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# **Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality**

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Can we produce a radical anti-systemic politics beyond identity politics?<sup>1</sup> Is it possible to articulate a critical cosmopolitanism beyond nationalism and colonialism? Can we produce knowledges beyond Third World and Eurocentric fundamentalisms? Can we overcome the traditional dichotomy between political-economy and cultural studies? Can we move beyond economic reductionism and culturalism? How can we overcome the Eurocentric modernity without throwing away the best of modernity as many Third World fundamentalists do? In this paper, I propose that an epistemic perspective from the subaltern side of the colonial difference has a lot to contribute to this debate. It can contribute to a critical perspective beyond the outlined dichotomies and to a redefinition of capitalism as a world-system.

In October 1998, there was a conference/dialogue at Duke University between the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group and the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. The dialogue initiated at this conference eventually resulted in the publication of several issues of the journal *NEPANTLA*. However, this conference was the last time the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group met before their split. Among the many reasons and debates that produced this split, there are two that I would like to stress. The members of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group were primarily Latinamericanist scholars in the USA. Despite their attempt at

producing a radical and alternative knowledge, they reproduced the epistemic schema of Area Studies in the United States. With a few exceptions, they produced studies about the subaltern rather than studies with and from a subaltern perspective. Like the imperial epistemology of Area Studies, theory was still located in the North while the subjects to be studied are located in the South. This colonial epistemology was crucial to my dissatisfaction with the project. As a Latino in the United States, I was dissatisfied with the epistemic consequences of the knowledge produced by this Latinamericanist group. They underestimated in their work ethnic/racial perspectives coming from the region, while giving privilege predominantly to Western thinkers. This is related to my second point: they gave epistemic privilege to what they called the "four horses of the apocalypse" (Mallon 1994; Rodríguez 2001), that is, Foucault, Derrida, Gramsci and Guha. Among the four main thinkers they privilege, three are Eurocentric thinkers while two of them (Derrida and Foucault) form part of the poststructuralist/postmodern Western canon. Only one, Ranajit Guha, is a thinker thinking from the South. By privileging Western thinkers as their central theoretical apparatus, they betrayed their goal to produce subaltern studies.

Among the many reasons for the split of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, one of them was between those who read subalternity as a postmodern critique (which represents a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism) and those who read subalternity as a decolonial critique (which represents a critique of Eurocentrism from subalternized and silenced knowledges) [Mignolo 2000: 183-186; 213-214]. For those of us that took side with the decolonial critique, the dialogue with the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group made evident the need to epistemologically transcend, that is, decolonize the Western canon and epistemology. The South Asian Subaltern Studies Group's main project is a critique to Western European colonial historiography about India and to Indian nationalist Eurocentric historiography of India. But by using a Western epistemology and privileging Gramsci and Foucault, constrained and limited the radicalism of their critique to Eurocentrism. Although they represent different epistemic projects, the South Asian Subaltern School privilege of Western epistemic canon overlapped with the sector of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group that sided with postmodernism. However, with all its limits, South Asian Subaltern Studies Group represents an important contribution to the critique of Eurocentrism. It forms part of an intellectual movement known as postcolonial critique (a critique of modernity from the Global South) as opposed to

the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group postmodern critique (a critique of modernity from the Global North) [Mignolo 2000]. These debates made clear to us (those who took side with the decolonial critique described above), the need to decolonize not only Subaltern Studies but also Postcolonial Studies (Grosfoguel 2006a; 2006b).

This is not an essentialist, fundamentalist, anti-European critique. It is a perspective that is critical of both Eurocentric and Third World fundamentalisms, colonialism and nationalism. Border thinking, one of the epistemic perspectives to be discussed in this article, is precisely a critical response to both hegemonic and marginal fundamentalisms. What all fundamentalisms share (including the Eurocentric one) is the premise that there is only one sole epistemic tradition from which to achieve Truth and Universality. However, my main points here are three: 1) that a decolonial epistemic perspective requires a broader canon of thought than simply the Western canon (including the Left Western canon); 2) that a truly universal decolonial perspective cannot be based on an abstract universal (one particular that raises itself as universal global design), but would have to be the result of the critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects towards a pluriversal as oppose to a universal world; 3) that decolonization of knowledge would require to take seriously the epistemic perspective/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South thinking from and with subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies. Postmodernism and poststructuralism as epistemological projects are caught within the Western canon reproducing within its domains of thought and practice a particular form of coloniality of power/knowledge.

However, what I have said about the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group applies to the paradigms of political-economy. In this article, I propose that an epistemic perspective from racial/ethnic subaltern locations has a lot to contribute to a radical decolonial critical theory beyond the way traditional political-economy paradigms conceptualize capitalism as a global or world-system. The idea here is to decolonize political-economy paradigms as well as world-system analysis and to propose an alternative decolonial conceptualization of the world-system. The first part is an epistemic discussion about the implications of the epistemological critique of feminist and subalternized racial/ethnic intellectuals to western epistemology. The second part is the implications of these critiques to the way we conceptualize the global or world system. The third part, is a discussion of global coloniality today. The

fourth part is a critique to both world-system analysis and postcolonial/cultural studies using coloniality of power as a response to the culture versus economy dilemma. Finally, the fifth, sixth, seventh and last part, is a discussion of decolonial thinking, transmodernity and socialization of power as decolonial alternatives to the present world-system.

## **Epistemological Critique**

The first point to discuss is the contribution of racial/ethnic and feminist subaltern perspectives to epistemological questions. The hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms that have informed western philosophy and sciences in the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (Grosfoguel 2005; 2006b) for the last 500 hundred years assume a universalistic, neutral, objective point of view. Chicana and black feminist scholars (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983; Collins 1990) as well as Third World scholars inside and outside the United States (Dussel 1977) reminded us that we always speak from a particular location in the power structures. Nobody escapes the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system". As feminist scholar Donna Haraway (1988) states, our knowledges are always situated. Black feminist scholars called this perspective "afro-centric epistemology" (Collins 1990) (which is not equivalent to the afrocentrist perspective) while Latin American Philosopher of Liberation Enrique Dussel called it "geopolitics of knowledge" (Dussel 1977) and, following Fanon (1967) and Anzaldúa (1987), I will use the term "body-politics of knowledge."

This is not only a question about social values in knowledge production or the fact that our knowledge is always partial. The main point here is the locus of enunciation, that is, the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks. In Western philosophy and sciences the subject that speaks is always hidden, concealed, erased from the analysis. The "ego-politics of knowledge" of Western philosophy has always privilege the myth of a non-situated "Ego". Ethnic/racial/gender/sexual epistemic location and the subject that speaks are always decoupled. By delinking ethnic/racial/gender/sexual epistemic location from the subject that speaks, Western philosophy and sciences are able to produce a myth about a Truthful universal knowledge that covers up, that is, conceals who is

speaking as well as the geo-political and body-political epistemic location in the structures of colonial power/knowledge from which the subject speaks.

