Introduction

Coloniality is the key concept to understanding decoloniality as a way of thinking and perceiving. As stated by Walter D. Mignolo (2011: 2-5) in "The Darker Side of Western Modernity", coloniality was a concept introduced by the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano, in the early 1990s, and goes hand in hand with what is considered to be decoloniality. Coloniality is linked to the concept of modernity and refers to a period of the development of Western civilization from the Renaissance to the present time of modern colonization and globalization. The awareness of the elements this process consists of is, according to Mignolo, one of the main traits of decolonization, perceived as a third option to capitalism and communism.

Mignolo underlines the manner by which decoloniality transforms, through time, into a new type of nationalism, the one that confronts "the homogenizing forces of globalization". In that sense, it seems that the "colonial matrix of power" is subject to adaptation and differentiation. Economy, authority, sexuality, and knowledge/subjectivity are the aspects that show how Eurocentric and North-American-centric thought dominated the social and ideological field. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015: 485-486) perceives decoloniality as an epistemological movement that rises above the strategies of dominating centers of power, and how they reflect on regions that were influenced by imperialist countries. He points out six consequences of colonialism, which are defined by Ali A. Mazuri, a critic who is part of and connected with the perspective of the so-called epic school. These consequences provide clear-cut and profound insight into the effects of the colonial way of thinking and acting: integration of the third-world country in the world economy and capitalism, partialization of land and property, its incorporation in the Eurocentric languages and cultures, integration into the global technological age, and the domination of the European moral order and Christian thought. Some of the African thinkers viewed these effects as, more or less, episodic, but they cannot be grasped apart from the overall influence of imperial forces on Indigenous peoples over the world.

Decoloniality is a phenomenon that also demands to be viewed in terms of what Catherine E. Walsh calls "decolonial dangers" (2018: 82). They underline the oversimplification and oversubjectification of the problem of indigeneity and Indigenous peoples. This process is also directed to the way the power struggle and praxis are perceived, since the overall change in the use of political power, language, and subjectivity is clearly directed to making more sense of the strategies of coloniality and its modernity. The perils of seeing

decoloniality outside the colonial matrix of power is one of the most complicated tasks, since its effects can be seen in the light of decolonial transformation into a peripheral, marginalized subject that only instrumentalizes the colonial power structure.

One way of thinking about decoloniality is to perceive it as relationality (vincularidad), a term proposed by Andean Indigenous thinkers (Walsh and Mignolo 2018: 1-2), i.e., a path to finding connections and correlations between different aspects and phenomena in the social and cultural milieu. In terms of decolonial praxis, narratives, histories and storytelling are some of the best ways to tap into the nature of decoloniality, especially when it is seen through the lenses of writers who originate from a particular geographical or historical region, and do not adopt an outside point of view. Decolonial voice is the voice originating from the inside, the never-ending clash of different standpoints that do not allow themselves to be submerged under the universal signifier, the only denotation that sums up all the liminal allusions and connotations.

Bogomilism, as a folk practice that emerged in a form of defiance against the Christian dogmatic and ideological standpoints, turned out to be a kind of decolonial praxis and way of thinking. Different people in the Byzantine Empire, forced to coexist and share spaces, were dominated not only politically, but also culturally, in terms of forgetting their legacy and transforming their past into a Byzantine heritage. This is especially true when it comes to Slavic people, rendered by Byzantine historians as “sclavi” (meaning ‘servants’), since Christianity was the main tool for transforming their animistic, polytheistic folklore beliefs into a history without recognition, one that serves no clear political point, and only underlines the historical necessity for them to be oppressed. By changing the main Christian concepts and reflection of the world, Bogomilic thinkers were struggling with colonial power by creating a new shared space of different religious viewpoints that also had political connotations. Aside from being focused on reinterpreting and changing Christian dogma, Bogomils were also battling the colonial feudal power, which mainly reinforced the differences in social status. One of the main events in Balkan medieval history is the moment of political recognition of Bogomilism, when Tsar Samuel’s state gave them freedom of speech and enabled the expansion of Bogomilism in different countries, followed by the religious conversion of several members of his family. That is a clear act of opposition against the dominant Byzantine practice, which strived to transform Bogomilic perspective into a marginalized subject. Bogomilism rose as the voice of the subjugated, Indigenous people, perceived from the center of political power only as an instrument of power distribution, but never as an affirmation of its distinctiveness.

