Colonizing and Decolonizing Minds

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[Preface]

The colonization of each other's minds is the price we pay for thought.[1]
Mary Douglas

Whereas the most visible forms of political colonialism have for the most part disappeared from the planet by the end of the millennium, several of its consequences remain with us. Criticism of colonialism, accordingly, has shifted its focus to its more subtle and lasting manifestations. Prominent among these are the varieties of what came to be known as the 'colonization of the mind'. This is one of the forms of 'epistemic violence' that it is certainly the task of philosophers to contribute to identify and struggle against. 'Postcolonial' thinkers have undertaken not only to analyze this phenomenon, but also to devise strategies for effectively combating and hopefully eradicating colonialism's most damaging aspect - the taking possession and control of its victims' minds.

My purpose in this paper is to contribute, qua philosopher, to both of these undertakings. I begin by trying to clarify the nature of the colonization of the mind and its epistemic underpinnings and the typical reactions to it. Next, I examine examples of these reactions with their corresponding analyses and strategies. The assumptions underlying them reveal certain inherent paradoxes, which call into question the possibility of a full decolonization of mind. I conclude by suggesting an alternative strategy and a series of means to implement it.

1: What is 'colonization of the mind'?

In this section, the range of phenomena that fall under the label 'colonization of the mind' is extended beyond its usual application and briefly toured; the main features of the phenomenon are described; its epistemic characteristics are analyzed; and the typical 'instinctive' reactions to mind colonization are considered.

1.1 The metaphor 'colonization of the mind' highlights the following characteristics of the phenomenon under scrutiny here: (a) the intervention of an external source - the 'colonizer' - in the mental sphere of a subject or group of subjects - the 'colonized'; (b) this intervention affects central aspects of the mind's structure, mode of operation, and contents; (c) its effects are long-lasting and not easily removable; (d) there is a marked asymmetry of power between the parties involved; (e) the parties can be aware or unaware of their role of colonizer or colonized; and (f) both can participate in the process voluntarily or involuntarily.

These characteristics are shared by a variety of processes of mind colonization, regardless of whether they occur in socio-political situations that are literally categorized as 'colonial'. Therefore, 'colonization of the mind' may take place through the transmission of mental habits and contents by means of social systems other than the colonial structure. For example, via the family, traditions, cultural practices, religion, science, language, fashion, ideology, political regimentation, the media, education, etc.

Consider education, for instance. The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has analyzed a typically mind-colonizing educational paradigm, which he suggestively dubbed the 'banking' model. In this paradigm, a commodity (knowledge) is 'deposited' by those who have it (the teachers) in the minds of those (the pupils) who don't have it; the task of both is basically passive: the former's, to transmit and the latter's to absorb 'knowledge'.[2]

1.2 The 'banking' model displays the characteristic *epistemic* nature of mind colonization: What grants the colonizer (in this case the teacher) the right to intervene in the pupil's mind, thereby colonizing it, is the fact that the former possesses and the latter lacks *knowledge*. This is a commodity that everybody is presumed to desire by virtue of its epistemic properties, namely *truth* and *universality*, whence its *applicability* and *utility* derive.

Analogously, parents have the *experience* their children lack, customs and traditions embody *proven methods* of survival in natural and social environments, religion grants *transcendental validity* to human behavior, language provides *reliable tools for mental operations* such as identification, conceptualization, classification, and inference, science supplies the basis of *technologies that work*, and ideologies, of *policies that are presumed to work*. The expressions in italics refer to epistemic warrants that yield epistemic legitimacy and thereby endow teacher, family, tradition, religion, language, science or ideology each with its brand of *epistemic authority*.

Notice that in most of these cases those who perform the colonizing are either not aware of the nature of their action or of the epistemic and other damaging consequences of their action.[3] Quite on the contrary, they believe

they are helping the colonized, by providing them with better beliefs and patterns of action that improve their ability to cope successfully with the environment. Furthermore, they are also unaware of the fact that for the most part their minds have themselves been colonized by others, whose agents they become by attributing to them the same epistemic authority they rely upon vis-à-vis those they colonize.

In order for any of these sources of authority to become, in turn, an effective vehicle of mind colonization, it must, in addition, obtain the support of power structures capable, by a variety of means, of transmuting epistemic authority into *social* authority and so to ensure its enforcement. These means range from semiotic displays of authority, through overrating some sources of epistemic authority and devaluating others, up to appealing to overt and covert forms of discrimination, making use of socio-economic rewarding or punishment, and sheer violent coercion.

Nevertheless, however powerful the pressure of its means, social authority alone, without an epistemic authority counterpart, isn't sufficient, for it cannot per se generate the authority necessary for succeeding in the colonization *of minds*. Success in this endeavor cannot be achieved by coercion and fear alone, for it consists in inducing a set of beliefs in the colonized mind via some sort of inferential, persuasive process - a process that is cognitive in nature. Its basic constituent is the implicit acceptance by the colonized of a 'rule of inference' that automatically grants superiority to the colonizer's epistemic warrants or reasons when they clash with those of the colonized. By virtue of this rule, when comparing the colonizer's and his own grounds for holding a specific belief, the colonized will usually tend to prefer the former's reasons and consequently adopt the colonizer's belief. In other words, colonization *of the mind* is achieved when the colonized adopts the colonizer's epistemic principle of 'invidious comparison'.[4] This means his implicit acceptance of the colonizer's asymmetric distinction between a 'primitive' mind - that of the colonized - and a 'superior' or 'civilized' one - that of the colonizer. It is this acceptance that establishes a sort of implicit agreement between colonized and colonizer which justifies the recurring inference by both to the effect that, in any matter involving cognitive abilities, the former's performance must be presumed to be inferior to the latter.

1.3 Of course, not always the colonization of mind is successful and yields acceptance and resignation by the colonized, although its rate of success can be considered typical, in so far as it has been surprisingly high throughout history.[5] Another typical reaction of the colonized to the colonization of mind drive of the colonizer, characteristic of the relatively recent 'decolonization' movement, is characterized by all out rejection and resistance. These two types of reaction are not the only ones, but they deserve special attention because, though on the face of it contrary to each other, they are widespread and equally 'instinctive' or 'natural'.

