politics, campaigning and violence in the country. "Look at these chairs," he enthusiastically said at one point while showing a photo of a polling precinct in an elementary school, "they are so tiny they look Lilliputian!" He quipped, too, that Filipinos do not vote in secret, as though people simply allow this to happen. In another, he showed a clip of an election campaign video of women dancing. But instead of analysing the video, he merely showed it for laughs at the expense of Filipinos who were portrayed as driven by emotions and kinship ties, unthinking and lacking in agency or nuanced political subjectivities and history, thus rehashing old colonial and racist tropes and scholarship on Philippine politics (see Ileto 2001). Worse, he bragged about bravely going to a province that has a reputation for electoral violence , guffawing that somebody was even killed while he was there. The image of a swashbuckling colonialist going into chaotic, "un-

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civilized” and “barbaric” places and surviving to tell the tale comes to mind. One would think that people would walk out on such a speech. On the contrary, his jokes elicited much laughter from a significant portion of the scholarly audience. Tellingly, none of the Filipinos, nor the Southeast Asians and Europeans who approached us afterwards in solidarity, were laughing. We were, instead, fuming.

At the end of the talk, several Filipino scholars called out the speaker for his orientalist, simplistic, reductionist and harmful portrayal not only of the elections but also of the country and its people. A Filipina professor spoke of how painful this talk was; that Filipinos and the situation in the Philippines should not be joked about, especially on that day when Marcos was sworn in as president. She added that her life is in danger when she returns to the Philippines after the conference because her university has been “red-tagged” as communist and terrorist by the government, a designation that has put activists and their organisations at risk of attacks by the military.

We pointed out, too, that if the speaker genuinely wanted to explain why the son of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos won, he should have referred to works by Filipinos who have been working on this topic longer and with more care and analytical insights than he. Better yet, invite a Filipino to give the keynote. We thus called out the association’s Board for their choice of keynote speaker and for not inviting a knowledge maker from the region or from the diaspora to give at least one of the two keynotes, which were both delivered by White scholars. This is not just an issue of representation. It is also an instance of the White scholar yet again being given the platform and the power to speak about others, without any form of accountability, despite harmful effects.

This appalling display of orientalism, of irresponsible and extractive and therefore unethical scholarship, is evidence of the pervasiveness of coloniality in academia. It contributes to and reproduces epistemic violence and epistemic injustice through harmful and dehumanising representations as well as erasure and disregard for non-Western epistemologies, knowledge-makers, agency and history. It is not merely that it takes up space that should be given to knowledge makers from the global South. It also reinforces global inequalities in knowledge production that strengthen Eurocentric, specifically White and male, power and knowledge. This illustrates that in certain corners of academia, the importance of confronting the embeddedness of knowledge production in imperial, colonial and patriarchal ideologies, practices and histories – and its complicities with oppression – has yet to take root, more than two decades since Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith argued that academic research is neither an innocent nor distant exercise, but, in its entanglement with European imperial and colonial projects, had in fact become “one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (Smith 2012: 1). As feminist, indigenous and post-and-decolonial scholars have also long asserted, research has stakes, and researchers have mul-

multiple accountabilities for the knowledge we produce. Research, in other words, is simultaneously an epistemological, political and ethical endeavour.

I thus posit a critical form of research ethics that is oriented towards a re-humanising and redistributive praxis. Such research ethics is an integral part of decolonial praxis, which is the dynamic process of thought-action-reflection-action aimed at rehumanising the world, redistributing resources and producing counter-knowledges and counter-praxes (Freire 1970, Walsh 2018). It challenges and holds accountable Eurocentric and patriarchal ways of being, doing, thinking and relating in order to imagine and build alternative worlds, presents and futures.