Recognition, relation, double negation

Approaching the problem of colonial relations and their effects, one is inevitably faced with the elements of colonial power struggle and its distribution. Glen Sean Coulthard, considering the ways colonialism marked its place in the Canadian form of settler-colonialism, underlines the specific form of colonial power which is not characterized by state violence. This form of non-violent direction of power, which cannot be subsumed under a common denominator, forces "Indigenous peoples to identify, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly asymmetrical and nonreciprocal forms of recognition, either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society" (Coulthard 2014: 25).

The phenomenon of colonial recognition and master-slave relations is among the most obvious effects of colonialism and its dynamics. One of the earliest insights in the problem of recognition, as a phenomenon that takes central place in Hegel's account of the phenomenology of spirit, is Franz Fanon's 1952 work "Black Skin, White Masks", where he challenges the concept of recognition in terms of colonial power struggle. In that sense, he actually draws upon Hegel's master-slave concept in The phenomenology of spirit from 1807. Recognition is, for Fanon, a necessity for the subjugated, because it is the exact point of affirming his own status in relation to the other, which is the colonial superpower. In that sense, Fanon states that the first truth of the marginalized subject is the comparison, "he is constantly preoccupied with selfevaluation and with the ego-ideal" (Fanon 2008: 163).

Hegel's concept of consciousness, especially the part dedicated to lordship and bondage, underlines the relative independence of self-consciousness, which is understood only in relation to the other. It is the foundation to understanding of master-slave dynamics. The fact that one consciousness must "supersede", be "out of itself" to get to know the other and overcome it, underlines the theoretical possibility to get to know itself "for itself", since "this other is itself". The main point here is this interrelation and intersubjectivity that Hegel proposes to be an essential quality of being that cannot be understood without a certain negative quality or trait. "Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for-self, self-equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else. For it, its essence and absolute object is 'I'; and in this immediacy, or in this [mere] being, of its being-for-self, it is an individual" (Hegel 1977: 113).

But this individual cannot be grasped without its effective relation to the other, which is also individual, although underlined by the attributes "unessential" and "negatively characterized object". This viewpoint takes Hegel to a depiction of nonreciprocal relations,

where the master is imagined as a "being-for-itself", and the bondage is "immediate consciousnesses, a form of 'thinghood'", imagined to be that other which is the object of desire for the lord. In Hegel's rumination, the exact state of thinghood enables the bondage to become individual, or to get to know its uniqueness in the process. Hegel attributes the thinghood to the bondsman as something which leads him only to "work" on it, meaning that he also derives his consciousness from the negative elements of his own subjugation. However, Hegel does not engage in futile discussion about the necessity of the bondsman's existence for the lord, since there are more complicated relations at stake. One of the main points here is the fact that the "unessential consciousness" of the bondsman is actually the "truth" of the master, but the bondsman acquires this knowledge after he is faced with the "absolute Lord", or the fear of death. That is the main trait of slavery, when their interdependence is immediately revealed to the master, and only subsequently understood by the bondsman.

The thinghood of the bondsman, which is an object of desire for the lord, and the exact point where the bondsman is negatively related to himself, becomes the path by which the bondsman acquires his consciousness, but only through work. Work is the exact quality by which the bondsman is negatively connected to his thinghood, but also the hot spot of his recognition of slavery. That is why Hegel concludes this passage by making remarks about what thinghood can do for the bondsman, since "in fashioning the thing, he becomes aware that being-for-self belongs to him, that he himself exists essentially and actually in his own right" (Hegel 1977: 118). The worker's realization of the independence of the object of his work is actually the moment when he acquires the awareness of his own independence, and the strategy of the master to enslave him by placing the result of his work out of his reach.

Fanon perceives Hegel's master-slave dynamics in a similar, yet more chronologically framed context. He uses widely the term "Negro" when depicting the relations between the subjugated and the master. In his perspective, the notion "Negro" serves as a common denominator of all black men, regardless of the continent or the country they inhabit, bonded by the psychodynamic of the master's act of objectification, and the need to constantly be valued and affirmed by an external standpoint (similar to what Hegel refers to in his explanation of master-slave connection and interdependence). Analyzing the significance of Fanon's early work "Black Skin, White Masks", Ziauddin Sardar (2008: x) points out to the fact that his work was not recognized until its first translation in English in 1967. Fanon strived to apply different methods to the topic that came to his interest after he moved to Algeria – Marxism, psychoanalysis, literary criticism, etc. This fact only proves

that he uncompromisingly focused on the question of struggle as an attempt to survive the inhuman conditions black men were placed in.