Prima facie, the two reactions are indeed radically opposed.[6] While the former acknowledges the epistemic superiority of the colonizer and adopts it as a principle of colonized belief formation, the latter denies the alleged asymmetry, argues that it is groundless because based on an 'invidious

comparison' procedure that is necessarily biased, and therefore refuses to adopt the presumption of epistemic inferiority of the colonized. While the former assumes the compatibility of adopting the colonizer's conceptual framework with the preservation of the colonized identity, the latter stresses the incompatibility between these two attitudes, arguing that the adopted or adapted colonizer's mind ultimately expels the original mind of the colonized, and thereby obliterates the latter's true or authentic identity. As far as the political consequences are concerned, while the resigned acceptance reaction does not recognize in the adoption of the colonizer's beliefs and forms of thinking one of the ways through which colonizers enhance their control over colonized behavior, the resistance reaction denounces it as a means of acquiring control over the will of the colonized, thus becoming a powerful tool of oppression, which must be combated.

2: Between colonization and decolonization

In this section, a version of the acceptance strategy, namely, the accommodation of the colonized with the 'colonial system' is described; the fact that the evils of this system persist even after the political decolonization of many states suggests the unsuspected depth and influence of mind colonization; the opposite reaction, the radical approach to mind decolonization, based on the total rejection of 'foreign' thinking patterns and contents, is then examined and its underlying assumption of a double mental colonization is pointed out; finally, the possibility of intermediate alternatives, admitting some interaction between the 'two minds' is discussed.

2.1 Albert Memmi, who experienced personally French colonialism as a native of Tunis and later as a teacher in Algiers, provides invaluable first person insight into the intricacies of the relationship between colonized and colonizer. The contrast between his first book (1957, transl. 1967) on the topic, written at the time of the Maghreb's struggle for decolonization, and the second (2004, transl. 2006), well after it, raises questions directly pertinent to the issue of mind colonization that are worth being explored here.

In the first book, Memmi portraits colonizer and colonized as living in the grip of a "colonial relationship" that chains them "into an implacable dependence, which molded their respective characters and dictated their culture" (p. ix). Reaffirming his belief that colonialism is primarily an economic enterprise,[7] with no "moral or cultural mission" whatsoever (p. xii), he stresses that the 'colonial system' determines and controls their mental attitudes. Even the "colonizer who refuses", on moral or political grounds, to endorse the exploitation of the colonized population and tries to do something about it, is dominated by the system, for "[i]t is not easy to escape mentally from a concrete situation, to refuse its ideology while continuing to live with its actual relationships" (p. 20). This is a situation in which his "humanitarian romanticism" is viewed by the "colonizer who accepts" as a serious illness and his "moralism" is condemned as intolerable (p. 21). Under these circumstances, the well-intentioned colonizer soon finds himself sharing his companion oppressors' derogatory image of the colonized: "How can one deny that they are under-developed, that their customs are oddly changeable and their culture outdated?" (p. 24), even though one is aware of the fact hat this is due not to the colonized "but to decades of colonization" (ibid.).

The colonizers, whatever their persuasion, inexorably develop a distorted portrait of the colonized that explains and justifies the roles of both in the 'colonial system' as 'civilizer' and 'civilized'. "Nothing could better justify the colonizer's privileged position than his industry, and nothing could better justify the colonized's destitution than his indolence" (p. 79). The myth of laziness and incompetence is elaborated and expanded into an essential inferiority and its alleged effects.[8] The incongruity thus generated inevitably leads, "by obvious logic" (p. 121), concludes Memmi, to a "fundamental need for change",[9] which will necessarily bring about the

destruction of the 'colonial system': "The colonial situation, by its own internal inevitability, brings on revolt" (p. 128).

While revolt is for him clearly the preferred and necessary alternative, he does not overlook the other of "the two historically possible solutions" (p. 120), which the colonized tries to put into practice, and with top priority: "The first attempt of the colonized is to change his condition by changing his skin" (ibid.). And this changing of skin consists mainly in a change of mind, i.e., in the adoption of the forms of thinking and behaving of the colonizer, in the hope that this will carry with it the corresponding privileges.[10] Nevertheless, Memmi argues, imitation and compromise are ruled out as real possibilities. "[R]evolt is the only way out of the colonial situation, and the colonized realize it soon or later. His condition is absolute and cries for an absolute solution; a break and not a compromise" (p. 127).

Although Marxian assumptions and libertarian themes dominate his analysis, leading to the conclusion that revolt is the only way, Memmi is aware of the powerful role of characteristically mental factors in the unfolding of colonial drama. He describes the 'absoluteness' of the colonized situation as a loss of his traditions and culture,[11] a loss of self,[12] a loss of authenticity, unity and belonging.[13] However, even "at the height of his revolt - he points out - the colonized still bears the traces and lessons of prolonged cohabitation. …The colonized fights in the name of the very values of the colonizer, uses his techniques of thought and his methods of combat" (p. 129). Furthermore - and more importantly from the point of view of mind colonization - he ends up inheriting from the colonizer the dichotomous form of thinking that serves as the grounding of racism and xenophobia of all sorts.[14]

Memmi's second book reflects his deep disenchantment with the fact that the evils of the 'colonial system', instead of disappearing with political decolonization, not only persist but have even worsened. Here is a sample of these evils, as seen by Memmi in 2004: "Widespread corruption and tyranny and the resulting tendency to use force, the restriction of intellectual growth through the adherence to long-standing tradition, violence toward women, xenophobia, and the persecution of minorities - there seems to be no end to the postulant sores weakening these young nations" (Memmi 2006: xi). For this situation he blames, among other factors, 'dolorism', the "natural tendency to exaggerate one's pains and attribute them to another" (p. 19) - in this case, the colonial past.[15] Ably exploited by the corrupt economic, political and military potentates, this can only lead to the "destruction of the present" (p. 43).