It is important here to distinguish the "epistemic location" from the "social location." The fact that one is socially located in the oppressed side of power relations does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location. Precisely, the success of the modern/colonial world-system consists in making subjects that are socially located in the oppressed side of the colonial difference, to think epistemically like the ones on the dominant positions. Subaltern epistemic perspectives are knowledge coming from below that produces a critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge in the power relations involved. I am not claiming an epistemic populism where knowledge produced from below is automatically an epistemic subaltern knowledge. What I am claiming is that all knowledges are epistemically located in the dominant or the subaltern side of the power relations and that this is related to the geo- and body-politics of knowledge. The disembodied and unlocated neutrality and objectivity of the ego-politics of knowledge is a Western myth.

René Descartes, the founder of Modern Western Philosophy, inaugurates a new moment in the history of Western thought. He replaces God, as the foundation of knowledge in the Theo-politics of knowledge of the European Middle Ages, with (Western) Man as the foundation of knowledge in European Modern times. All the attributes of God are now extrapolated to (Western) Man. Universal Truth beyond time and space privileges access to the laws of the Universe, and the capacity to produce scientific knowledge and theory is now placed in the mind of Western Man. The Cartesian "Cogito ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am") is the foundation of modern Western sciences. By producing a dualism between mind and body and between mind and nature, Descartes was able to claim non-situated, universal, God-eyed view knowledge. This is what the Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez called the "point zero" perspective of Eurocentric philosophies (Castro-Gómez 2003). The "point zero" is the point of view that hides and conceals itself as being beyond a particular point of view, that is, the point of view that represents itself as being without a point of view. It is this "god-eye view" that always hides its local and particular perspective under an abstract universalism. Western philosophy privileges "ego politics of knowledge" over the "geopolitics of knowledge" and the "body-politics of knowledge." Historically, this has allowed Western man (the gendered term is intentionally used here) to represent his knowledge as the only one capable of

achieving a universal consciousness, and to dismiss non-Western knowledge as particularistic and, thus, unable to achieve universality.

This epistemic strategy has been crucial for Western global designs. By hiding the location of the subject of enunciation, European/Euro-American colonial expansion and domination was able to construct a hierarchy of superior and inferior knowledge and, thus, of superior and inferior people around the world. We went from the sixteenth century characterization of "people without writing" to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century characterization of "people without history," to the twentieth-century characterization of "people without development" and more recently, to the early twenty-first-century of "people without democracy". We went from the sixteenth-century "rights of people" (Sepúlveda versus de las Casas debate in the University of Salamanca in the mid-sixteenth century), to the eighteenth-century "rights of man" (Enlightenment philosophers), and to the late twentieth-century "human rights." All of these are part of global designs articulated to the simultaneous production and reproduction of an international division of labor of core/periphery that overlaps with the global racial/ethnic hierarchy of Europeans/non-Europeans.

However, as Enrique Dussel (1994) has reminded us, the Cartesian "Cogito ergo sum" was preceded by 150 years (since the beginnings of the European colonial expansion in 1492) of the European "ego conquistus" ("I conquer, therefore I am"). The social, economic, political and historical conditions of possibility for a subject to assume the arrogance of becoming God-like and put himself as the foundation of all Truthful knowledge was the Imperial Being, that is, the subjectivity of those who are at the center of the world because they have already conquered it. What are the decolonial implications of this epistemological critique to our knowledge production and to our concept of world-system?

## **Coloniality of Power as the Power Matrix of the Modern/Colonial World**

Globalization studies, political-economy paradigms and world-system analysis, with only a few exceptions, have not derived the epistemological and theoretical implications of the epistemic critique coming from subaltern locations in the colonial divide and expressed in academia through ethnic studies and woman studies. They still continue to produce knowledge from the Western man "point zero"

god-eye view. This has led to important problems in the way we conceptualize global capitalism and the "world-system." These concepts are in need of decolonization and this can only be achieved with a decolonial epistemology that overtly assumes a decolonial geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge as points of departure to a radical critique. The following examples can illustrate this point.

If we analyze the European colonial expansion from a Eurocentric point of view, what we get is a picture in which the origins of the so-called capitalist world-system are primarily produced by the inter-imperial competition among European Empires. The primary motive for this expansion was to find shorter routes to the East, which led accidentally to the so-called discovery and, eventual, Spanish and Portuguese colonization of the Americas. From this point of view, the capitalist world-system would be primarily an economic system that determine the behavior of the major social actors by the economic logic of making profits as manifested in the extraction of surplus value and the ceaseless accumulation of capital at a world-scale. Moreover, the concept of capitalism implied in this perspective privileges economic relations over other social relations. Accordingly, the transformation in the relations of production produces a new class structure typical of capitalism as opposed to other social systems and other forms of domination. Class analysis and economic structural transformations are privileged over other power relations.

Without denying the importance of the endless accumulation of capital at a world scale and the existence of a particular class structure in global capitalism, I raise the following epistemic question: How would the world-system look like if we moved the locus of enunciation from the European man to an Indigenous women in the Americas, to, say, Rigoberta Menchú in Guatemala or Domitila Barrios de Chungara in Bolivia? I do not pretend to speak for or represent the perspective of these indigenous women. What I attempt to do is to shift the location from which these paradigms are thinking. The first implication of shifting our geopolitics of knowledge is that what arrived in the Americas in the late fifteenth century was not only an economic system of capital and labor for the production of commodities to be sold for a profit in the world market. This was a crucial part of, but was not the sole element in, the entangled "package." What arrived in the Americas was a broader and wider entangled power structure that an economic reductionist perspective of the world-system is unable to account for. From the structural location of an indigenous woman in the Americas, what arrived was a more complex world-system than what political-economy paradigms and world-system analysis portrait. A



European/capitalist/military/Christian/patriarchal/white/heterosexual/male arrived in the Americas and established simultaneously in time and space several entangled global hierarchies that for purposes of clarity in this exposition I will list below as if they were separate from each other:

- 1) a particular global class formation where a diversity of forms of labor (slavery, semi-serfdom, wage labor, petty-commodity production, etc.) are going to co-exist and be organized by capital as a source of production of surplus value through the selling of commodities for a profit in the world market;
- 2) an international division of labor of core and periphery where capital organized labor in the periphery around coerced and authoritarian forms (Wallerstein 1974);
- 3) an inter-state system of politico-military organizations controlled by European males and institutionalized in colonial administrations (Wallerstein 1979);
- 4) a global racial/ethnic hierarchy that privileges European people over non-European people (Quijano 1993; 2000);
- 5) a global gender hierarchy that privileges males over females and European Judeo-Christian patriarchy over other forms of gender relations (Spivak 1988; Enloe 1990);
- 6) a sexual hierarchy that privileges heterosexuals over homosexuals and lesbians (it is important to remember that most indigenous peoples in the Americas did not consider sexuality among males a pathological behavior and had no homophobic ideology);
- 7) a spiritual hierarchy that privileges Christians over non-Christian/non-Western spiritualities institutionalized in the globalization of the Christian (Catholic and later, Protestant) church;