Homi K. Bhabha (2008: xxiii) goes further in his explanation of what Fanon's new humanism really means, by underlining his "subversive turn of a familiar term", when Fanon states that the nonexistence of Negro is part of the actual nonexistence of the white man as well. Bhabha connects Hegel and Fanon by juxtaposing history and existentialism, i.e., the historical development proposed by Hegelian dialectic and the "presence of the marginalized" by Fanon. Fanon's focus is placed on the black men who are clearly part of the colonial matrix of power, where the distribution of economy, language, knowledge, and subjectivity comes into being. However, by marking the difference between the common understanding of Negro as a generic term and what makes the difference between black peoples, Fanon assumes that psychoanalysis is the best tool for explaining the current state of affairs. His claim: "The Negro is not. Any more than the white man" (Fanon 2008: 180), actually affirms not only the necessity to view one's position outside the matrix of power and enslavement, but also the variability of the concept, which subsumes and deletes the proper cultural and environmental differences between black people. The black man's need for recognition from the other is also a "dual narcissism", since for him, there is a need to be recognized from both sides (as black, and as non-white).

The black man is a comparison in terms of his double-folded position – he is comparing himself with other black people, and with the white man as well. In this hiatus, the level of narcissistic engagement can vary, so Fanon points out the difference between the Antilleans and Martinicans. Antilleans are comparing themselves with white people, so the comparison is marked by the racial difference, while Martinicans are comparing with each other, against the moral order and the pattern proposed by the white man. That is why his Adlerian scheme underlines the rise of the ego which is not different, but "greater than the Other". In that sense, the greatness is claimed by other black people who are following or reworking the white pattern, in terms of their blackness. That is why Fanon views Martinican as a "crucified man".

Although Fanon is recognized as a partisan of the concept of struggle and its importance for the rise of new humanism, in his inquiry into Hegel's notion of recognition, he underlines the exact way this recognition turns into relation. "Historically, the Negro steeped in the inessentiality of servitude was set free by his master. He did not fight for his freedom. Out of slavery the Negro burst into the lists where his masters stood" (Fanon 2008: 171). By differentiating the concept of freedom, based on the affirmation of one's active

remembering of the struggle, in contrast to the one affirmed by the white man who is unmoved in the presence of the black, Fanon underlines the historical necessity of conflict and the slave's turn to the master by abandoning the object. That is the crucial difference that can be drawn between Hegelian concept of recognition and reciprocity, and Fanon's view of the slave's turn to the master instead of the object.

Fanon's further interest in overcoming dualities and the compartmentalization of coloniality can be seen in the light of his 1961 work, "The Wretched of the Earth". Homi K. Bhabha views this work as an example of the manner Fanon thought about the main concepts in his taxonomy. Decolonization, according to the way Bhabha read Fanon, "can be achieved only with the destruction of the Manichaeanism of the cold war" (Bhabha 2004: xiv), and it is precisely the term "Manichaeanism" that is fundamental to the understanding of colonial duality. The future of the world, after decolonization, can be viewed only in terms of its development beyond narrow-minded nationalism, and it is exactly nationalism that makes the most for colonial distribution of power. Fanon adopts a very interesting perspective when it comes to the question of nationality and the past, since colonialism not only attacks the economic underdevelopment of Indigenous people, but also reaffirms and rewrites their past and history. "With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, and destroys it. This effort to demean history prior to colonization today takes on a dialectical significance" (Fanon 2004: 149). A way out of this circle is, for Fanon, the theoretical possibility of the colonized people to reclaim their past on their own terms, and that possibility is ingrained in the colonizer's unawareness of the national/cultural specifics of people.