Memmi stresses the collusion of the intellectuals in this process: "The shortcomings of intellectuals, whether characterized as resignation or betrayal, play a part in national cultural lethargy" (p. 40). They may have their excuses, [16] but their silence "leaves the field open for those who opt for mystic effusion in place of rationality" (ibid.). Instead of envisioning a future for their nations, they "dream only of a return to a golden age, a renewed fusion, the only productive kind in their view, of religion, culture, and politics" (p. 41). They thus join the cohort of developers and believers in a decolonized's 'countermythology', whose advent he had already

anticipated in the final pages of his earlier book.[17] It is important to notice, however, that in so doing the intellectuals of the decolonized nations - perhaps unwittingly - endow a past, largely constructed culture with the epistemic authority (see 1.2) without which it would not gain its current political attraction. As the special role he attributes to the intellectual's lethargy shows, Memmi no doubt detected, in both books, the colonization of mind as a factor both in colonization and in the failure of decolonization.[18] Nevertheless, he did not grant it neither the attention it deserves, nor its proper significance. As a result, he overlooked an important - presumably essential - reason for the continuation and worsening, after decolonization, of the evils of colonization. In all likelihood, the problems Europe and the 'decolonized' immigrants that come to its shores face are not only economical, but also - and perhaps mainly - due to the incapacity of both sides to deal properly with the phenomenon of mind colonization, especially with the stereotypical thinking it engenders and sustains both ways.

2.2 Decolonization, if it is to be successful as a reaction against such a deep, powerful, and long lasting colonization of the mind, cannot but be itself as radical as its opponent. It must, therefore, eradicate not only its surface manifestations and the concomitant 'colonial system', but its epistemic roots as well.

Frantz Fanon's (1965, 1967) vigorous anti-colonial position fully acknowledges the need to combat the sources and effects of the colonization of the native's minds and argues for the intimate relationship between this 'cultural' combat and the struggle for independence. His speech at the congress of Black African Writers (1959), "Reciprocal basis of national culture and the fight for freedom",[19] begins with a very clear statement of the incompatibility between a colonial situation and the independence of a creative cultural life, "[c]olonial domination, because it is total and tends to over-simplify, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of a conquered people", and stresses that "[e]very effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture". Nothing short of "organized revolt" and violent struggle can put an end to the colonization of his mind achieved through this admission, which is in fact precisely the initially mentioned "total and over-simplified" submission to the forcefully imposed colonizer's epistemic authority.

The conclusion appears to be ineluctable: "In the colonial situation, culture, which is doubly deprived of the support of the nation and of the state, falls away and dies. The condition for its existence is therefore national liberation and the renaissance of the state". To the one remaining essential question he identifies, "what are the relations between the [liberation] struggle - whether political or military - and culture?", Fanon's reply is predictable: "It is the fight for national existence which sets culture moving and opens to it the doors of creation". This fight is decisive not only because it is a fight for "the national consciousness which is the most elaborate form of culture", but also because it is through it that the nation will free its mind from colonization and thus pave the way for recovering its epistemic autonomy. Ultimately, this is why "[a]fter the conflict there is not

only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man".

Another example of an uncompromising rejection attitude designed to achieve a total, radical decolonization of the colonized mind is the strategy developed by Uhuru Hotep (2008).[20] Unlike Fanon, he does not strive either for a political or for an armed struggle solution. Instead, he focuses on the mental aspects of colonization and his proposals, accordingly, are directly intended to overcome them. The motto chosen for his paper couldn't be more explicit about Hotep's main concern: "The central objective in decolonizing the African mind is to overthrow the authority which alien traditions exercise over the African".[21] Of course the achievement of this aim also requires action in other areas of life, as the motto further stresses: "This demands the dismantling of white supremacist beliefs, and the structures which uphold them, in every area of African life".

Hotep's discussion targets the "psychology of African liberation" and, accordingly, he dubs the ensemble of techniques developed by Europeans with the purpose of creating the 'authority' capable of subordinating the African mind, a "method of psychological manipulation". Yet, the obstacle to liberation he identifies and seeks to overthrow is roughly the same I denote by the expression 'epistemic authority', whereby I emphasize its philosophical underpinnings. According to him, the method was designed to gain control of the African mind through "disconnect[ing] Africans from their heritage and culture", which would achieve the colonizers' purposes "because people who are cut off from their heritage and culture are more easily manipulated and controlled".[22] This process of 'deculturalization', alias 'seasoning' (in American slaveholders jargon) and 'brainwashing' (in today's vernacular), comprises three main steps: feel ashamed of yourself, admire and respect the whites, and be rewarded with more indoctrination if successful in the former steps. In Black America, the main instrument, though not the only one,[23] of deculturalization is 'mis-education', responsible for "destructive effects on the Black mind by schools that use a pedagogy and curriculum that deliberately omits, distorts or trivializes the role of African people in and their seminal contributions to world history and culture".

Regardless of what seems to be an excessive emphasis on the intentionally designed, not to say conspiratorial nature of the process,[24] it no doubt yielded in America and elsewhere a prime example of mind colonization in the form of a selective set of mental contents and attitudes, which were adopted by Blacks and clearly valued European history, culture and thinking as superior to their African counterparts. It is the results of this process and the threat of its continuation that Hotep purports to combat.

He summarizes his strategy succinctly and clearly: "In the American context, decolonizing the African mind means reversing the seasoning process";[25] and with some more detail: "Reversing the seasoning process is a constructive way to frame a psychoeducational approach for cleansing African minds of European or Arab cultural infestation". Obviously such a reversal, which implies the demise of an operating system and its replacement by another, amounts to no less than a revolution and calls for a

rhetoric of total war - even though the battleground is the mind:[26] First remove the occupier; next cleanse the ground; then design your own new-old structure and install it in the freed space.[27] The combat thus involves the virtually simultaneous identification of the vestiges of colonization to be eliminated and of the colonized's traditions remnants, which the Africans will immediately use, "as the colony is being dismantled", in order to "fill the liberated spaces with those life-sustaining social values, beliefs and customs that enabled their ancestors to establish stable, autonomous families and communities prior to the Arab or European invasions and conquest of their societies". It is by recovering and reconnecting in this way with "the best of traditional African culture" that "European dominance of the African psyche" will end for Africans in the Americas; for them, therefore, "decolonization is **Re-Africanization**" (author's boldface).