- 8) an epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western knowledge and cosmologies, and institutionalized in the global university system (Mignolo 1995, 2000; Quijano 1991);
- 9) a linguistic hierarchy between European languages and non-European languages that privileges communication and knowledge/theoretical production in the former and subalternize the latter as sole producers of folklore or culture but not of knowledge/theory (Mignolo 2000);
- 10) an aesthetic hierarchy of high art vs. naïve or primitive art where the West is considered superior high art and the non-West is considered as producers of inferior expressions of art institutionalized in Museums, Art Galleries and global art markets;
- 11) a pedagogical hierarchy where the Cartesian western forms of pedagogy are considered superior over non-Western concepts and practices of pedagogy;
- 12) a media/informational hierarchy where the West has the control over the means of global media production and information technology while the non-West do not have the means to make their points of view enter the global media networks;
- 13) an age hierarchy where the Western conception of productive life (ages between 15 and 65 years old) making disposable people above 65 years old are considered superior over non-Western forms of age classification, where the older the person, the more authority and respect he/she receives from the community;
- 14) an ecological hierarchy where the Western conceptions of "nature" (as an object that is a means towards an end) with its destruction of life (human and non-human) is privileged and considered superior over non-Western conceptions of the "ecology" such as Pachamama, Tawhid, or Tao (ecology or cosmos as subject that is an end in itself), which considers in its rationality the reproduction of life;

15) a spatial hierarchy that privileges the urban over the rural with the consequent destruction of rural communities, peasants and agrarian production at the world-scale.

It is not an accident that the conceptualization of the world-system from decolonial perspectives of the South will question its traditional conceptualizations produced by thinkers from the North. Following Peruvian Sociologist Aníbal Quijano (1991; 1998; 2000), we could conceptualize the present world-system as a historical-structural heterogeneous totality with a specific power matrix that he calls a "colonial power matrix" ("patrón de poder colonial"). This matrix affects all dimensions of social existence such as sexuality, authority, subjectivity and labor (Quijano 2000). The sixteenth century initiates a new global colonial power matrix that by the late nineteenth century came to cover the whole planet. Taking a step further from Quijano, I conceptualize the coloniality of power as an entanglement or, to use U.S. Third World Feminist concept, intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; Fregoso 2003) of multiple and heterogeneous global hierarchies ("heterarchies") of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide transversally reconfigures all of the other global power structures. What is new in the "coloniality of power" perspective is how the idea of race and racism becomes the organizing principle that structures all of the multiple hierarchies of the world-system (Quijano 1993). For example, the different forms of labor that are articulated to capitalist accumulation at a world-scale are assigned according to this racial hierarchy; coercive (or cheap) labor is done by non-European people in the periphery and "free wage labor" in the core. The global gender hierarchy is also affected by race: contrary to pre-European patriarchies where all women were inferior to all men, in the new colonial power matrix some women (of European origin) have a higher status and access to resources than some men (of non-European origin). The idea of race organizes the world's population into a hierarchical order of superior and inferior people that becomes an organizing principle of the international division of labor and of the global patriarchal system. Contrary to the Eurocentric perspective, race, gender, sexuality, spirituality, and epistemology are not additive elements to the economic and political structures of the capitalist world-system, but an integral, entangled and constitutive part of the broad entangled "package" called the European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system (Grosfoguel 2002).

European Judeo-Christian patriarchy and European notions of sexuality, epistemology and spirituality were globalized and exported to the rest of the world through the colonial expansion as the hegemonic criteria to racialize, classify and pathologize the rest of the world's population in a hierarchy of superior and inferior races.

This conceptualization has enormous implications that I can only briefly mention here:

- 1) The old Eurocentric idea that societies develop at the level of the nation-state in terms of a linear evolution of modes of production from pre-capitalist to capitalist is overcome. We are all encompassed within a capitalist world-system that articulates different forms of labor according to the racial classification of the world's population (Quijano 2000; Grosfoguel 2002).
- 2) The old Marxist paradigm of infrastructure and superstructure is replaced by a historical-heterogeneous structure (Quijano 2000), or a "heterarchy" (Kontopoulos 1993), that is, an entangled articulation of multiple hierarchies, in which subjectivity and the social imaginary is not derivative but constitutive of the structures of the world-system (Grosfoguel 2002). In this conceptualization, race and racism are not superstructural or instrumental to an overarching logic of capitalist accumulation; they are constitutive of capitalist accumulation at a world-scale. The "colonial power matrix" is an organizing principle involving exploitation and domination exercised in multiple dimensions of social life, from economic, sexual, or gender relations, to political organizations, structures of knowledge, state institutions, and households (Quijano 2000).
- 3) The old division between culture and political-economy as expressed in post-colonial studies and political-economy approaches is overcome (Grosfoguel 2002). Post-colonial studies conceptualize the capitalist world-system as being constituted primarily by culture, while political-economy places the primary determination on economic relations. In the "coloniality of power" approach, what comes first, "culture or the economy," is a false dilemma, a chicken-egg dilemma that obscures the complexity of the capitalist world-system (Grosfoguel 2002).

- 4) Coloniality is not equivalent to colonialism. It is not derivative from, or antecedent to, modernity. Coloniality and modernity constitute two sides of a single coin. The same way as the European industrial revolution was achieved on the shoulders of the coerced forms of labor in the periphery, the new identities, rights, laws, and institutions of modernity such as nation-states, citizenship and democracy were formed in a process of colonial interaction with, and domination/exploitation of, non-Western people.
  
- 5) To call "the present world-system "capitalist" is, to say the least, misleading. Given the hegemonic Eurocentric "common sense," the moment we use the word "capitalism," people immediately think that we are talking about the "economy". However, "capitalism" is only one of the multiple entangled constellations of colonial power matrix of what I called, at the risk of sounding ridiculous, "Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial World-System." Capitalism is an important constellation of power, but not the sole one. Given its entanglement with other power relations, destroying the capitalist aspects of the world-system would not be enough to destroy the present world-system. To transform this world-system it is crucial to destroy the historical-structural heterogeneous totality called the "colonial power matrix" of the "world-system" with its multiple forms of power hierarchies. Above, I outlined a total of 15 global power hierarchies, but I am sure there are more that escaped my conceptualization.
  
- 6) Accordingly, to move beyond this system the struggle cannot be just anti-capitalist but an anti-systemic decolonial liberation. Anti-systemic decolonization and liberation cannot be reduced to only one dimension of social life such as the economic system (capitalism) like it happened with the twentieth century Marxist left. It requires a broader transformation of the sexual, gender, spiritual, epistemic, economic, political, linguistic, aesthetic, pedagogical and racial hierarchies of the "modern/colonial western-centric Christian-centric capitalist/patriarchal world-system." The "coloniality of power" perspective challenges us to think about social change and social transformation in a non-reductionist way.

7) The complex multiplicity of power hierarchies at the global scale in the present world-system we inhabit is not just a social or an economic system, but a civilization that has conquered the world trying to colonially impose the ways of thinking, acting and living to the rest of the peoples in the world. Anti-systemic decolonial struggles against the fifteen power hierarchies of the world-system are at the same time a civilization struggle for a new humanism (Fanon 1967) and a new civilization (indigenous' conception of transformation in different parts of the world).

