

Review of Ailton Krenak's book "Futuro Ancestral"

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Presenting the book "Futuro Ancestral" is not a simple task because it requires translating knowledge from an indigenous worldview into another form. Looking through this lens requires careful exercise, sensitivity to nuances and respect for differences, because, after all, it is still a lens we, non-indigenous people, have borrowed. This exercise necessarily involves joining different worldviews.

The description of the book could begin with what is evident, saying that it is a book by Ailton Krenak, a Brazilian that belongs to the Krenak people, a philosopher and socio-environmental activist, leader in the defence of indigenous rights, the first indigenous member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters; or that the book was organized by Rita Carelli based on interviews, lectures, classes and seminars given by Krenak between 2020 and 2021; or that the book is 122 pages long, is organized in 5 thematic chapters, and is part of a series of books published by the publishing house Companhia das Letras. To describe it in a way that seeks to classify its contents into categories seems to run counter to the way the book coordinates different types of knowledge and reaches us, non-indigenous beings, citizens of cities. This knowledge, which escapes the hegemonic, anthropocentric classification, is configured within another imaginary, at the basis of an ancestral worldview.

A first approach to the body of the book reminds us of the Deleuze-Guattarian philosophy, according to which "there is no difference between what a book speaks and the way it is written." In this context, the book has no object or subject, becoming an agency in connection with other agencies. This is particularly relevant when we analyse Krenak's orality, always an agent of multiplicities, in connection with the world's ancestral

knowledge. The question is not what the book means, but what multiplicities it conjoins, and they are many.

At first glance, the book's physical size can be deceiving, leading us to believe that its small size or non-academic language could somehow be proportional to its level of understanding. As we read the book, it becomes what it describes: a river where diverse knowledge from various indigenous peoples - Andean, *Quilombolas*, South Americans - conjoins and becomes richer at each new subjectivity.

In the first chapter, "Greetings to the rivers", Krenak draws attention to the immeasurable wealth that is to live in the presence of mountain rivers, understood as living beings, bearers of the ancestry of his people. This people, who operate on the basis of the sensitive observation of the natural world, thus practice river-becoming and mountain-becoming. The idea of displacement is invoked, first as a physical characteristic, though still mentioning the flying rivers and how their crossing is cyclical, where "the waters of the rivers are those of the sky, and the waters of the sky are those of the river", as well as abstraction, a displacement that allows escaping "anthropomorphism, and experiencing other forms of existence", thus expanding the worldview. When describing water-becoming, the author discusses power, resilience and adaptability, especially in contrast to the context of Brazilian cities that refuse the presence of these living beings. Krenak shows us the almost antagonistic difference between people living in the city and those living with nature:

"Most people think that they only live on land and do not imagine that a part of humanity finds in the waters the completeness of their existence, their culture, their economy and their experience of belonging" (KRENAK, 2022: 17-18)

The author recalls, in an act of greeting — and, consequently, of recognition — various rivers, always inseparable from the peoples who inhabit them: the Watu people and the Jequitinhonha and Mucuri rivers, the Ashaninka and the Jurua River, the Mundukuru and Sateré Mawé and the Tapajos, the peoples who live in stilts in Peru and Colombia, as well as in Lake Titicaca. So many other rivers, Xingu, Amazonas, Rio Negro, Solimons, San Francisco, Madeira, Tocantins, but also Tagus, Niva, Ganges. In the city of São Paulo, the Tiete River is compared to a sewer, while so many others were asphyxiated below the asphalt, in refusal and affective collapse. Faced with this disaffection, the rivers can dive into themselves, under several layers of soil. As living beings, they also denounce and refuse this exploratory relationship, flowing through other paths. The rivers' resilience and regeneration exceed those of human beings. The author draws attention to the danger of becoming water's enemy, inviting humans to become water and learn its language.

In "Cartographies for after the end", the author proposes multiplicity and the need to include new paradigms in the face of the collapse of capitalist management. This way, he challenges readers to "imagine cartographies, layers of worlds, in which narratives are so plural that there is no conflict when different foundation stories are evoked" (idem: 32).

This is a deeply significant statement, since the author highlights the relevance of different epistemologies coexisting, assigning meaning to the unique experiences of each people and to the multiple ways of life existing on the planet. Living multiplicity and learning from other knowledge lead to the creation of an affective cartography, in which the production of subjectivities is shaped by the other. "Cartographies for after the end" map other territories, with their singular epistemologies, offering possibilities of

navigation in a post-capitalist world. When invoking Antonio Bispo dos Santos, Krenak speaks of confluences, the antidote to the monoculture of necro politics. Confluences as a vehicle of multiplicity, in a rhizomatic existence where diverse worlds can affect.

“If colonialism caused us almost irreparable damage, it was to say that we are all equal. Now people will have to deny this and evoke the world of affective cartographies, in which the river can escape damage, life, the lost bullet, and freedom is not just a contradiction of the subject's acceptance, but a radical experience that takes us beyond the idea of finitude” (idem: 42-43).