Behind the fascinating logic of total revolt they argue for, it is no less fascinating to notice that neither Fanon nor Hotep are aware of the double colonization of mind upon which their argument is in fact based. If we recall that, in the extended characterization of 'colonization of the mind' (see 1.1, 1.2), the 'colonizer' performing the 'external intervention' that inserts in the colonized mind contents and patterns of thinking endowed with 'epistemic authority' that will serve as a model for that mind, need not be the typical colonizer of a 'colonial situation'. As we have seen, there are many other kinds of situation where mind colonization may take place. One of them is the transmission of accepted beliefs, patterns of behavior and thought, ideologies, etc. that are considered constitutive of a community's, society's or nation's 'culture' or 'identity'. One cannot but won]der whether, after decolonizing one's mind through its complete cleansing from the foreign model, the following step in Fanon's or Hotep's strategy, namely re-filling the 'liberated space' with another set of contents, whatever their origin, does not amount to re-colonizing the just liberated mind.

2.3 In the light of the problems faced by both options - full acceptance and total rejection of mind colonization - we should look for alternatives to them. Of course, such alternatives are not easy to formulate and defend, especially in situations of acute conflict; after all, in comparison to the appealing simplicity of the two poles of the much simpler dichotomy such alternatives purport to overcome, they must not only be rather complex, but also involve a degree of uncertainty that renders them problematic for guiding political action.[28] Still, valuable suggestions for such intermediate alternatives do exist.

When referring (in 2.2) to the motto of Hotep's paper, I deliberately omitted one sentence of Chinweizu's quote. My intention was to highlight the mutually exclusive, dichotomous way in which Hotep opposes the European and the African worldviews. Chinweizu, in this respect, is more nuanced. He distinguishes between rejecting the allegiance to 'foreign traditions' and advocating that they shouldn't be learned at all. Here is his missing sentence: "It must be stressed, however, that decolonization does not mean ignorance of foreign traditions; it simply means denial of their authority and withdrawal of allegiance from them". Hotep, on the other hand, though also combating the mind colonizing effect of granting

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unwarranted epistemic authority to foreign scholarship, suggests a policy of segregation towards it, presumably on the grounds of a sweeping attribution of falsehood to whatever emanates from the hidden intentions of the colonizer.

The practice Hotep recommends consists in protecting the decolonized African mind from any contact with beliefs that might call into question the legitimate, authentic African perspective. The rule he advises the African youth to follow in order to keep his mind decolonized might be phrased exactly in Peirce's (1877: 235) words: "systematically keeping out of view all that might cause a change in his opinions". This is one of the ways to implement what Peirce called 'the method of tenacity', whose basic principle is to "cling tenaciously, not merely to believing, but to believing just what we do believe" (ibid.: 231). Yet, as Peirce points out, the application of the 'belief protection rule' is not easy, for whoever tries to apply it "will find that other men think differently from him" and will realize that "their opinions are quite as good as his own, and this will shake his confidence in his belief" (ibid.: 235). Chinweizu's distinction, however, is compatible with this observation of Peirce, for it would permit - at least in principle - a practice of open examination of the epistemic authority of any set of beliefs, without prejudging its acceptability on the grounds of their being foreign or native. Evidently, to take advantage of this possibility and develop on its basis an alternative to the acceptance vs. rejection dichotomy requires much more cognitive effort than that demanded by the 'tenacity method'. Philosophers may have contributed their share to this effort.

Among African philosophers, there is indeed much concern with the issue of colonization and decolonization of the mind, which is at the background of philosophical reflection in the continent.[29] An interesting question is whether this background concern does not itself affect the range of alternatives that are considered 'valid' (should I say 'politically correct'?). Doesn't the fact that philosophy is supposed to deal with "the universal" necessarily contest the legitimacy of philosophical accounts from whose scope certain cultures are excluded? And if this is the case, wouldn't extreme particularistic positions regarding mind colonization rule themselves out as acceptable within a broad philosophical discussion of the topic? Or doesn't the fact that the discussion takes place in a former colonized environment, say, in the African context, require participants to assume that mind colonization is wrong and that, whatever the arguments presented in the inquiry or debate, the conclusion must be in conformity with its condemnation?

All these questions are in fact present and easily recognizable in the philosophical debate about what is or should be African philosophy that runs through the pages of the Coetzee and Roux (1998) excellent reader, which thus exemplifies the variety of possible positions towards the thorny issue of what should be expected - if at all - from the decolonization of African philosophy. Let us consider a few instances.

In contradistinction to 'ethnophilosophy', which sees African philosophy as comprising essentially the collection and interpretation of traditional proverbs, folktales, myths and similar materials, Kaphagawani (1998: 87)

discerns another, modern, multi-perspective conception of African philosophy "as a joint venture and product of traditional as well as modern trend philosophers, … of divergent world outlooks and who employ different methods … in debates and research … of relevance to the cultures and nationalities of Africa". Appealing as this program is, it turns out that its followers "insist, in a frighteningly fanatical way at times, that rationality, rigour, objectivity, and self-criticism be properties of the African philosophy they have in mind" (ibid.). That is to say, they are perceived by Kaphagawani as mind colonization agents, who import European or North-American criteria of philosophizing. He is afraid bowing to these conditions "confines the conception of philosophy to just one aspect".[30] In support for this claim he appeals to Wiredu (1980: 6): "If we demand that a philosophy has to have all these attributes by definition, then we are debarred from pointing out, what is a well known fact, that some philosophies are unrigorous or unsystematic or dogmatic or irrational or even anti-rational" - all of them, I would add, kinds of philosophy that deserve to be pursued, for their intrinsic value and for the fact that they may contribute significantly to clarifying the nature of those imported criteria African philosophers allegedly ought to blindly respect.

It is curious to observe to what extent an author such as Kaphagawani, eager to protect African philosophy from Euro-American hegemony, inadvertently falls prey to the latter's mind-colonizing power. In order to justify that there is no need to provide a single, unitary definition of 'African philosophy', he argues as follows: "since even Western philosophers define philosophy in different ways, there is no reason why African philosophers should all define African philosophy in the same way" (Kaphagawani 1998: 98).

Finally, an example that should not be missed in the present discussion is the attempt to override the universalistic-particularistic dichotomy by creating an alternative based on merging these two poles. I will limit myself to quote two passages of the first page of a paper dealing with the "moral foundations of an African culture". Its opening statement is categorical: "Morality in the strictest sense is universal to human culture. Indeed, it is *essential* to all human culture" (Wiredu 1998b: 306). The opening of the second paragraph is no less categorical: "The foregoing reflection still does not exclude the possibility of a legitimate basis for differentiating the morals of the various peoples of the world" (ibid.). Whether upholding the two claims and combining them successfully is feasible or not depends, of course, on the details of the author's proposal. In any case, it is a courageous attempt to overcome the grip of an entrenched dichotomy.[31]

3: Can there be fully decolonized minds?