Reading about Fanon's notion of national consciousness, one can note that he actually affirms the idea that nationality reveals the struggles and ideas of intellectuals (i.e., the local colonized bourgeoisie) that, in the economic realm, strive to occupy the place of the colonizers. In that sense, the simple understanding of nationalism as a state of progression from being colonized to being fully developed is actually wrong. Nation is a term that Fanon uses in order to signify the process of awakening, or a cultural distinction, which is intentionally blurred by the oppressive voice of the colonizer. In that sense, colonized literature in Africa has always been viewed under the term "Negro literature", and never in the spectrum of its national character. This double negative value of national determination leads to the use of a common denominator (Negro, Arab, Jewish, etc.) as a substitution and a supplementation of the actual national character of one region or culture. In that way, the colonized is first stricken by the need to overcome the generalization, and then to reclaim

his own past by reaffirming its features on different ground.
For the colonized to experience the past differently, and to do something more than a simple justification of the acts of politicians, Fanon proposes a return to culture and the past that is from above, i.e., an intellectual who is aware of his alienation in his own culture, providing a new glance at the spectrum of its national features. Fanon regards the nation as something of utmost importance, viewed as a basis for all kinds of cultural movements. “The colonized intellectual is responsible not to his national culture, but to the nation as a whole, whose culture is, after all, but one aspect” (2004: 168). In that sense, the fight for national liberation should be the first element that underlines overall strives for national culture and national culture, and it should lie at the heart of the liberation struggle. The colonized must decolonize their perspective, in the scope of “psycho-affective liberation”, to achieve a more sensible and vivid perception of their own past and future.

Slavic tradition and its place in Byzantine coloniality

In regard to Slavic tradition, especially the medieval period, the Byzantine rule and its government were one of the major historical and cultural themes that tackled the problem of coloniality. In the sources, i.e., the texts written by the Byzantine authors, Slavic tradition is seen as a phenomenon that emerged in the historical scene after a certain clash of different peoples, and this Slavic conglomerate is the actual opponent to Byzantine state order. As interconnected communities, Slavs appeared in the Balkan historical scene after the 4th and 5th centuries AD. In the writings of Procopius of Caesarea (1981: 19), Slavs and Antes, different, but similar peoples, are regarded as part of one unity, and their democratic regime (a tribal organization) is pointed out as a factual threat to Byzantine state order. Procopius underlines their traditional beliefs and their way of life, quite different from the Byzantine, because the manner by which they formed settler tribes and practiced primitive forms of agriculture and cattle breeding made them inferior to the Byzantine traditional and colonial gaze. Procopius noted their barbarian language and related it to their modest and poor way of life, which was in direct opposition to the manner in which they endangered the Empire and its function.
As Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243) explains, coloniality is different from colonialism by its effects and duration. Coloniality “refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations”. In that

sense, Byzantine rule represented a form of coloniality, which spread through different peoples that were part of its state order. Dimitri Obolensky (1971: 130 – 131), in the 1970s, proposed the term "Byzantine commonwealth" in order to describe the power and cultural strategies that the Byzantine Empire employed to establish its government over different peoples under its rule. Tsar Samuel, in the 10th century, appeared to be one of the first state rulers that were opponents to the grand Byzantine Empire, alongside the Bulgarian state.

There are several different standpoints regarding Tsar Samuel's origin. John Fine (1983: 191 – 192) tackles the problem of Samuel's ethnic heritage (Macedonian or Bulgarian), and the fact that it is irrelevant in terms of his insisting on posing himself, in historical order, as different from the Byzantines. Samuel's state is directly connected to the appearance and rise of Bogomilism, as a dualistic turn in Christian tradition that made a great impact on the Balkans and beyond. Its historical relevance is also connected to the rule of the Bulgarian Tsar Peter I in the 10th century, thus making its importance for the Slavic people even more profound. As Mitko Panov (2021: 132) notes, there is no evident proof in the works of Byzantine contemporaries that they identified Samuel's state with Bulgaria. The population of Samuel's state was perceived as a new opponent to the Byzantine state, a strange people that were designated mainly with the stereotype terms "Scythians", "Mysians", "barbarians", or simply "enemies". This was the ideological construct in the time of Basil II Porphyrogenitus, also called the Bulgarian Slayer, whose colonial power was demonstrated not only in the acts of naming different people, as presented by historians, but also in the attribution of the common denominator (Romei) to all the different ethnic entities that were part of this great country.

These historical circumstances enabled the rise and progression of the Bogomil movement. There were three forces that were distributing the power struggle (Byzantine Empire, Bulgarian state/knigdom and Tsar Samuel's state/kingdom), and Bogomils were forced to occupy the place of the subjugated in this power dynamics. At first, their appearance was not perceived as a threat, since their rituals were clearly connected to different folk beliefs that were of no interest to the governing order. However, after their confrontation with the church, mostly by affirming different concepts, confronting Christian dogma and people's status in the Christian church, their conditions rapidly changed. By propagating disobedience to the church dogma and its status as a state institution, the Bogomil movement became one of the first represenations of decolonial thinking in the Balkans.