### **From Global Colonialism to Global Coloniality**

We cannot think of decolonization in terms of conquering power over the juridical-political boundaries of a state, that is, by achieving control over a single nation-state (Grosfoguel 1996). The old national liberation and socialist strategies of taking power at the level of a nation-state are not sufficient, because global coloniality is not reducible to the presence or absence of a colonial administration (Grosfoguel 2002) or to the political/economic structures of power. One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of a "postcolonial" world. The heterogeneous and multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same "colonial power matrix." With juridical-political decolonization, we moved from a period of "global *colonialism*" to the current period of "global *coloniality*." Although "colonial administrations" have been almost entirely eradicated and the majority of the periphery is politically organized into independent states, non-European people are still living under crude European/Euro-American exploitation and domination. The old colonial hierarchies of European versus non-Europeans remain in place and are entangled with the "international division of labor" and accumulation of capital at a world-scale (Quijano 2000; Grosfoguel 2002).

Herein lies the relevance of the distinction between "colonialism" and "coloniality." Coloniality allows us to understand the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations, produced by colonial cultures

and structures in the modern/colonial capitalist world-system. "Coloniality of power" refers to a crucial structuring process in the modern/colonial world-system that articulates peripheral locations in the international division of labor with the global racial/ethnic hierarchy and Third World migrants' inscription in the racial/ethnic hierarchy of metropolitan global cities. Peripheral nation-states and non-European people live today under the regime of 'global coloniality' imposed by the United States through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the Pentagon, and NATO. Peripheral zones remain in a colonial situation, even though they are not any longer under a colonial administration.

"Colonial" does not refer only to "classical colonialism" or "internal colonialism," nor can it be reduced to the presence of a "colonial administration." Quijano distinguishes between colonialism and coloniality. I use the word "colonialism" to refer to "colonial situations" enforced by the presence of a colonial administration such as the period of classical colonialism, and, following Quijano (1991; 1993; 1998), I use "coloniality" to address "colonial situations" in the present period in which colonial administrations have almost been eradicated from the capitalist world-system. By "colonial situations" I mean the cultural, political, sexual and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racial/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations. Five hundred years of European colonial expansion and domination formed an international division of labor between Europeans and non-Europeans that is reproduced in the present so-called "post-colonial" phase of the capitalist world-system (Wallerstein, 1979; 1995). Today, the core zones of the capitalist world-economy overlap with predominantly White/European/Euro-American societies such as Western Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States, while peripheral zones overlap with previously colonized non-European people. Japan is the only exception that confirms the rule. Japan was never colonized nor dominated by Europeans and, similar to the West, played an active role in building its own colonial empire. China, although never fully colonized, was peripheralized through the use of colonial entrepôts such as Hong Kong and Macao, and through direct military interventions.

The mythology of the "decolonization of the world" obscures the continuities between the colonial past and current global colonial/racial hierarchies and contributes to the invisibility of "coloniality" today. For the last fifty years, peripheral states that are today formally independent, following the dominant Eurocentric liberal discourses (Wallerstein, 1991a; 1995), constructed ideologies of "national

identity," "national development," and "national sovereignty" that produced an illusion of "independence," "development," and "progress." Yet their economic and political systems were shaped by their subordinate position in a capitalist world-system organized around a hierarchical international division of labor (Wallerstein, 1979; 1984; 1995). The multiple and heterogeneous processes of the world-system, together with the predominance of Eurocentric cultures (Said, 1979; Wallerstein, 1991b; 1995; Lander 1998; Quijano 1998; Mignolo 2000), constitute a "global coloniality" between European/Euro-American peoples and non-European peoples. Thus, "coloniality" is entangled with, but is not reducible to, the international division of labor. The global racial/ethnic hierarchy of Europeans and non-Europeans, is an integral part of the development of the capitalist world system's international division of labor (Wallerstein, 1983; Quijano, 1993; Mignolo, 1995). In these "post-independence" times the "colonial" axis between Europeans/Euro-Americans and non-Europeans is inscribed not only in relations of exploitation (between capital and labor) and relations of domination (between metropolitan and peripheral states), but in the production of subjectivities and knowledge. In sum, part of the Eurocentric myth is that we live in a so-called "post"-colonial era and that the world and, in particular, metropolitan centers, are in no need of decolonization. In this conventional definition, coloniality is reduced to the presence of colonial administrations. However, as the work of Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (1993, 1998, 2000) has shown with his "coloniality of power" perspective, we still live in a colonial world and we need to break from the narrow ways of thinking about colonial relations, in order to accomplish the unfinished and incomplete twentieth-century dream of decolonization. This forces us to examine new decolonial utopian alternatives beyond Eurocentric and "Thirdworldist" fundamentalisms.

## **Post-Coloniality and World-Systems: A Call for a Dialogue**

Rethinking the modern/colonial world from the colonial difference modify important assumptions of our paradigms. Here I would like to focus on the implication of the "coloniality of power" perspective for the world-system and post-colonial paradigms. Most world-system analyses focus on how the international division of labor and the geopolitical military struggles are constitutive of capitalist accumulation processes at a world-scale. Although I use this approach as a point of



departure, thinking from the colonial difference forces us to take more seriously ideological/symbolic strategies as well as the colonial/racist culture of the modern/colonial world. World-system analysis has recently developed the concept of geoculture to refer to global ideologies. However, the use of "geoculture" in the world-system approach is framed within the infrastructure-superstructure Marxist paradigm. Contrary to this conceptualization, I take global ideological/symbolic strategies and colonial/racist culture as constitutive, together with capitalist accumulation processes and the inter-state system, of the core-periphery relationships at a world-scale. These different structures and processes form a heterarchy (Kontopoulos, 1993) of heterogeneous, complex and entangled hierarchies that cannot be accounted for in the infrastructure/superstructure paradigm.

Post-coloniality shares with the world-system approach a critique to developmentalism, to Eurocentric forms of knowledge, to gender inequalities, to racial hierarchies, and to the cultural/ideological processes that foster the subordination of the periphery in the capitalist world-system. However, the critical insights of both approaches emphasize different determinants. While post-colonial critiques emphasize colonial culture, the world-system approach emphasizes the endless accumulation of capital at a world-scale. While post-colonial critiques emphasize agency, the world-system approach emphasizes structures. Some scholars of the post-colonial theory such as Gayatri Spivak (1988) acknowledge the importance of the international division of labor as constitutive of the capitalist system, while some scholars of the world-system approach, such as Immanuel Wallerstein, acknowledge the importance of cultural processes such as racism and sexism as inherent to historical capitalism. However, the two camps in general are still divided over the culture vs. economy and the agency vs. structure binary oppositions. This is partly inherited from the "two cultures" of Western knowledge that divide the sciences from the humanities, premised upon the Cartesian dualism of mind over matter.