I acknowledge that the term decoloniality itself has become the subject of much debate. It has been criticised, for instance, for appropriating indigenous struggles, epistemologies and methodologies, for not reflecting on decolonial scholars' and activists' complicity with coloniality, and for ignoring settler colonialism and land dispossession.<sup>1</sup> Others lament that it has been emptied of its significance, appropriated by White scholars and those with proximity to Whiteness who do not address structural issues of racism, exclusions and silencing that preserve White privilege and power (Moosavi 2020, The River and Fire Collective 2021). These are very important and urgent criticisms that decolonial thinkers and activists need to seriously consider and address. At the same time, however, the gains of decolonial movements in drawing attention to structural and global inequalities in knowledge production, epistemologies and ways of being and relating – and to the rootedness of these in the division of the world's populations into degrees of being human due to the continuing legacies of European colonialism – as well as in proposing, developing and experimenting with methods to dismantle these practices of dehumanisation and in envisioning and realising a pluriversal world within and beyond academia,<sup>2</sup> deserve to be continuously engaged with.

That is, we need to continuously sharpen and evolve decolonial critique and methods instead of relinquishing them to the dust bin of knowledge making and political action. This is especially necessary since the gains of decoloniality are the result of decades of multiple strands of struggles in various parts of the world. And I suggest that one of the central ways to move decolonial projects forward is through a critical form of research ethics oriented toward decolonial praxis, which I outline below. This is not an exhaustive list of features of decolonial research ethics, and indeed, numerous works serve as valuable guideposts and inspiration.<sup>3</sup>

1 Cf. Moosavi 2022, The River and Fire Collective 2021, Tuck / Yang 2012, Whyte 2018.

2 Kessi et al. 2022, Grosfoguel 2012, Maldonado-Torres 2016, Smith 2012.

3 See Chilisa 2012, Kessi et al. 2022, Maldonado-Torres 2016, Rubis 2020, Seedat / Suffla 2017, Smith 2012, Tambinathan / Kinsella 2021, The River and Fire Collective 2021, Tuck / Yang 2012, Uperesa 2016.

This research ethics confronts the practice of ethics within power relations between researcher and interlocutors – or, rather, knowledge co-producers including research assistants and translators (Schmeidl forthcoming) – and between scholars of the global North and the global South. I take the global South here to refer not only to economically disadvantaged nation-states but also to spaces and people who have suffered due to capitalism and colonialism (Mahler 2017). As a metaphorical concept rather than geographical, the South includes those who have been marginalised, erased and silenced in the North and who resist this oppression (De Sousa Santos 2016). Critical research ethics is also sensitive to and critical of structures of inequalities *within* post-colonies that have shaped research conduct and knowledge production about the global South by Southern scholars themselves; by those with relative power and privilege in the web of multiple colonial and imperial relations within and in relation to the global South; and those with “hybrid” positionalities (Castillo 2022, Grosfoguel et al. 2014, Moosavi 2022).

This necessitates examining the embeddedness of our research and knowledge production within longer histories of colonialism and imperialism, and the ethical implications of the colonality of knowledge to seek ways to address these power relations. In locating knowledges, bodies, privilege and practice within intersecting systems of power and oppression, critical research ethics thus espouses an intersectional approach and critical reflexivity.<sup>4</sup> This involves the praxis of thought-action-reflection-action regarding one’s positionality, place of enunciation, privileges and biases as well as responsibilities and accountabilities during and after research – that is, in all acts of representation and engagement. These are enacted not as a mere navel-gazing exercise nor as a reinforcement of White innocence, but rather to undo relations and structures of inequalities.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, research ethics that positions itself as a decolonial endeavour challenges the ways in which dominant research ethics guidelines preserve the privilege and power of the researcher in making ethical decisions and in collecting data and bringing them elsewhere for analysis (Decoloniality Europe 2013, Uperesa 2016). It is critical as well of the legal and bureaucratic orientation of the current dominant ethics guidelines that do not necessarily cultivate ethical consciousness and behaviour (Castillo 2018). Such an ethical stance furthermore questions how ethics codes, such as the US Belmont Report, valorise rationality and individuality, including in conceptualising justice, which disregards the importance of community, relationality and emotions in making ethical choices (Alvarez Castillo forthcoming).