Decoloniality in terms of Kosta Racin's works on Bogomilism and its tradition

Decolonial thinking, viewed as a way of approaching discourses and history "from above" (or beyond), can also be seen in Kosta Racin's works on Bogomilic tradition. Kosta Solev Racin (1908 – 1943) represents one of the key figures in the contemporary Macedonian literature and culture. He is also an important figure for other South-Slavic peoples as well, since he collaborated with several important figures of that time (Stevan Galogaža, Miroslav Krleža, August Cesarec, etc.). His place of origin and way of life condition the life he leads in his early days, when he is forced to stop his education in the fall of 1922. As a worker on various properties, he obtained more financial stability in pottery, to which he was later forced to dedicate himself completely. His father was a pivotal figure in his life and had an important influence on his work, as a transmitter of folklore tales and songs, just like his mother. There are two periods in his literary work, one that can be connected to the publication of his first poetic work in the Serbian language in 1936, and the second, from 1936 to his death, when he mainly wrote articles and short stories.
His study "Dragovitskite bogomili (The Bogomils of Dargoviti)", written between 1938 and 1940, represents a valuable document concerning the medieval Macedonian and Balkan history. According to Blaže Koneski (1987: 96 – 97), Racin was drawn to study Bogomilism because of his social millieu, and the possibility to "awaken the national pride of the Macedonian people". It is indubitable that for this study, Racin was using sources in several different languages (Serbian, Bulgarian, Russian, French, Czech, etc.), and he strived to present Bogomilism from a certain Marxist perspective. This analysis took him to a more profound affirmation of folklore heritage and the aspect of "the origin of motifs in the folk tales", as stated by Kiril Penušliski (1987: 162), although he underlines their local attributes. When Racin approaches the problem of Bogomilism, he drafts a general frame in which this process can be placed, in order to explain its dimensions, before further explanation of the historical process and the conditions in which this movement unfolded.
Racin qualifies Bogomilism as a "folk, rationalistic interpretation of Christianity", in correlation to the feudal social system. One of Racin's fundamental premises is that Bogomilism faced people with the ultimate truth that "man should not believe, but think" (Racin 2024: 143), to find God's kingdom here, on earth. It is related to Hegel's view on subjectivity and how awareness can change master-slave dynamics. Bogomil's point was to find the significance of human life in the struggle with everything that originates not from God but from the devil. This struggle is in humans and in society as well, which is a dungeon

to the human spirit (again, a point of similarity with Hegel's dialectics). In that sense, Bogomilism rises as a "most noble phenomenon in the spiritual sacristy of humanity". Racin took account on Bogomilism from historical perspective, marking its origin from Macedonia, in the 10th century, and regarding it in a Balkan and European perspective – in the following centuries, it spread across Bosnia, Northern Italy and South of France. It is the essential link for the upcoming European Reformation movement in the 15th and the 16th century, seen as a result of Bogomils' efforts and their physical and moral exclusivity (in terms of the dualism they propagate). Racin underlines Bogomils' resistance to institutional religion and hierarchy, social and religious.

Racin expands the historical framework of Bogomilism in the context of the changes in social structure that occur at the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century. The process of merging the former independent Sclaveni territories of Dragovites, Sagudates and Brsjaks into the powerful state structure, governed by the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon, and the annihilation of the old Slavic community, Racin regards as the basic precondition for future class segregation. As a skilled historian, adopting a decolonized perspective, he affirms the change of the feudal system under the influence of war expeditions, enlarged taxes, and the increase in the number of the feudal aristocracy. It goes in line with Fanon's request for the colonized intellectual to understand his responsibility for the national awakening and rebirth. These social changes are in direct correlation with the church dominance, whose monotheistic dogma was directed to subjugate old Slavic beliefs and enforce the state regime, which resulted in the enlargement of church territories. By underlining historical necessities, Racin does not forget to refer to the key connection between one's behavior and historical laws, in terms of dialectic movement seen through the lenses of social struggle and the disarray of certain processes. This is confirmed in the process of the impoverishment of the vast majority of peasants, and the disappearance of small land properties, which turned peasants into "medieval proletarians". Racin's views are mainly grounded in Florinski and Blagoev, and he underlines the creation of "Byzantine Christianity" as an ideology of the feudal class, one of the main obstacles for the appearance of medieval citizenship, which could have been the leader of social change.