The purpose of this section is to analyze some of the assumptions of the decolonization ideal and point out their paradoxical consequences. This raises the question whether the achievement of such an ideal is feasible at all.

3.1 The radical rejection strategy assumes that the disqualification of the colonizer worldview must be total in order to be effective. This is required, first, for the success of the struggle against colonization. If the slightest value is admitted to any part of the colonizer's scheme, this part might be accepted and thus incorporated into the colonizer's mind, which would thus become at least partly colonized. This would, in turn, justify collaboration with the colonizer on those aspects acknowledged as valuable by the colonized. Given the interconnection of the components of the colonization system, the legitimacy thus granted to one of them would easily extend to others. This would expand mind colonization as well as collaborationism. The result would be the corruption of the cause and the debilitation of the liberation struggle.

Secondly, total elimination of any trace of mental colonization is necessary for accomplishing the return to the original traditions that were belittled, corrupted, and replaced by colonization. For the colonized to be able to recover the uncorrupted roots of his traditions and to render operative again the worldview embedded in them, it is necessary to suppress the whole set of beliefs, desires, fears, and mental habits that became part of his mind through a long and continuous contact with the colonizer. If any of these elements remain in the colonized's mind, it will continue to fuel the colonizer's derogatory sapping of the former's roots, traditions, and wisdom. This mental presence of colonization would be a Trojan skeptical agent permanently casting doubt on the authenticity of the revived worldview and therefore on the unquestionable allegiance due to its fundamental status.

Third, and most important, the complete demolition of the colonizer's conceptual system is required in order to suppress its presumed epistemic authority. Once the colonized mind realizes that it is the whole system, with its principles, categories, argumentation practices, values, and attitudes that crumbles, rather than just some of its components, it loses its architectonic coherence and can no longer be trusted. Its judgments - especially those that delegitimize the colonized's - can and must be questioned; the onset of epistemic revolt announces the end of mind colonization.

3.2 This totalizing set of absolute demands might seem to presume that the comparison between the mental sets of colonizer and colonized are objectively comparable and therefore can be treated as a rational choice. But this is far from being the case. Whatever they are, worldviews and cultures are comprehensive, complex, multi-dimensional systems, for whose comparison no clear set of epistemic criteria is definable. For such criteria to exist and be properly applied, one would have to rely on a neutral point of view, a sort of Rawlsian 'veil or ignorance' insulating the applier from the knowledge of his personal contingencies. In their absence, however, we are not in a position to determine objectively - not to say absolutely - whether

one of the systems actually has more epistemic authority than its competitor or overcomes it according to other, well grounded standards of excellence.

It follows that the choice between them comports necessarily an important degree of arbitrariness. This shows up in the strong reliance upon contingency in making such choices, especially in situations like the colonized-colonizer confrontation, which are necessarily asymmetrical. For example, perceiving oneself as the underdog may determine which of the 'instinctive' reactions to opt for; personal or collective resentful or empathetic relations play a role; and in general the choice is guided not by the question "what is better" but by attaching to it the coda "for me" or "for us" and coupling it with the further question "what is worse for them". It is in this way that one replaces firm but unavailable criteria by a circumstantial and rather arbitrary anchor for a choice, granting it the aura of authority needed in order to command the allegiance of the relevant constituencies.

Alternatively, one appeals to simplified dichotomies and argumentative manipulation. Totalizing conditions intended to establishing clear cut definitions is a case in point (see 3.3). Another is the appeal to authenticity, identity, and the high value assigned to temporal priority, an idea akin to fundamentalism - all of them apparently intuitive and unproblematic notions, to which I shall return later (see 3.5).

3.3 The total cleansing of the colonized mind from colonizer imported elements as a sine qua non for decolonization (see 3.1) - in Hotep's succinct definition, the reversion of seasoning - consists in fact in inverting the direction of application of invidious comparison. It is no longer the dirt of the African mind, but the "European or Arab cultural infestation" (Hotep 2008) that must be removed; it is the former, not the latter, that is superior in its wisdom, and therefore worth allegiance and imitation. The same kind of argument that was (and still is) responsible for the discrimination and exploitation against which decolonization purportedly struggles is thus turned against someone else. Does the fact that this someone else happens to be no other than the colonizer who made use of the same kind of argument for justifying the oppression of the colonized justify this procedure? And, in any case, aren't we here witnessing a non negligible element of mind colonization in the thinking of radical decolonization proponents?

3.4 The question whether to demand or not a total cleansing of the mind from contents considered by someone wrong presupposes that it is possible to perform such cleansing. But is this possible? This issue has been for centuries the object of debate in Western thought. Descartes was convinced that the elimination of prejudice is a precondition for correct thought and that it is in our power to get rid of all prejudices; Hume warned against succumbing to mental habits devoid of empirical support but he at the same time questioned our ability to actually avoid them; Marx and Freud were even more skeptical concerning the possibility of liberating our thought from conceptions and emotions causally impressed in our minds during our formative years; and hermeneutics, though accepting the inevitability of prejudice, adopted the "if you cannot beat them, join them!" attitude, arguing that prejudice can be at least partially controlled and harnessed for critical use. I refer the reader to my paper "Three prejudices about

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prejudice" (Dascal 1999), where I discuss these various positions and suggest how to circumvent all of them - without, however, admitting either the possibility or the necessity of full eradication of prejudice from our minds.

3.5 Underlying much of the arguments and rhetoric of decolonization lies the assumption that a person, a nation and sometimes even a state have - or had, prior to colonization - a recognizable and stable 'identity'. One of decolonization's tasks is taken to be the rescuing of this identity from the threat of mind colonization and restore it to its position of authority in the person's, nation's or state's life. However, the performance of this task, as those who undertake to do it soon realize, is not analogous to merely locating an endangered object, slightly repairing it and putting it back in service. It rather involves re-creating the 'object' through a selection of features presently considered most relevant by the self-appointed identity designers and assigning it its new place in current life. Furthermore, since identities aren't static but rather dynamic and interact with neighboring identities, it would be vain to expect that, however well designed, once constructed and well protected from foreign intervention, an identity remains unchanged (see Dascal 2003). It is important to stress both the constructivist and fluid nature of identity in order to understand that, it is not an 'intrinsic' given that defines a person, nation or state - but rather the other way around; it is the latter, along with the changing circumstances, that define the identity. The reactivation of an identity allegedly emaciated by mind colonization, therefore, cannot single out in a univocal way the aim of a decolonization drive. At most, it is a vague formulation of a program that decolonizers in different conjunctures will interpret and implement at their convenience.