The alternative to these is a research ethics that centrally considers for whom, how and why we are doing research. It is built on care and accountability, and is grounded on relationality and the sharing of knowledge and on the just and

4 Chilisa 2012, Crenshaw 1989, Suffla et al. 2015, Tambinathan / Kinsella 2021, Uperesa 2016.

5 The River and Fire Collective 2021, Uperesa 2016; see also Moosavi 2022.

fair collaboration with communities we work with.<sup>6</sup> It reflects and works on the implications of the knowledge we produce, of authorship and ownership of knowledge, of our methods and dissemination.<sup>7</sup> This necessitates critically examining the power and privilege of the researcher to interpret and theorise and be the sole ethical decision-maker while reducing “informants” to mere sources of empirical data who are incapable of producing knowledge and theory.<sup>8</sup> This is a research ethics that recognises on equal terms knowledges produced in the global South and by other historically marginalised knowledge producers and knowledge archives, and strives for non-exploitative, non-extractive and reciprocal knowledge production. As a process of thinking-acting-reflecting-acting, it calls for finding and developing ways of working alongside knowledge co-producers instead of speaking for or about them; of including in the research design a feedback process and dialogue with knowledge co-producers and marginalised knowledge makers and practitioners; of giving up space and dismantling privilege; of reflecting on and addressing our complicity in coloniality; and of embracing the humility as well as discomfort that come with this process.

Critical research ethics, is, ultimately, anti-racist and driven by the desire for social justice. As Alvarez Castillo (forthcoming) writes, “research ethics is (or must be) about justice, solidarity, caring and empathy”. With this orientation, research ethics can thus become an integral part of undoing the coloniality of power, knowledge and being that continues to shape research and academia and that impacts our knowledge co-producers’ lives and communities, and can contribute to advancing evolving decolonial processes and movements.

## Remaking Relations for Decolonial Futures

June Rubis

As I write this, I am on unceded Gadigal Country, also known as Sydney, on a fixed-term work contract and visa. If the decolonial project is one that aims to dismantle the continuing legacies of colonisation through institutions, practices and the hegemonic “Western” ways of understanding the normative world that are still present today, then it would be hugely remiss for us to not contend upfront that decolonising the university must first foreground the First

6 Chilisa 2012, Tambinathan / Kinsella 2021, The River and Fire Collective 2021, Smith 2012, Uperesa 2016.

7 Chilisa 2012, Rubis 2020, Smith 2012, Uperesa 2016.

8 Maldonado-Torres 2016, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017, Rubis 2020, Uperesa 2016.

Nations struggle to assert sovereignty<sup>9</sup> and confront White imperial histories that built these institutions.<sup>10</sup> Yet academic institutions continue to be complicit with on-going imperial, colonial violence that aims for a “neoliberal disciplining” (Springer 2016: 286 in Lobo / Rodríguez 2022) and the reproduction of colonial Whiteness through everyday practices.<sup>11</sup> I have observed the creation of decolonial symposiums that assert the desire to “uplift and centre Indigenous and Global South voices, experiences and knowledges” while Global South Indigenous staff themselves are dismissed and ignored.

Such “decolonial” attempts are superficial at best, where chosen representatives of conflated alterity are hand-picked and the “Other” is encouraged to speak “only up to a point, and in a special way” (Said 1995: 293). While recognising that decolonial writing often comes from a different positionality that speaks towards the material conditions of experience, sometimes these voices are nevertheless either muted or domesticated (Noxolo 2017). Such intrinsic violence of the political economy of knowledge may include ignoring or diluting Indigenous or other critical embodied scholarship that directly challenges White legacies and worldviews embedded within institutional practices (Cusicanqui 2012, Noxolo 2017). Less critical voices that uphold academic knowledge extraction from vulnerable communities through a “white possessiveness” (Moreton-Robinson 2015) are instead centred. This forestalls any engagement or confrontation with Indigenous territorial sovereignty, Whiteness and White privilege in institutions and academics (of all origins) themselves, while projecting a radical and “diverse” façade. In the process of possessing or capturing “decolonisation” as a subject of expertise or a funding mechanism, (re)colonising acts follow, through a process of dilution and domestication (Noxolo 2017) or a subversive complicity (Grosfoguel 2002, 2008). This is not dissimilar to the overall process of decolonisation, in which one group of elites is replaced by a new one (Fanon 1963). Lewis R. Gordon (2020) therefore advocates that decolonial thinkers go beyond decoloniality for the sake of decoloniality, following Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh’s (2018) consideration of “decoloniality *for*”.