Although Racin's point of view is generally Marxist, he tackles the problem of religion with caution, considering its importance. The religion "reflects, in its own way, the objective social essence" (Racin 2024: 154), and in that sense, the truth of society is inscribed in its religious foundation. That is why Christianity is of utmost importance for the affirmation of feudalism, and its postulates are completely different from the ancient dualistic heretic

movements. These “religious and oppositional heresies” in the Balkans are noted as early as the occurrence of the first Armenian and Syrian colonists that, for political reasons, were dislocated and formed settler colonies in the distant north-west borders of their land. Colonizations that were executed by the Byzantine state order are the reason for the appearance of Syrian and Armenian colonists on the borders of the Empire, as well as the neighboring Sclaveni communities, in the south-east ethnic Macedonia at that time, around the city of Kastoria. These facts are confirmed by the toponyms that appear in these regions and indicate the presence of these peoples (Ermenovo, Ermensko, Ermenhor, etc.). Manichaeism and Paulicianism are regarded as spiritual precursors of Bogomilism. For Racin, the explanation of dualistic premises is the necessary foreground to understand the perspective of Christian monotheism, and its affirmation and interpretation of holy writings, which is granted only to the members of the church. This process can be seen in the light of Fanon’s interrelation between the non-existence (or the conditioned existence) of the oppositions, namely black and white man, which reveal their function only in their codependence.

Apart from the feudal and church stance that the world is created according to God’s will and providence, the dualistic teachings are based on the assumption of the “restless”, or “unsteady Spirit” that is capable, rationally, to comprehend the deep contradictions in material existence. In that sense, dualism advocates the limitation of delight, originating from material experiences, to achieve spiritual rebirth and change that will also be actualized in the social realm. Racin considers the history of heretic movements in the context of appropriate social turmoil, in the spirit of his dialectical method. He presents the connection between Paulicianism and Manichaeism, the latter seen as a “reformed Christianity”, or the most influential spiritual movement for the appearance and development of Bogomilism. Priest Bogomil (the meaning of his name is ‘one who is dear to God’) undertakes a reformation act, as part of the lower clerics, and this can be seen as a confirmation of the invidious position of peasants in the Empire. Racin assumes that he was a very insightful and educated man, since he used the principles of other dualistic teachings to derive and transform the postulates of his own thought. What we know of Bogomilism is acknowledged by its opponents, especially Presbyter Cosmas, and the important Bogomilist study, “The Secret Book”, which is kept in the Carcassonne Archives, as a main source of study.

In order to explain Bogomils’ rationalism and rebellion against feudalism, Racin systematically describes the principles of their teaching throughout their cosmogony. For

Bogomils, the understanding of God and Satan is more of a conceptual, philosophical kind, and not just a question of their appearance as theological personae. In that sense, the understanding of heaven and hell is not in accordance with the Christian interpretation, since the body, as every material phenomenon, is subject to decay and to the laws of this material world. It is ruled by the Satan, similar to every human being, and can be saved only after the Second Coming of Christ. Bogomils refused to accept Christ's resurrection, and associated Christ merely with the common man, who incarnated "the living word" or "awareness", "God's spark". Racin highlights that Bogomils' revolutionary act in understanding religion turns them towards a more appropriate realization of man's life on the earth, in terms of his moral and ethical improvement that should not happen exclusively after his death. One's assignment is to incorporate ethical premises in one's daily life, while one is here, in the physical world. Bogomils oppose Christianity as a religion which affirms class differences in the name of God's rule and hierarchy, thus negating the significance of Christian symbols and rituals. "The reason was the phenomenon that kindled [Christian] social untruths and became a powerful tool in the hands of the subjugated" (Racin 2024: 163). That is why Bogomils reject the concept of Immaculate Conception, since it is one more of the strategies to oppress people and a manner to live in a delusion about the true nature of the world and everything that exists.