In “Cities, pandemics and other stuff”, the author reflects on the city-forest dichotomy and how this antagonistic perspective is introduced into children's imagination from a very early age, exemplified in the figure of the evil wolf that threatens Red Riding Hood. In recent history, with the pandemic as an aggravating factor, the emergence of the virus is also attributed to wild nature rather than to civilised and technologically advanced cities. With a clear understanding of how modern architecture has reconfigured the paradigm of Western civilisation, the author questions himself and makes us question the way other cultures produce their epistemes, what grammars are used in places like Africa, India or China, to speak of the cities, what is dirty as opposed to what is clean, opposing Western sanitary culture. Thus, arises the following thought:

“How could the concept that life is wild be applied to urban thinking today? It is a call to rebellion from an epistemological point of view to collaborate in the production of life. When I say that life is wild, I want to draw attention to the power of existence, which has a forgotten poetics, abandoned by the schools that train professionals who perpetuate the logic that civilisation is urban, and everything outside the cities is barbaric, primitive. — and that we can burn” (idem: 63-64)

To reinforce his vision of citizenship in the Anthropocene, or rather, “Capitalocene” era, Krenak invokes former Uruguayan President José Mujica, when he says that we are replacing the idea of citizen with the idea of consumer, in a world inhabited by customers, that has the illusion and presumptuousness that they can extend their life on the planet. In the capitalist context, cities are indispensable platforms for technological development. By quoting Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Krenak brings an antithesis, saying that the technology Brazil is most specialised in is that of poverty production: “If you take a Yanomami out of the forest, where he has water, food and autonomy, and place him in Boa Vista, that is poverty production” (idem: 57).

When asked how you can cross the city walls, Krenak proposes a counterword: afforestation, rather than citizenship; an experience that can be caused as an antidote to the urban sanitary order, a way to summon the forest and make it exist in us. To reconcile the city with the forest, reforest our imagination.

In “Affective alliances”, Krenak uses the history of rubber tappers and indigenous peoples, of the struggle for land rights, marked by the figure of Chico Mendes, and of the positive cultural influence between the two groups, to introduce a movement of which he was one of the creators, the Alliance of Forest Peoples, created in 1980. Krenak did not want this movement to become a political alliance and thus compel its members to an equality that is even oppressive. Therefore, he proposes the concept of “affective alliance”, assuming the creation of affective bonds between unequal worlds.

“This movement does not demand equality; it recognises an intrinsic alterity in each person, in each being, introduces a radical inequality before which we force ourselves to a pause before entering: We have to take off our sandals; we cannot

enter with our shoes on. So I escaped the union, and the party parables (...) and I experimented with affective alliances, which involve me and a wealth of people and beings in which I disappear: I no longer need to be a political entity, I can be only a person within a stream producing affections and senses" (idem: 82-83).

The author speaks of conjugating the verb "to world" ("mundizar"), as a power to experience other worlds and thus imagine a multiverse. He mentions Alberto Acosta and the Andean thinkers who evoke the possibility of a dynamic of affections between these worlds. He calls for indigenous peoples to build a new constitutionalism in Latin America, which, from the Andes, can bring other perspectives on country and nation, sharing power and flowing like rivers.

In "The Heart at the Rhythm of the Earth," Krenak discusses the future of education from an ancestral perspective that holds that beings reach the world already conformed. On top of this pre-existing basis, humans acquire skills, thereby gaining layers. This understanding, without contradicting the experience of existing, runs counter to the concept that people need to be shaped to be useful in a modern world that fosters competitiveness. The projection of the future is increasingly unlikely, a fast-paced future, with a single narrative.

The author discusses the importance of children's early years, whether in anthroposophy or in other traditional cultures, where the first seven years of life are seen as a period of establishing yourself on Earth, of world cartography, which provides a map for the experience of the future adult, a period of life when we should not undergo any moulding. "Instead of being thought of as empty packaging that needs to be filled," children are carriers of "creativity and subjectivity capable of inventing other worlds." The key to the future, according to the author, is to welcome young people's subjectivity. Children, when living with other beings, whether plant or animal, see themselves as integral parts of nature, and thereby experience the collective subject.

"They feel life in other beings, in a tree, in a mountain, in a fish, in a bird, and they become involved. The presence of other beings is not only added to the landscape of the place I live in; that presence changes the world. This power of seeing yourself as part of a whole and being able to modify the world could be a good concept of education. Not for an imaginary time and place, but for the where we are now" (idem: 102-103).

Again, the author criticises Western pedagogy that fosters excellence, the search for a prominent place, in contrast to a collective existence. He proposes an education that takes place in friction with daily life, outside the classroom, friction that provides an essential subjectivity field, while teaching how to live in an integrated way with the collective. The essence of indigenous children's learning lies in sharing; they yearn to be old, i.e., to be wise, just like their ancestors, with their hearts beating to the rhythm of the land.

The set of reflections Ailton Krenak brings together in this book reveals why his work has become a crucial contribution to the development of a plural and contemporary theory. Straining the limits of Western epistemology, the author proposes the confluence of multiple forms of existence, displacing thought and knowledge production beyond hegemonic categories and reformulating the political, environmental and pedagogical imagination from an indigenous worldview and situated existence. With accessible, at times poetic, language, Krenak creates alternative grammars in articulating ancestral knowledge — indigenous, Andean, Quilombolas — as conceptual operators capable of

reconfiguring concepts of territory, citizenship, education, subjectivity and the future. The book re-enchants thought, inviting its readers to imagine possible futures that arise by recognising the power of the multiplicity of existences.

Bibliography

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