Going beyond decoloniality requires remaking relations towards a liberatory justice. Rosa Cordillero A. Castillo describes here a critical form of research ethics oriented toward decolonial praxis. Castillo asserts that as researchers, we continually have to ask ourselves why we are doing research and how we can practise ethical collaboration, accountability and grounded relationality with the communities we work with. This call follows Franz Fanon (1963) and other radical Black and Indigenous decolonial thinkers who argue for estab-

9 Moreton-Robinson 2000, Tuwihai-Smith 2012, Tuck / Yang 2014, Todd 2016.

10 Ahmed 2012, Daigle / Sundberg 2017, Bhambra et al. 2018, Connell 2019, Mignolo / Walsh 2018, Lobo 2022.

11 Ahmed 2017, Noxolo 2017, Lobo 2022, Lobo / Rodríguez 2022.



lishing genuinely ethical relations beyond the ontological and epistemological selves<sup>12</sup> while continually attending to our ontological and epistemological habits (Sundberg 2014, Todd 2016, Mabele et al. 2021). In remaking our relations, we have to take account of our own accountability and responsibilities. Famously, we are reminded that decolonisation is about the praxis, not just deconstruction (Tuck / Yang 2014, Smith 2021) – but how often do we turn inwards to examine within ourselves?

Gordon (2020: 35) further asks: what if these ethical relationships are colonised by the *colonial normative life*? Here, I consider the additional layers of accountability and relationality within the ethical relationships that Castillo advocates for, while working on settler-colonial lands and maintaining research interests in the Global South. Following Pat Noxolo et al.'s (2011) call for unsettling geographies of responsibility, I assert that accountability and ceremonial relationality, existent within Indigenous communities around the world, should not stop outside communit(ies) of research interest and nation-state or research borders. As long as I remain on unceded Aboriginal lands, I have to think deeply about how I am contending with my own obligations, responsibilities and relationalities to nourish Country (Smith et al. 2020, Theriault et al. 2020), while understanding that Country refers to lands and waters, all living and inanimate beings, ancestors, stories, weather and song lines of Aboriginal homelands (Kwaymullina 2008, Smith et al. 2021). On a more explicit political front, I have to consider how I can support First Nations sovereignty as a racialised minority settler on a short-term visa. Yet such expectations for the self are compounded by the additional weight of facing the racism and hostility upheld by academics invested in Whiteness and by White institutions. This is not dissimilar to racialised scholars based in Europe or UK institutions who face the domestication of decolonial thought within these institutions, as Castillo and many others describe.<sup>13</sup> I am not alone in this dilemma. Many racialised scholars in the “Global North” have drawn similar connections<sup>14</sup> and have turned towards building solidarity and relationality practices alongside the political theory in their work.

Recently, I gave a talk about my on-going work and collaborations with various collectives, including my work for a global membership-based consortium that advocates for Indigenous and local community-led conservation in international policy-making processes. This work draws on on-going relations I have developed over the years. I was later challenged on my body of work, when it was suggested that I did not have the time to focus on policy-work and relation-building and still be an academic (implying the need to follow normative career(-ist) steps towards a tenure-track job). I agreed wholeheartedly and joked that I was indeed a “bad academic”. I had after all chosen to spend

12 Maldonado-Torres 2008, 2011; Smith 2019, 2021; Gordon 2020; Tynan 2020; Wilson 2020.

13 Esson et al. 2017, Noxolo 2017, Mabele et al. 2021, Fakunle et al. 2022.

14 Kobayashi / de Leeuw 2010, Pulido 2018, Kalinga 2019, Lobo 2020, Lobo / Rodríguez 2022.



the years of my fixed-term postdoctoral contract further developing relations and focusing on more immediate impacts for Indigenous peoples through policy-writing and global advocacy, while fighting alongside the union to keep my job when unable to reside in Australia for two years because of the closing of the border. Facing such work conditions during the pandemic, I had chosen to focus on my personal health and the needs of my emerging community.