With very few exceptions, most post-colonial theorists come from fields of the humanities such as literature, rhetoric, and cultural studies. Only a small number of scholars in the field of post-coloniality come from the social sciences, in particular from anthropology. On the other hand, world-system scholars are mainly from disciplines in the social sciences such as Sociology, Anthropology, Political Sciences, and Economics. Very few of them come from the humanities, with the exception of

historians, who tend to have more affinities with the world-system approach, and very few come from literature. I have emphasized the disciplines that predominate in both approaches because I think that these disciplinary boundaries are constitutive of some of the theoretical differences between both approaches.

Post-colonial criticism characterizes the capitalist system as a cultural system. They believe that culture is the constitutive element that determines economic and political relations in global capitalism (Said, 1979). On the other hand, most world-system scholars emphasize the economic relations at a world-scale as constitutive of the capitalist world-system. Cultural and political relations are conceptualized as instrumental to, or epiphenomenon of, the capitalist accumulation processes. The fact is that world-system theorists have difficulties theorizing culture while post-colonial theorists have difficulties conceptualizing political-economic processes. The paradox is that many world-system scholars acknowledge the importance of culture, but do not know what to do with it nor how to articulate it in a non-reductive way; while many post-colonial scholars acknowledge the importance of political-economy but do not know how to integrate it to cultural analysis without reproducing a "culturalist" type of reductionism. Thus, both literatures fluctuate between the danger of economic reductionism and the danger of culturalism. Post-Colonial Studies and World-System Analysis are in need of decolonial intervention.

I propose that the culture vs. economy dichotomy is a "chicken-egg" dilemma, that is, a false dilemma, that comes from what Immanuel Wallerstein has called the legacy of nineteenth-century liberalism (Wallerstein, 1991a: 4). This legacy implies the division of the economic, political, cultural and social as autonomous arenas. According to Wallerstein, the construction of these "autonomous" arenas and their materialization in separate knowledge domains such as political science, sociology, anthropology, and economics in the social sciences as well as the different disciplines in the humanities are a pernicious result of liberalism as a geoculture of the modern world-system. In a critical appraisal of world-system analysis, Wallerstein states that:

World-system analysis intends to be a critique of nineteenth-century social science. But it is an incomplete, unfinished critique. It still has not been able to find a way to surmount the most enduring (and misleading) legacy of nineteenth-century social science- the division of social analysis into three arenas, three logics, three levels – the economic, the political and the socio-cultural. This trinity stands in the middle of the road, in granite, blocking our

intellectual advance. Many find it unsatisfying, but in my view no one has yet found the way to dispense with the language and its implications, some of which are correct but most of which are probably not. (1991a: 4)

...all of us fall back on using the language of the three arenas in almost everything we write. It is time we seriously tackled the question...we are pursuing false models and undermining our argumentation by continuing to use such language. It is urgent that we begin to elaborate alternative models. (1991: 271)

We have yet to develop a new decolonial language to account for the complex processes of the modern/colonial world-system without relying on the old liberal language of the three arenas. For example, the fact that world-system theorist characterize the modern world-system as a world-economy misleads many people into thinking that world-system analysis is about analyzing the so-called "economic logic" of the system. This is precisely the kind of interpretation Wallerstein attempts to avoid in his critique to the three autonomous domains. However, as Wallerstein himself acknowledges, the language used in world-system analysis is still caught in the old language of nineteenth-century social science and to dispense of this language is a huge challenge. What if capitalism is a world-economy, not in the limited sense of an economic system, but in the sense of Wallerstein's historical system defined as "...an integrated network of economic, political and cultural processes the sum of which hold the system together" (Wallerstein, 1991a, 230)? We need to find new concepts and a new decolonial language to account for the complex entanglement of gender, racial, sexual, and class hierarchies within global geopolitical, geocultural, and geo-economic processes of the modern/colonial world-system where the ceaseless accumulation of capital is affected by, integrated to, constitutive of, and constituted by those hierarchies. In order to find a new decolonial language for this complexity, we need to go "outside" our paradigms, approaches, disciplines and fields. I propose that we examine the metatheoretical notion of "heterarchies" developed by Greek social theorist, sociologist and philosopher Kyriakos Kontopoulos (1993), as well as the notion of "coloniality of power" developed by Aníbal Quijano (1991; 1993; 1998).

Heterarchical thinking (Kontopoulos, 1993) is an attempt to conceptualize social structures with a new language that breaks with the liberal paradigm of nineteenth century social science. The old language of social structures is a language

of closed systems, that is, of a single, overarching logic determining a single hierarchy. To define a historical system as a "nested hierarchy," as Wallerstein proposed in the Gulbenkian Commission report "Open the Social Sciences," undermines the world-system approach by continuing to use a metatheoretical model that corresponds to closed systems, precisely the opposite of what World-System approach attempts to do. In contrast, heterarchies move us beyond closed hierarchies into a language of complexity, open systems, entanglement of multiple and heterogeneous hierarchies, structural levels, and structuring logics. The notion of "logics" here is redefined to refer to the heterogeneous entanglement of multiple agents' strategies. The idea is that there is neither autonomous logics nor a single logic, but multiple, heterogeneous, entangled, and complex processes within a single historical reality. The notion of entanglement is crucial here and is close to Wallerstein's notion of historical systems understood as "integrated networks of economic, political and cultural processes." The moment multiple hierarchical relationships are considered to be entangled, according to Kontopoulos', or integrated, according to Wallerstein, no autonomous logics or domains remain. The notion of a single logic runs the risk of reductionism, which is contrary to the idea of complex systems, while the notion of multiple logics runs the risk of dualism. The solution to these ontological questions (the reductionist/autonomist dilemma) in heterarchical thinking is to go beyond the monism/dualism binary opposition and to talk about an emergentist materialism that implies multiple, entangled processes at different structural levels within a single historical material reality (which includes the symbolic/ideological as part of that material reality). Heterarchies keep the use of the notion of "logics" only for analytical purposes in order to make certain distinctions or to abstract certain processes that once integrated or entangled in a concrete historical process acquire a different structural effect and meaning. Heterarchical thinking provides a language for what Immanuel Wallerstein calls a new way of thinking that can break with the liberal nineteenth-century social sciences and focus on complex, historical systems.

The notion of "coloniality of power" is also helpful in terms of decolonizing the culture vs. economy dilemma. Quijano's work provides a new way of thinking about this dilemma that overcomes the limits of both post-colonial and world-system analysis. In Latin America, most *dependentista* theorists privileged the economic relations in social processes at the expense of cultural and ideological determinations. Culture was perceived by the dependentista school as instrumental

to capitalist accumulation processes. In many respects dependentistas and world-system analyst reproduced some of the economic reductionism of orthodox Marxist approaches. This led to two problems: first, an underestimation of the colonial/racial hierarchies; and, second, an analytical impoverishment that could not account for the complexities of global heterarchical political-economic processes.