Unlike identity, religious orthodoxy and certain specific traditions have the advantage of being systematically codified and quite accurately recorded. This might turn them into reliable objective criteria for defining the cultural aims of decolonization. Yet, fundamentalism notwithstanding, the history of religion and culture demonstrate that neither orthodoxy nor tradition are immune to the vagaries of multiple interpretation and should - no more than identity - be relied upon as solid anchors for decolonization aims.

It would be otiose perhaps to add to this list of unstable criteria and vaguely defined aims the search for authenticity, given the undisputable effect of taste, fashion, zeitgeist, subjectivity and other equally variable factors on any decision about what is and what is not an authentic expression of a culture, identity or religion.

What is certainly not otiose is to inquire why should these clearly contingent and unstable notions function as prominent signposts precisely of those versions of decolonization thinking that proclaim to have absolute aims and precise criteria for their definition and achievement. Part of the answer was already given (see 3.2): the need for anchors, for mental structures upon which to base individual and collective cohesion; for the second part, I follow Peirce. According to him, humans are profoundly uncomfortable when they are in a state of doubt; consequently, he claims,

"the irritation of doubt is the only immediate motive for the struggle to attain belief" (1877: 232). This need to overcome doubt is so profound, it seems, that whether the anchors provided are actually solid and absolute in their reliability is irrelevant, for they are designed, presented and perceived as if they were - which is what counts. In any case there are no doubt plenty of methods for what Peirce calls the 'fixation of belief', which can be used for disguising a belief as reliable.[32]

3.6 I wish to conclude this section by suggesting an additional factor that might contribute to understand the etiology of both the acceptance and the rejection 'instinctive' reactions vis-à-vis the colonization of mind. In this respect my suggestion here, based on the work of Kaufman (1973) is presumably closely related to Peirce's.

In spite of the evident differences between the two kinds of reaction, if we reflect about the underlying causes, mechanisms and effects of the two reactions, we may discover some unsuspected similarity. The acceptance attitude, as we have seen (cf. 1.3), implies submission to the colonizer's supposed epistemic superiority. The adoption of this alien - but authoritative - set of beliefs and pattern of thought is hardly the result of the careful examination of its merits and weaknesses, whence their alleged epistemic authority should emerge; rather, it is usually performed without a systematic, conscious deliberation. The advantage of such an adoption lies precisely in bypassing the need for such an energy consuming mental process; instead, one 'buys' an apparently certified mental device, which one assumes to be capable of correctly deciding for oneself. In Walter Kaufman's terms, this is one of the strategies used by those who dread the autonomy and responsibility required for "making with open eyes the decisions that give shape to one's life" - a disease he considers catastrophically widespread and calls *decidophobia* (Kaufman 1973: 2-3).

Assuming that my diagnosis is correct, one might argue, it only shows how deeply different is the accepting/adopting attitude from the rejecting/resisting one. Those who choose the latter, the argument would go, far from conforming like the former to the asymmetric colonization condition and its implications, actually choose a course of thinking and of acting that courageously fights against the stream, thus making a non-conformist decision "that gives shape to their life". But is this choice indeed a case of autonomous decision-making, free from any trace of decidophobia? Furthermore, regarding the specific issue of our present inquiry, is it free from mind colonization?

As for the first question, Kaufman leaves no room for doubt. The all out resistance attitude exemplifies one of the most potent of the ten strategies that according to him decidophobes often employ in order to avoid decisions. This is the Manichaeist strategy. To be sure, it is characteristic of Manichaeism to imperiously demand a decision - between god and evil, light and darkness, true and false. But, as Kaufman (1973: 18) puts it, it arranges the alternative in such a way that "the choice is loaded". The 'correct' option appears as so evident that it cannot fail to be chosen. Who would dare not to choose what is unquestionably good and true? Isn't resistance the only possible right choice for the colonized - any other being

nothing but a variety of weakness, self-hatred, collaborationism, or straightforward betrayal? What is there to decide? And as to the second question, isn't in fact the rejection/resistance choice dictated by the values, categories, and dichotomous structure of a conceptual system implanted in the mind through one or more of the kinds of mind colonization, rather than being the result of a supposed decision by a supposed free mind?

4: Concluding remarks: Living with a colonized mind?

If decolonization of the mind in its radical conception, which combats courageously colonization of the mind in order to put an end to it, is plagued, as we have seen, with indefensible assumptions and with paradoxes - including the fact that, when put into practice, it ends up by freeing its clients' minds from one version of colonization only at the heavy price of installing in those minds another colonizing scheme - should we give up and accept mind colonization as unbeatable? Or is there something to do against it, something that, even though not yielding an absolutely pure, uncolonized mind, would allow us to live with a modicum of colonization without having to be dominated by it and without having to give up entirely one's autonomy? My answer is that such a possibility exists. In this concluding section I will briefly argue for it and hint at how to achieve the suggested modus vivendi. Unfortunately, the explanation and elaboration of the means to such an achievement would require an exposition at least as long as the analysis of the problem with which we have mostly dealt up to this point.