The ideal that Bogomils strive to obtain is close to Racin's standpoint – the concept of "fraternity and equality", as envisioned by the first Christians, who lived it genuinely and without a mediator (in terms of church authority). The possibility of living the "all human Christian fraternity", ruled by truth, justice and wisdom, is placed by Racin not only as an ideal, but also as something that is possible and attainable. Although priest Bogomil was part of the lower clergy, it is indubitable that people who developed and lived Bogomilist principles were well-educated people, part of the clerical order of "pure Bogomils". It is of utmost importance for Racin that Bogomils have authored different folklore genres, thus creating a folk world-view, and also various apocryphal (hidden) manuscripts, full of interesting narratives that recreate and transform the Christian dogma. They incarnate Walsh and Mignolo's concept of relationality, as a true manifestation of decolonial thinking that not only diminishes oppositions, but also reworks inherited concepts and puts them into considerable correlation.

At the end of his study, Racin tackles the results that Bogomilism provided over the centuries. He explains the changes in the social realm of the 10th century, especially the ones connected to the creation of Tsar Samuel's state (and the fact that Samuel was only a

supporter of Bogomils, i.e., he used them for his political goals, but never became Bogomil himself). Throughout the centuries, Bogomilism survived as a movement, although it was persecuted. The variety of acts against Bogomils can be seen in Tsar Dushan's statute book, as well as in the act of burning of priest Basil and his 12 students. Even the constitution of the so-called Bosnian Church during the 13th century was considered a triumph of Bogomilic defiance, so Bogomils ought to be severely punished. Patarenes' persecutions in Northern Italy, or the Cathars in the South of France, present more evidence, as well as Pope Innocent III's crusade against them (1209 – 1229). The Bogomil movement spread not only in South Slavic countries, but also throughout Europe. Under the veil of folklore beliefs, it persisted despite the dominance of the church, and enhanced the national resurrection of South Slavic people. In the spirit of a true visionary, Racin notes that "the ultimate right to Bogomil heritage belongs to the inheritor of the civil state, by claiming the historical and cultural legacy of the people" (Racin 2024: 173).

Racin's study "Bogomils (a short debate on Macedonian history)" is actually the first version of his standpoints on Bogomilism, in vernacular language. It is a kind of "first historical study in Macedonian" (Shoptrajanov 1987: 323 – 325), taking into account the frequency of the use of corresponding terms related to the toponym Macedonia. Here, Racin takes on the question of Bogomilism more directly, first by depicting its role in the development of human history. The importance of medieval history for the following events in the social realm, especially during the Renaissance, as well as the fact that Bogomils are "our first true teachers and authors", places the focus of his study on Bogomilic turn in favor of the equality and equanimity of all people. Racin considers the Bogomil movement to have socialist traits, seen in the light of the ideological struggle of his time, considering priest Bogomil's true insistence on social justice and fairness. Racin underlines the difference between science and religion, thus claiming that in periods of underdeveloped scientific thought, religion was one of the ways to objectively approach the world and its existence. He highlights the difference between the monotheistic and dualistic teachings, as well as the importance of critical and common sense in the understanding of the good and the evil, whose fight is the essence of this physical, material world. The oppressed, through dualistic approaches, criticized the feudal order, which was imposed by the lords, in accordance with Christian dogma.

Bogomils claim that the human body is a creation of the devil, and human thought, only when it is sincere and pure, pertains to the godly realm. This represents an attack on the medieval thought system and confirms that Bogomils believed that justice is attainable while

man is still alive on the earth. In his study, Racin does not rely entirely on different sources and tries to systematize Bogomils' teaching in several points. Their resistance was mainly directed against the church dogmatism, and that is the reason why Racin renders them a true precursor of the movement of the Reformation, although quite before its time. In that sense, Bogomilic dualism is viewed not only as a strike against the ruling strategies, but also as a victory of common critical sense over the imposition of power and the ideas that are not authentically Christian. Bogomilism for Racin is a synonym of old Slavic, old Christian teaching, which tends to renew original study by rejecting everything that is dogmatic and outdated (2024: 185 – 187). The creation of Bogomil manuscripts is seen as a result of the incorporation of Manichaean ideas and the infliction of new explanations, familiar to Eastern legends and narratives. By affirming Bogomilism's promise for a better and more righteous life, Racin concludes that Bogomilism should not be transformed into a new contemporary faith; instead, it should serve as a stepping stone for further struggle and aspirations. In 1939, he makes one more attempt to actualize this theme, underlining its Slavic character, as a rebirth and a return to "true Christianity". Racin considers this movement in the light of its folklore legacy, confirming the necessity for its definition as a "folk movement for human rights" (Racin 2024: 192).