Dependency ideas must be understood as part of the *longue durée* of modernity ideas in Latin America. Autonomous national development is a central ideological theme of the modern world-system since the late eighteenth century. Dependentistas reproduced the illusion that rational organization and development can be achieved from the control of the nation-state. This contradicted the position that development and underdevelopment are the result of structural relations within the capitalist world-system. Although dependentistas defined capitalism as a global system beyond the nation-state, they still believed it was possible to delink or break with the world system at the nation-state level (Frank, 1970: 11, 104, 150; Frank, 1969: Chapter 25). This implied that a socialist revolutionary process at the national level could insulate the country from the global system. However, as we know today, it is impossible to transform a system that operates on a world-scale by privileging the control/administration of the nation-state (Wallerstein, 1992b). No "rational" control of the nation-state would alter the location of a country in the international division of labor. "Rational" planning and control of the nation-state contributes to the developmentalist illusion of eliminating the inequalities of the capitalist world-system from a nation-state level.

In the present world-system, a peripheral nation-state may experience transformations in its form of incorporation to the capitalist world-economy, a minority of which might even move to a semi-peripheral position. However, to break with, or transform, the whole system from a nation-state level is completely beyond their range of possibilities (Wallerstein, 1992a; 1992b). Therefore, a global problem cannot have a national solution. This is not to deny the importance of political interventions at the nation-state level. The point here is not to reify the nation-state and to understand the limits of political interventions at this level for the long-term transformation of a system that operates at a world-scale. The nation-state, although still an important institution of Historical Capitalism, is a limited but important space for radical political and social transformations. Collective agencies in the periphery need a global scope in order to make an effective political intervention in the capitalist world-system. Social struggles below and above the nation-state are

strategic spaces of political intervention that are frequently ignored when the focus of the movements privileges the nation-state. Social movements' local and global connections are crucial for effective political interventions. The dependentistas overlooked this due, in part, to their tendency to privilege the nation-state as the unit of analysis and to the economic reductionist emphasis of their approaches. This had terrible political consequences for the Latin American left and the credibility of the dependentista political project.

For most dependentistas and world-system analyst, the "economy" was the privileged sphere of social analysis. Categories such as "gender" and "race" were frequently ignored and when used they were reduced (instrumentalized) to either class or economic interests. Quijano (1993) is one of the few exceptions to this critique. "Coloniality of power" is a concept that attempts to integrate as part of a heterogeneous structural process the multiple relations in which cultural, political and economic processes are entangled with capitalism as a "historical system." Quijano uses the notion of "structural heterogeneity" which is very close to the notion of "heterarchy" discussed above. Similar to world-system analysis, the notion of "coloniality" conceptualizes the process of colonization of the Americas and the constitution of a capitalist world-economy as part of the same entangled process. However, different from world-system approach, Quijano's "structural heterogeneity" implies the construction of a global racial/ethnic hierarchy that was simultaneous, coeval in time and space, to the constitution of an international division of labor with core-periphery relationships at a world-scale. Since the initial formation of the capitalist world-system, the ceaseless accumulation of capital was entangled with racist, homophobic and sexist global ideologies. The European colonial expansion was led by European heterosexual males. Everywhere they went, they exported their cultural prejudices and formed heterarchical structures of sexual, gender, class, and racial inequality. Thus, in "historical capitalism," understood as a "heterarchical system" or as a "heterogeneous structure," the process of peripheral incorporation to the ceaseless accumulation of capital was constituted by, and entangled with, homophobic, sexist, and racist hierarchies and discourses. As opposed to world-system analysis, what Quijano emphasizes with his notion of "coloniality of power" is that there is no overarching capitalist accumulation logic that can instrumentalize ethnic/racial divisions and that precedes the formation of a global colonial, Eurocentric culture. The "instrumentalist" approach of most world-system analysis is reductive and is still caught in the old language of nineteenth century social science.

For Quijano, racism is constitutive and entangled with the international division of labor and capitalist accumulation at a world-scale. The notion of "structural heterogeneity" implies that multiple forms of labor co-exist within a single historical process. Contrary to orthodox Marxist approaches, there is no linear succession of modes of production (slavery, feudalism, capitalism, etc.). From a Latin American peripheral perspective, as a general trend these forms of labor were all articulated simultaneously in time and entangled in space between "free" forms of labor assigned to the core or European origin populations and "coerced" forms of labor assigned to the periphery or non-European populations. Capitalist accumulation at a world-scale operates by simultaneously using diverse forms of labor divided, organized and assigned according to the racist Eurocentric rationality of the "coloniality of power". Moreover, for Quijano there is no linear teleology between the different forms of capitalist accumulation (primitive, absolute and relative, in this order according to marxist Eurocentric analysis). For Quijano, the multiple forms of accumulation also co-exist simultaneously, are coeval in time. As a long-term trend, the "violent" (called "primitive" accumulation in Eurocentric Marxism) and "absolute" forms of accumulation are predominant in the non-European periphery while the "relative" forms of accumulation predominate in the "free" labor zones of the European core.

The second problem with the dependentista underestimation of cultural and ideological dynamics is that it impoverished their own political-economy approach. Ideological/symbolic strategies as well as Eurocentric forms of knowledge are constitutive of the political-economy of the capitalist world-system. Global symbolic/ideological strategies are an important structuring process of the core-periphery relationships in the capitalist world-system. For instance, core states develop ideological/symbolic strategies by fostering "occidental" forms of knowledge that privileged the "West over the Rest." This is clearly seen in developmentalist discourses which became a so-called "scientific" form of knowledge in the last fifty years. This knowledge privileged the "West" as the model of development. Developmentalist discourse offers a colonial recipe on how to become like the "West".

Although the dependentistas struggled against these universalist/Occidental forms of knowledge, they perceived this knowledge as a "superstructure" or an epiphenomenon of some "economic infrastructure". Dependentistas never perceived this knowledge as constitutive of Latin America's political-economy. Constructing

peripheral zones such as Africa and Latin America as "regions with a "problem" or with a "backward stage of development" concealed European and Euro-American responsibility in the exploitation of these continents. The construction of "pathological" regions in the periphery as opposed to the so-called "normal" development patterns of the "West" justified an even more intense political and economic intervention from imperial powers. By treating the "Other" as "underdeveloped" and "backward," metropolitan exploitation and domination were justified in the name of the "civilizing mission."