4.1 The reader surely noticed that the discussion of decolonization in this paper has focused almost exclusively on the radical version. To be sure, suggestions leading to less radical alternatives, which admit some sort of acknowledgment of valuable elements in the colonizer's system, were presented (see 2.3); but they didn't receive the detailed consideration some of them certainly deserve. I will partly fulfill this obligation here by calling attention to the fact that a 'preference for purity' prevails in current decolonization debate, without any serious attempt, as far as I know, to justify it. As a result, radical decolonization approaches, which tacitly assume that a 'pure' conceptual framework, theory, or cultural system is, for some reason, preferable to a mixed or eclectic one, benefit from the dialectical advantage of not having to argue in support of this alleged superiority. Hence they can go on and insist - also without having to bear the charge of the proof - about the importance of cleansing (see 3.3), i.e., of 'purifying' the colonized mind from extraneous elements. Those who defend, however, the legitimacy of mixed systems, not only are in danger of being not politically correct, but also bear the responsibility to detail and justify the kind of eclecticism they believe can contribute to decolonization. Were there at present a more balanced distribution of opinion on the value and nature of purity and eclecticism, as it was the case for example in the European Enlightenment - to wit Diderot's long article 'éclectisme' in the *Encyclopédie* - the situation would be quite different, at least in that the preference for purity could no longer be accepted, without argument, as a reason for the complete elimination of European, Arab or White American elements from the African mind.[33]

4.2 The value of purity is but one example of an entrenched belief that is taken for granted and consequently is very hard to abandon or 'de-fixate'. In this respect it resembles beliefs about the preservation of identity (however interpreted or constructed), the value of authenticity (however defined), and ancient status (which is considered valuable merely because its being

sufficiently old is supposed to ensure that a practice or belief is superior since it pre-existed the onslaught of the mind colonizing invasions). As we have seen, these beliefs too are tacitly assumed but hardly explicitly justified, and consequently it is hard to call them into question. The problem with this kind of entrenched fixations is that they acquire an 'absolute authority' that is stronger than normally justified 'epistemic authority'. This means that de-fixating them cannot just consist in comparing them with their counterparts in other conceptual systems, weighing their merits, and deciding accordingly - all of which are regular epistemic operations.[34] What their de-fixation requires, in addition, is a non-epistemic operation of 'de-absolutization', which involves also socio-political will and power in order to be carried out successfully (see 1.2). Now, once they lose their special absolute authority, these beliefs no longer have the extra power needed to impose mind colonization; and this means that absolute decolonization, i.e., the total rejection of the colonizer's mental framework is no longer necessary. It is only then that paths open for the development of conceptual mergers that yield mixed or eclectic accounts.

4.3 The series of 'de-' terms so far employed in this paper, de-colonization, de-fixation, de-absolutization,[35] must be expanded to contain also some 're-' terms such as re-place, re-colonize, and re-frame. 'Re-place' is already familiar to us from the discussion of radical decolonization approaches, which argue that the aim of decolonization is to <u>replace</u> the colonizing mental scheme by the original, authentic, pure, ante-colonial mental scheme of the native population. But this, as we have seen, amounts in fact to <u>re-colonize</u>, albeit with a different authoritative scheme, a mind that has been cleansed. The re-colonized minds are passive in this process, analogously to the student subjected to the educational practice Paulo Freire has compared to depositing in a bank account (see 1.1). <u>Re-framing</u>, in contradistinction, is an essentially active process, where the participants themselves are those who construct a new mental framework, rather than passively 'receiving' any of the extant schemes.[36] This process requires a dialectical give and take where elements from different, conflicting systems that, despite - or perhaps due to - their absolute status are unable to offer solutions to conflicts at hand, can partially merge and thus generate innovative alternatives for resolving the conflicts in question. Re-framing is an essential tool for overcoming the fear that naturally arises when attempts are made to de-fixate entrenched beliefs are made, for it does not imply either complete rejection or complete acceptance of any of the systems in conflict. It should be clear by now what can be the contribution of re-framing and its components for a livable and creative decolonization, where at no stage a mind is required to become a totally empty tabula rasa or a totally filled cupboard.

4.4 Perhaps with all that has been said so far, we are now in a position to understand what Mary Douglas perhaps intended to say with the puzzling and not politically correct remark I took the liberty of using as a motto for this paper. The context of her remark appears to be the much less contestable observation that science is a dialogical-cooperative enterprise, for "knowledge is built by people communicating and responding to one

another". In such a context, a positive role of mind colonization indeed emerges, provided we remember that its effect on our beliefs, habits and behavior is always profound. Colonizing each other's minds can indeed be conceived as a condition for thought in so far as it refers to the depth rather than to the superficiality involved in knowledge building communication - a depth that reflects respect rather than contempt for each other, trust rather than suspicion. This is a kind of communication between others that are different and yet care to talk to and listen to each other because they know there is something worthwhile to learn from the other's thoughts and because due attention will be granted by them to our thoughts as well. In short, because Mary had in mind her experience of communicating with people who are worth being mentally colonized by and colonizing - however paradoxical this phrase may at first sound.

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Notes

1 *The New York Times*, 22 May 2007, front page; quoting the British anthropologist Mary Douglas on occasion of her death on 16 May 2007 at the age of 86.

2 "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. … In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. … The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence – but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher" Freire (2004: 72). For a discussion of this paradigm and its consequences, see Dascal (1990).

3 See characteristic (e), in 1.1.

4 For a definition and discussion of this concept, see Dascal (1991). Anthropological terminology abounds in terms implying invidious comparison, as points out Overing (1987: 82): "If you think about it, most of our jargon designates 'primitiveness' and therefore 'lesser'. We wish to capture the difference of 'the other'; yet in so doing we often (unwittingly) denigrate 'the other' through the very process of labeling him/her as different. I think it is certainly true of such labels as 'kinship-based society', 'magical rites', 'mythology', 'shaman', and so on". None of *these labels* have anything to do with levels of technological 'advancement', but rather they refer to social roles, frameworks of thought, symbols, systems of morality, axioms, values and sentiments – all areas of life and related theory that may well be more sophisticated than the same areas of life and relate theory in our own society".

5 Bodei (2002: 249), for instance, wonders about the high number of those who have chosen, without trauma, to give up their autonomy: "… come mai siano stati così numerosi coloro che hanno scelto di perdere, spesso senza eccessivi trauma, la propria autonomia".

6 Nevertheless, as we shall see (see 3.6), they can be traced back to similar mental mechanisms.

7 "[T]he best possible definition of a colony: a place where one earns more and spends less. You go to a colony because jobs are guaranteed, wages high, careers more rapid and business more profitable" (Memmi 1967: 4).

8 "The ideological aggression which tends to dehumanize and then deceive the colonized finally corresponds to concrete situations which lead to the same result" (ibid.: 91).

9 "How can one believe that he [the colonized] can ever be resigned to the colonial relationship; that face of suffering and disdain allotted to him? In all of the colonized there is a fundamental need for change" (ibid.: 119).