Racin's accounts on Bogomilism take on historical and political stances to develop a certain profound line of thought. However, apart from these implications, Racin is clearly avoiding the perils of being exclusively a Marxist thinker. He recognizes the true power of folk beliefs and dodges Walsh's "decolonial dangers" by affirming the complexity of these early understandings of colonial matrices of power. Bogomils were more than aware of the ways the Empire was enabling their subjugation, not only through religious practices, but also by inflicting religious beliefs. To create an independent point of view, Bogomils were turning not to the distant Slavic, animistic worldview, but to the original, more authentic version of Christian thought, found in the dualistic movements around the world. The humanistic perspective of the man and his space-time relations is the key point of Bogomils' understanding, thus providing an early vision of how society can develop into a more updated version of itself, avoiding the power relations and the power struggle.

Concluding remarks

Decoloniality represents one of the key concepts in the contemporary teachings of humanistic studies. It sheds light on the problem of colonial power and its distribution not

only in historical perspective, but in modern times as well. As Césaire (2001: 52) puts it, colonialism and its effects should take us to a more profound understanding of what a new society is ready to offer, by affirming the "productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of golden days". In addition to what the decolonial turn can awaken, as a reimagining and reframing of old concepts and thought frames, it also paves the way to a more profound insight into what humans are capable of doing in terms of social relations and strategies. Since coloniality draws upon language, subjectivity, knowledge, and the time/space continuum, the four aspects of power structure and dominance, decoloniality can turn our attention to the qualities and perspectives of a more humanistic society. In terms of its various effects, decoloniality is an option which should not be considered as an imperative (Mignolo 2018: 224), but as a possibility that is "convincing and empowering". In that sense, decolonial thinkers of different regions and parts of the world propagate similar and inspiring ways of thinking.

Racin's work proves to be one of the earliest accounts on decolonial thinking in Macedonian and Balkan tradition, if we consider Bogomilic manuscripts and anti-Bogomilic works to be the first attempts to see Byzantine ideology and way of thinking in the spectrum of its colonial power. His historical account serves as a stepping stone to modern analyses of Balkan history, and a possibility to see Slavic tradition in the light of colonialism (although the formation of Slavic medieval countries is not traditionally considered in the light of the colonial power struggle). The problem of Bogomils' rise, and their theoretical framework serve as a starting point to defining decolonial concepts, which were rapidly spreading. Racin is among the first to approach the problem of Bogomilism historically, and then address its political consequences. Bogomilism is the ground on which Racin builds his perspective of the colonial rewriting of history and the past, by affirming the necessary reassessment of its importance for the understanding of Slavic, Balkan, and European tradition. Works on and against Bogomilism, as well as accounts dedicated to its importance, such as Racin's analyses, consider colonial power struggle a tool for political gains, but also underline the important revision of inherited notions, such as folklore tradition, in a more humanistic manner. Aside from its antagonistic position to Byzantine state strategy, Bogomilism underlines the rebirth of man as a historical subject, grounded in his right to be the agent of his own development and change. That is why priest Bogomil was a key figure of this movement, representing one's right to recognize tradition under one's own terms. Bogomilism is a shift in the way subjectivity, knowledge, and power are perceived, in the same way that Racin's work contributes to that epistemological turn.

To think decolonially means to reevaluate the inherited concepts, which encapsulate the thought process in a predictable framework. It also takes up subjectivity, regarded in terms of its fragmentation and the impossibility of narrowing it down to three opposing and contradictory aspects – the settlers, natives, and subjugated. Tuck and Yang (2012: 31) clearly affirm the necessity to go beyond the commonly accepted aspects of decoloniality. "Decolonization 'here' is intimately connected to anti-imperialism elsewhere. However, decolonial struggles here/there are not parallel, not shared equally, nor do they bring neat closure to the concerns of all involved – particularly not for settlers. Decolonization is not equivocal to other anti-colonial struggles. It is incommensurable". The reshaping of human history and tradition in the context of decolonization only gives rise to questions that should not be answered immediately, but only serve as a confirmation of its power and necessity. The practice of decolonization enables a more profound approach to the possible answers of human existence, avoiding the necessary separation and power struggle, and not limiting in the confinements of the historical probability and necessity. If Bogomilism is the early act of decolonial thinking in the Balkans and beyond, Racin's study is a metacritical revision of decoloniality, in terms of its humanistic, relational, and thought-provoking character.

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