Following Lauren Tynan, relationality needs to be a conscious and embedded practice, despite academics being conditioned to “research in non-relational and extractive ways, using strict time frames, restrictive academic writing styles, hierarchical notions of expertise and colonial discourses of ‘discovery’, ‘finding the gap’ and ‘collecting data’” (2021: 599). It is an attentive practice that requires much emotional energy and focus that many of us tend not to disclose or realise ourselves. In order in order to retain our own strength and to nourish our relations while knowing our *response-ability* (Bawaka Country et al. 2019), certain protocols – of relating, belonging, responsibilities and knowing our place – ought to be followed.

With my intersecting positionalities, as a Bidayuh woman who was born and raised in Sarawak, Malaysia, and now temporarily living in the “Global North” as a scholar with a Malaysian passport, I have at times experienced false courtesy and extraction from academics from whom I had hoped for solidarity because of similar research areas and shared academic interests – yet never from my compatriots or other academics from countries of similar economic backgrounds. Sadly, while not uncommon (Kalinga 2019), the multiple asymmetries embedded in academic politics have made me rethink protocols within relations between the “Global North” and “Global South” (also described with its overlapping pluralities by Castillo), such as in research collectives.

I am a member of several such collectives, from “Creature Collective” to “Not Lone Wolf”, Indigenous-led research collaborations such as the Bawaka and Yandaarra collectives, and the Institute for Freshwater Fish Futures co-founded in 2018 by Métis scholar Zoe Todd. In these shifting collectives, overlapping and (re)merging over different spaces and times, we consider how our protocols could “contribute to the remaking of relationships that foster more-than-human accountability, reciprocity, and capacities for resistance” (Therriault et al. 2020: 893; see also Hernandez et al. 2021).

We came together once more in 2021 with additional like-minded geographers of different career levels and geographical locations. After one year’s online organising, in which we focused on checking on each other during the pandemic, a three-day online symposium was created in 2021 to bring us together in a larger group to have a digital *yarn*, an Indigenous form of cultural form of conversation (Smith 2019, Hughes / Barlo 2021). Enacted protocols of relations included attuning to the environment (Kanngieser / Todd 2020), led by Amer Kanngieser, and weaving practices, led by Lauren Tynan. We shared

poems and stories of resistance, grief and rest. We discussed what institutional change might look like through different perspectives within and outside the academy, and engaged on emerging ideas for future-proofing. In this symposium, we considered once more how we can conceive of and enact relationality through existing protocols (Kanngieser et al., forthcoming). As a collective, we call ourselves “Not Lone Wolf”, recognising that as academic researchers, we have never done our research in isolation, and that we depend on a range of interrelationships and interdependencies with humans and non-humans.

Slow, ethical relation-building through space and time is more radical, in its own quiet way, than generating endless decolonial “products”. The former allows for “breathing spaces of fearlessness and generosity” by providing nourishing encounters within the academy (Lobo 2022: 134). There are multiple legitimate and incredibly valuable ways of being an academic. Focusing less on capturing terms like “decolonial” and creating extractive encounters, and instead centring our efforts on nourishing and meaningful ethical relationships with each other may indeed prove more radical and transformative as institutions crumble.

## Rehumanising, Redistribution and Emotional Labour in Decolonial Academic Praxis

Antony George Pattathu

As a male, BIPOC social and cultural anthropologist looking at my own discipline, I contend that decolonial praxis and ethics must deal with the colonial continuities and complicities from the past to the present and work toward strategies that prevent their perpetuation in the ways research is practiced, exercised and taught. This means, as Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo argues, grounding our ethics in positionality, relationality and accountability for the work we do and considering our privilege and opportunity to support the communities we work with, by not merely reflecting on their struggles, but also standing with them.<sup>15</sup> The incident that Castillo shares with the readers to open her piece is symptomatic of a larger problem in the academic landscape, and particularly within the humanities, which leads her to demand critical research ethics as a decolonial praxis, with a redistributive and rehumanising praxis at its centre. Decolonial scholarship has for many decades been at the forefront of promoting critical research ethics by considering the entanglements of colonialism, empire, racism and Whiteness.