The ascribed superiority of European knowledge in many areas of life was an important aspect of the coloniality of power in the modern/colonial world-system. Subaltern knowledges were excluded, omitted, silenced, and/or ignored. This is not a call for a fundamentalist or an essentialist rescue mission for authenticity. The point here is to put the colonial difference (Mignolo, 2000) at the center of the process of knowledge production. Subaltern knowledges are those knowledges at the intersection of the traditional and the modern. They are hybrid, transcultural forms of knowledge, not merely in the traditional sense of syncretism or "mestizaje," but in Aimé Césaire's sense of the "miraculous arms" or what I have called "subversive complicity" (Grosfoguel, 1996) against the system. These are forms of resistance that resignify and transform dominant forms of knowledge from the point of view of the non-Eurocentric rationality of subaltern subjectivities thinking from border epistemologies. They constitute what Walter Mignolo (2000) calls a critic of modernity from the geo-political experiences and memories of coloniality. According to Mignolo (2000), this is a new space that deserves further explorations both as a new critical dimension to modernity/coloniality and, at the same time, as a space from where new utopias can be devised. This has important implications for knowledge production. Are we going to produce a new knowledge that repeats or reproduces the universalistic, Eurocentric, god's eye view? To say that the unit of analysis is the world-system, not the nation-state, is not equivalent to a neutral god's-eye view of the world. I believe that world-system analysis needs to decolonize its epistemology by taking seriously the subaltern side of the colonial difference: the side of the periphery, the workers, women, gays/lesbians, racialized/colonial subjects, homosexuals/lesbians and anti-systemic movements in the process of knowledge production. This means that although world-system takes the world as a unit of analysis, it is thinking from a particular perspective in the world. Still, world-system analysis has not found a way to incorporate subaltern knowledges in



processes of knowledge production. Without this there can be no decolonization of knowledge and no utopistics beyond Eurocentrism. The complicity of the social sciences with the coloniality of power in knowledge production and imperial global designs makes a call for new institutional and non-institutional locations from which the subaltern can speak and be heard.

## **Decolonial Thinking**

So far, the history of Western civilization articulated in what I have called the “modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric world-system” has privileged the culture, knowledge, and epistemology produced by the West inferiorizing the rest. No culture in the world remained untouched by European modernity. There is no absolute outside to this system. The monologism and monotopic global design of the West relates to other cultures and peoples from a position of superiority and is deaf toward the cosmologies and epistemologies of the non-Western world.

The imposition of Christianity in order to convert the so-called savages and barbarians in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the imposition of “white man’s burden” and “civilizing mission” in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the imposition of the “developmentalist project” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, more recently, the imperial project of military interventions under the rhetoric of “democracy” and “human rights” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, have all been imposed by militarism and violence under the rhetoric of modernity of saving the other from its own barbarianisms. Two responses to the Eurocentric colonial imposition are third world nationalisms and fundamentalisms. Nationalism provides Eurocentric solutions to an Eurocentric global problem. It reproduces an internal coloniality of power within each nation-state and reifies the nation-state as the privileged location of social change (Grosfoguel 1996). Struggles above and below the nation-state are not considered in nationalist political strategies. Moreover, nationalist responses to global capitalism reinforce the nation-state as the political institutional form per excellence of the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system. In this sense, nationalism is complicit with Eurocentric thinking and political structures. On the other hand, Third World fundamentalisms of different kinds respond with the rhetoric of an essentialist “pure outside space” or “absolute exteriority” to modernity. They are “anti-modern modern” forces that reproduce the binary oppositions of Eurocentric thinking. If Eurocentric thinking claims “democracy” to be a Western natural attribute, Third

World fundamentalisms accept this Eurocentric premise and claim that democracy has nothing to do with the non-West. Thus, it is an inherent European attribute imposed by the West. Both deny the fact that many of the elements that we call today to be part of modernity such as democracy were formed in a global relation between the West and the non-West. Europeans took a lot of its utopian thinking from the non-Western historical systems they encounter in the colonies and appropriated them as part of Eurocentered modernity. Third World fundamentalisms respond to the imposition of Eurocentered modernity as a global/imperial design with an anti-modern modernity that is as Eurocentric, hierarchical, authoritarian and anti-democratic as the former.

One of many plausible solutions to the Eurocentric versus fundamentalist dilemma is what Walter D. Mignolo, following Chicano(a) thinkers such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and José David Saldívar (1997), calls "critical border thinking" (Mignolo 2000). Critical border thinking is the epistemic response of the subaltern to the Eurocentric project of modernity. Instead of rejecting modernity to retreat into a fundamentalist absolutism, border epistemologies subsume/redefine the emancipatory rhetoric of modernity from the cosmologies and epistemologies of the subaltern, located in the oppressed and exploited side of the colonial difference, towards a decolonial liberation struggle for a world beyond eurocentered modernity. What border thinking produces is a redefinition/subsumption of citizenship, democracy, human rights, humanity, and economic relations beyond the narrow definitions imposed by European modernity. Border thinking is not an anti-modern fundamentalism. It is a decolonial transmodern response of the subaltern to Eurocentric modernity. But border thinking is just one expression of epistemic decolonization in this case following the Chicano colonial experience inside the US Empire. There are other decolonial notions such as diasporic thought, autonomous thought, thinking from the margins, thinking from Pachamama, etc. articulated from other colonial experiences.

A good example of this is the Zapatista struggle in Mexico. The Zapatistas are not anti-modern fundamentalist. They do not reject democracy and retreat into some form of indigenous fundamentalism. On the contrary, the Zapatistas accept the notion of democracy, but redefine it from a local indigenous practice and cosmology, conceptualizing it as "commanding while obeying" or "we are all equals because we are all different." What seems to be a paradoxical slogan is really a critical decolonial redefinition of democracy from the practices, cosmologies and

epistemologies of the subaltern. This leads to the question of how to transcend the imperial monologue established by the European-centric modernity.

## **Transmodernity as an Utopian Decolonial Project**

An inter-cultural North-South dialogue cannot be achieved without a decolonization of power relations in the modern world. A horizontal dialogue as opposed to the vertical monologue of the West requires a transformation in global power structures. We cannot assume a Habermasian consensus or an equal horizontal relationship among cultures and peoples globally divided in the two poles of the colonial difference. However, we could start imagining alternative worlds beyond Eurocentrism and fundamentalism. Transmodernity is Latin American philosopher of liberation Enrique Dussel's utopian project to transcend the Eurocentric version of modernity (Dussel 2001). As opposed to Habermas project that what needs to be done is to fulfill the incomplete and unfinished project of modernity, Dussel's transmodernity is the project to fulfill the 20<sup>th</sup> Century unfinished and incomplete project of decolonization. Instead of a single modernity centered in Europe and imposed as a global design to the rest of the world, Dussel argues for a multiplicity of decolonial critical responses to eurocentered modernity from the subaltern cultures and epistemic location of colonized people around the world. Dussel's transmodernity would be equivalent to "diversality as a universal project" which is a result of "critical border thinking," "critical diasporic thinking" or "critical thinking from the margins" as an epistemic intervention from the diverse subalterns locations. Subaltern epistemologies could provide, following Walter Mignolo's (2000) redefinition of Caribbean thinker Edouard Glissant's concept, a "diversality" of responses to the problems of modernity leading to "transmodernity."

Liberation philosophy for Dussel can only come from the critical thinkers of each culture in dialogue with other cultures. One implication is that the diverse forms of democracy, civil rights or women liberation can only come out of the creative responses of local subaltern epistemologies. For example, Western women cannot impose their notion of liberation on Islamic women. Western men cannot impose their notion of democracy on non-Western peoples. This is not a call for a fundamentalist or nationalist solution to the persistence of coloniality or to an isolated parochial particularism. It is a call for critical decolonial thinking as the

strategy or mechanism towards a “decolonialized transmodern world” as a pluriversal project that moves us beyond Eurocentrism and fundamentalism.