10 "There is a tempting model very close at hand – the colonizer. The latter suffers from none of his deficiencies, has all rights, enjoys every possession and benefits from every prestige. … The first ambition of the colonized is to become equal to that splendid model and to resemble him to the point of disappearing in him" (ibid.: 120).

11 "He has been torn away from his past and cut off from his future, his traditions are dying and he loses the hope of acquiring a new culture" (ibid.: 127-128).

12 "[T]he colonized's liberation must be carried out through a recovery of self and of autonomous dignity. Attempts at imitating the colonizer required self-denia; the colonizer's rejection is the indispensable prelude to self-discovery" (ibid.: 128).

13 "The important thing now is to rebuild his people, whatever be their authentic nature; to reform their unity, communicate with it and to feel that they belong." (ibid.: 135).

14 "Being considered and treated apart by colonialist racism, the colonized ends up accepting this Manichaean division of the colony and, by extension, of the whole world" (ibid.: p. 131).

15 "If the economy fails, it's always the fault of the ex-colonizer, not the systematic bloodletting of the economy by the new masters" (Memmi 2006: 20).

16 "[I]ntellectuals seem to be afflicted by the same paralysis of thought and action that has affected everyone else. The most common excuse was that of solidarity. One shouldn't overwhelm one's fellow citizens when they are living in such misery. That would be like supporting their enemies" (ibid.: 30).

17 "We shall ultimately find ourselves before a countermythology. The negative myth thrust on him by the colonizer is succeeded by a positive myth about himself suggested by the colonized – just as there would seem to be a positive myth of the proletarian opposed to a negative one. To hear the colonized and often his friends, everything is good, everything must be retained among his customs and traditions, his actions and plans; even the anachronous or disorderly, the immoral or mistaken" (Memmi 1967: 139).

18 He also mentions, for example, the fact that the political model – i.e., a conceptual tool, courtesy of the colonizer – for the new nations remains the one provided by the West. For instance: "There is yet another paradox to the decolonized's national aspiration: his nation has come into existence at a time when the Western national ideal that served as a model has begun to weaken throughout the rest of the world" (Memmi 2006: 55); "The presidents of the new republics generally mimic what is most arbitrary about the colonial power" (ibid.: 60).

19 The quotations in this and the following paragraph are all from this speech (as printed in Fanon 1965).

20 In what follows, I will quote from the downloaded version of this paper, indicated in the references.

21 This is a quotation from Chinweizu, a Nigerian critic and journalist, author of *Decolonizing the African Mind* (1987). For further bio-bibliographical information, see http://www.sunnewsonline.com/images/Chinweizu.jpg.

22 Hotep mentions Ajamu (1997) who employs the expression 'intellectual colonialism' for this procedure.

23 The media, of course, shouldn't be omitted: "Literally from birth to death, African Americans are awash in a sea of European-designed, mass media disseminated disinformation, misinformation, half-truths and whole lies about the people, history, culture and significance of Africa".

24 For instance: "European-orchestrated campaign to destroy the African mind as a prelude to destroying African people".

25 "For those millions of African POWs who survived the horrors of the middle passage, seasoning was a three to four year period of intense and often brutal slave making at the hands and feet of their European captors and their agents. … [It] was so effective as a pacification method that North American slave owners gladly paid a premium for 'seasoned' Africans from the Caribbean. For enslaved Africans, seasoning, when successful, laid the foundation for a lifetime of faithful, obedient service to their master and his children".

26 Jacob Carruthers (1999), who calls this war 'intellectual warfare', stresses that it must begin within the mind of the young warriors. As Hotep puts it, "the freedom-seeking African youth must stand up and declare total war on their own colonial thinking. They must attack mercilessly its instruments and agents, deconstruct its intellectual base, and thereby break out of conceptual incarceration".

27 "[T]he first step toward decolonizing the African mind is to identify a re-placement worldview on which to frame a liberated African future. In other words, once the forces of mental colonization are defeated and their colonial government expelled, its infrastructure razed and the battle site cleansed, what type of structures do we install in this newly liberated space to unleash genius and thwart re-colonization efforts?".

28 See Barghouti (2005) for an argument defending, on ethical grounds, the dichotomous position in cases of conflict.

29 After giving an appalling example of a missionary imposed 'translation' that renders in Lue 'creator' by no other than 'Rubanga', a hostile spirit, Wiredu (1998a: 201) observes:

"Disentangling African frameworks of thought from colonial impositions such as these is an urgent task facing African thinkers, especially philosophers, at this historical juncture. Clarifying African religious concepts should be high on the agenda of this kind of decolonization". On a similar case, he comments: "African thinkers will have to make a critical review of those conceptions and choose one or none, but not both. Otherwise, colonized thinking must be admitted to retain its hold" (ibid.: 195).

30 Among the excluded aspects, besides 'ethnophilosophy', also 'sage philosophy' – i.e., "the sagacious and philosophical thinking of indigenous native Africans whose lives are rooted in the cultural milieu of traditional Africa" (Oruka 1998: 99) – would be certainly in the list.

31 It is certainly connected to the same author's terminological tell-tale innovation 'strategic particularism' (Wiredu 1998a: 186).

32 Peirce discusses four methods, the method of tenacity, the method of authority, the a priori method, and the scientific method. Needless to say that he criticizes the first three and considers only the fourth to be reliable. In Dascal and Dascal (2004) we criticize also the fourth, arguing that what we need are methods or means not to fixate, but to de-fixate beliefs. See section 4 for further reference to de-fixation.

33 Here is an interest example of a scientist and well known writer who declares his preference rather for impurity: "In order for the will to turn, for life to be lived, impurities are needed, and the impurities of impurities in the soil, too, as is known, if it is to be fertile. Dissensions, diversity, the grain of salt and mustard are needed: Fascism does not want them, forbids them, and that's why you're not a Fascist; it wants everybody to be the same, and you are not" (Levi 1995: 37).

34 I am using here the model of the balance or scales, as proposed by Leibniz. See Dascal (2005).

35 'De-dichotomization' is also an important term in this series, which is not present in the text, but is certainly an implicit part of its argument. See Dascal (2006).

36 For definition and illustration of this notion, see Dascal and Dascal (2004).