15 Abrahams 2021, Diallo / Friborg 2021, TallBear 2014, The River and Fire Collective 2021.

In this response I want to take up some of Castillo's arguments, to critically reflect and elaborate on these as well as examine possible repercussions. I will take a closer look at the roles of rehumanising and of Whiteness in the context of decolonial praxis and critical research ethics and the importance of the emotional dimension that is involved in the current decolonial debates, connecting them to considerations of emotional labour and redistribution.

What does rehumanising and redistributive practice mean in a neoliberal academic setting embedded in global racial capitalism (Robinson 2000)? And how can we, as academics, address these issues directly, when research dynamics between the Global North and the Global South are still deeply asymmetrical? This remains so, despite the many efforts undertaken to level these asymmetries with programmes helping researchers in the Global South and North to cooperate more intensively. The structural challenges addressed early on by Faye Harrison (1997, 2008), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2019, 2021) and others are still very much present in the sheer fact that funding is often coupled with a focus on the Global South, rather than laying the focus on the roots of these asymmetries in the Global North. The South becomes a resource that is also mirrored in language use, citational practices, access to discourses and valuation of academic works and institutions on the basis of locality, prestige and elitism.<sup>16</sup>

These dynamics reveal some of the problems and starting points for redistributive measures that need to be addressed in a decolonial praxis. Redistribution means working against and with these currents to create a sustainable transformational change, aiming at the discourses, finances and institutional structures that uphold the asymmetries of coloniality. The demand of rehumanising plays right into these problems and should be connected to already existing ethical standards within the different disciplines of the humanities. As an anthropologist, I see a long line of ethical considerations most prominently mentioned from the writing culture debate (Behar / Gordon 1995, Clifford / Marcus 1985) up to the current decolonial debates on research ethics, and woven into the code of ethics in the respective countries and localities (e.g. American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics or the German Anthropological Association Ethic Guidelines). Looking more deeply into this question and what Ryan C. Jobson and Jafari S. Allen (2016) have called the decolonising generation, the work of Sylva Wynter (2003) is most helpful. She has argued for new emancipating forms of being human, interwoven with the potentials of decolonial engagement. In Wynter's work, this understanding of being human is pitted against the colonial condition and its ongoing presences, and her understanding is deeply rooted in the scholarship of decolonial approaches.<sup>17</sup>

Schematically, this understanding of being human is conceptualised against a colonial fabric that creates a scale in which the White, cis, Christian hetero-

16 Grosfoguel 2007, Mbembe 2016, O' Sullivan 2019, Thiong'o 2017.

17 The River and Fire Collective 2021, Kaur / Klinkert 2021, McKittrick 2015, Mignolo / Walsh 2018.

sexual “Man” becomes the naturalised universalism and power structure that permeates colonial continuities through history in the developments of humanism and Darwinian evolution, constructing “Man” as rational, non-emotional, grounded in reason and chosen by natural selection (Wynter 2003). This power dynamic of “Man” is inherent in colonial encounters and underlies the creation of humanism as part of Renaissance and enlightenment thinking (Dhawan 2014, Wynter 2003). The valuation of people and their lives today often follows intersectional lines that create different hierarchies of systems of inequality that depart from the power centres of “Man”. Drawing on Quijano, Mignolo, Fanon and many others, Wynter illustrates how this dilemma leads to forms of modernity and poverty born out of the colonial conditions of our time (Mignolo / Walsh 2018, Mignolo / Escobar 2013). Analysing education, attainment gaps and the prison industrial complex, Wynter shows how lives and genres of being human are valued differently (Wynter 2003). What Wynter offers us in the complexities of her analyses, is a path to rehumanising academia, by taking “Man” out of the praxis of being human.

In this conceptualisation I do not understand White as an essentialised identity category, but rather as a fluid marker, which gains meaning within different formations and systems of Whiteness in relation to locality, ethnicities, social and political context, that can be understood as systems of power informed by direct and indirect racialisation and inequality connected to White privilege.<sup>18</sup> In the South Asian, and particularly the Indian context, an example of this relationality of how idioms of Whiteness unfold can be seen in casteism and forms of anti-blackness (Thomas 2021).

The incident described by Castillo above illustrates these power dynamics of Whiteness in academia, but also reveals an emotional dimension that is an integral part of decolonial and anti-racist work. There is an empathy and awareness gap that has made it possible for an incident like this to occur even as the people most affected have to do the labour of addressing the problem. Students of colour in the classroom experience this as much as BIPOC academic staff.<sup>19</sup> The problematic relation between coloniality, racism and Whiteness in its current form is reflected in such incidents and is increasingly the object of academic enquiry. For a decolonial praxis to inform critical research ethics it is most important that these dynamics of emotional labour are critically addressed, to create an awareness and change within the structures of emotional labour within academia.<sup>20</sup>

Self-reflexivity is an integral part of the ethics of all disciplines, which on the one hand is an advantage to help overcome and address the issues at hand. On the other hand, it has become increasingly obvious that this self-reflexivity is

18 Ahmed 2007, Barnett-Naghshineh / Pattathu 2021, Bhopal 2018, Kline 2021.

19 Ahmed 2018, Doharty et al. 2021, Prasad 2020, Roig 2021, Sequeira 2015.

20 Ahmed 2018, Bhabra et al. 2018, Brodtkin et al. 2011, Klinkert 2021.

also a shield that – in its relationality to Whiteness and questions of racism – has also helped to prevent a structural transformation of the humanities.<sup>21</sup> Victoria Klinkert identifies this as the *ego reflexivus* of the discipline of anthropology, which she sees as coupled with White ignorance. Looking into the field of agnotology, she describes how knowledge and ignorance are connected and how it is necessary to humble the ego of the discipline and of the researchers in the face of colonial history:

In the case of humbling anthropology the ego that needs to be diminished is that of the *ego reflexivus*. Only when we root ourselves in the complicity of a history that is the precondition of modern-day racialized epistemology and commit to a reflexivity that traces these colonial continuities into the present, can we counter the detrimental nature of this ego's arrogance. (Klinkert 2021: 315)

Such concepts and reflections on these dynamics are an ongoing process of decolonial praxis and the creation of broader awareness as a part of critical research ethics. The question remains: What will be the consequences of the incident Castillo describes, or the repercussions to her piece? As Sarah Ahmed and many others have described for cases of racism and discrimination in the institution, the incident might be, most probably, reduced to an exception, a slippage in the broadly “racism free” landscape of academia (Ahmed 2018; Prasad 2020). Or the description and call for critical research ethics as decolonial praxis will be seen as “moralising”, as missing the point of ethics as an analysis and interrogation into morals. But as Didier Fassin reminds us, anthropologists have always been morally invested and have not adhered to a positive understanding of morals but rather have thought about morals through an “ethics of discomfort” (Fassin 2012).

Problematising morality in incidents like these often acts as a reflexive shield for academics. In this way their own positionality remains hidden, detached from the moral sphere that they are themselves a part of. Their role remains invisible, transcending the political realities of colonial continuities and their effects. Here we can start to think about how there is an emotional and intellectual economy at work in the way the debates on decolonial praxis are led. Through a thorough discussion of positionality, it is also possible to indicate these fields of emotional and intellectual labour in the academic landscape and create an awareness of the way in which collaborations in research are built. In the respective disciplines this starts in the ways in which these disciplines are taught, in the canons, classrooms and the curriculums where the transformations for the coming generations of researchers begin.

Decolonial praxis offers us a way to reshape our critical research ethics in a rehumanising and redistributive way to address colonial continuities, emotional

21 Diallo / Friborg 2021, The River and Fire Collective 2021, Wekker 2016.

labour discrimination and racism, Whiteness and power dynamics within and outside of academia. It is a transformative praxis to create more awareness and humility for the future of our disciplines.

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