During the last 510 years of the “Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial World-System” we went from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century “christianize or I shoot you,” to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century “civilize or I shoot you,” to 20<sup>th</sup> Century “develop or I shoot you,” to the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century “neoliberalize or I shoot you,” and to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century “democratize or I shoot you.” No respect and no recognition for Indigenous, African, Islamic or other non-European forms of democracy. The liberal form of democracy is the only one accepted and legitimated. Forms of democratic alterity are rejected. If the non-European population does not accept the Euro-American terms of liberal democracy then it is imposed by force in the name of civilization and progress. Democracy needs to be reconceptualized in a transmodern form in order to be decolonized from liberal democracy, that is, the Western racialized and capitalist-centered form of democracy.

By radicalizing the Levinasian notion of exteriority, Dussel sees a radical potential in those relatively exterior spaces not fully colonized by the European modernity. These exterior spaces are not pure or absolute. They have been affected and produced by European modernity, but never fully subsumed or instrumentalized. It is from the geopolitics of knowledge of this relative exteriority, or margins, that “critical decolonial thinking” emerges as a critique of modernity towards a pluriversal transmodern world of multiple and diverse ethico-political projects in which a real horizontal dialogue and communication could exist between all peoples of the world. However, to achieve this utopian project it is fundamental to transform the systems of domination and exploitation of the present colonial power matrix of the “modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric world-system.”

## **Anti-systemic struggles today**

The pernicious influence of coloniality in all of its expressions at different levels (global, national, local) as well as its Eurocentric knowledges has been reflected in anti-systemic movements and utopian thinking around the world. Thus, the first task of a renewed leftist project is to confront the Eurocentric colonialities not only of the right but also of the left. For example, many leftist projects, underestimated the racial/ethnic hierarchies and reproduced White/Euro-centered

domination over non-European peoples within their organizations and when in control of the state structures. The international 'left' never radically problematized the racial/ethnic hierarchies built during the European colonial expansion and still present in the world's "coloniality of power." No radical project can be successful today without dismantling these colonial/racial hierarchies. The underestimation of the problem of coloniality has greatly contributed to the popular disillusionment with 'leftist' projects. Democracy (liberal or radical) cannot be fully accomplished if the colonial/racist dynamics keep a large portion or, in some cases, the majority of the population as second-class citizens.

The perspective articulated here is not a defense of "identity politics." Subaltern identities could serve as an epistemic point of departure for a radical critique of Eurocentric paradigms and ways of thinking. However, "identity politics" is not equivalent to epistemological alterity. The scope of "identity politics" is limited and cannot achieve a radical transformation of the system and its colonial power matrix. Since all modern identities are a construction of the coloniality of power in the modern/colonial world, their defense is not as subversive as it might seem at first sight. "Black," "Indian," "African," or national identities such as "Colombian," "Kenyan," or "French" are colonial constructions. Defending these identities could serve some progressive purposes depending on what is at stake in certain contexts. For example, in the struggles against an imperialist invasion or in anti-racist struggles against white supremacy these identities can serve to unify the oppressed people against a common enemy. But identity politics only addresses the goals of a single group and demands equality within the system rather than developing a radical anti-systemic struggle against the systemic and planetary Western-centric civilization. The system of exploitation is a crucial space of intervention that requires broader alliances along not only racial and gender lines but also along class lines and among a diversity of oppressed groups around the radicalization of the notion of social equality. But instead of Eurocentric modernity's limited, abstract and formal notion of equality, the idea here is to extend the notion of equality to every relation of oppression such as racial, class, sexual, or gender. The new pluriverse of meaning or new imaginary of liberation needs a common language despite the diversity of cultures and forms of oppression. This common language could be provided by radicalizing the liberatory notions arising from the old modern/colonial pattern of power, such as freedom (press, religion, or speech), individual liberties or social

equality and linking these to the radical democratization of the political, epistemic, gender, sexual, spiritual and economic power hierarchies at a global scale.

Quijano's (2000) proposal for a "socialization of power" as opposed to a "statist nationalization of production" is crucial here. Instead of "state socialist" or "state capitalist" projects centered in the administration of the state and in hierarchical power structures, the strategy of "socialization of power" in all spheres of social existence privileges global and local struggles for collective forms of public authority.

Communities, enterprises, schools, hospitals and all of the institutions that currently regulate social life would be self-managed by people under the goal of extending social equality and democracy to all spaces of social existence. This is a process of empowerment and radical democratization from below that does not exclude the formation of global public institutions to democratize and socialize production, wealth and resources at a world-scale. The socialization of power would also imply the formation of global institutions beyond national or state boundaries to guarantee social equality and justice in production, reproduction and distribution of world resources. This would imply some form of self-managed, democratic global organization that would work as a collective global authority to guarantee social justice and social equality at a world-scale. Socialization of power at a local and global level would imply the formation of a public authority that is outside and against state structures.

Based on the old Andean indigenous communities and the new urban marginal communities where reciprocity and solidarity are the main forms of social interaction, Quijano sees the utopian potential of a social private alternative to private property and an alternative non-state public that is beyond the capitalist/socialist Eurocentric notions of private and public. This non-state public (as opposed to the equivalence of state and public in liberal and socialist ideology) is not, according to Quijano, in contradiction to a social private (as opposed to a corporate, capitalist private property). The social private and its institutional non-state public authority are not in contradiction with personal/individual liberties and collective development. One of the problems with liberal and socialist discourses is that the state is always the institution of public authority which is in contradiction to the development of an alternative "private" and "individuals'" growth.

Developmentalist projects that focus on policy changes at the level of the nation-state are obsolete in today's world-economy and leads to developmentalist

illusions. A system of domination and exploitation that operates on a world-scale such as the capitalist world-system cannot have a "national solution." A global problem cannot be solved at the nation-state level. It requires global decolonial solutions. Thus, the decolonization of the political-economy of the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system requires the eradication of the continuous transfer of wealth from South to North and the institutionalization of the global redistribution and transfer of wealth from North to South. After centuries of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003), the North has a concentration of wealth and resources inaccessible to the South. Global redistributive mechanisms of wealth from North to South could be implemented by the direct intervention of international organizations and/or by taxing global capital flows. However, this would require a global decolonial power struggle at a world-scale towards a transformation of the global colonial matrix of power and, consequently, to a transformation of the "modern/colonial western-centric/Christian-centric capitalist/patriarchal world-system." The North is reluctant to share the concentration and accumulation of wealth produced by non-European labor from the South after centuries of exploitation and domination of the latter by the former. Even today, the neo-liberal policies represent a continuation of the "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003) began by the European colonial expansion with conquest of the Americas in the sixteenth century. Many peripheral countries were stolen of their national wealth and resources during the last 20 years of neo-liberalism at a world-scale under the supervision and direct intervention of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These policies have led to the bankruptcy of many countries in the periphery and the transfer of wealth from the South to transnational corporations and financial institutions in the North. The space of maneuver for peripheral regions is very limited given the constraints to the sovereignty of peripheral nation-states imposed by the global inter-state system. In sum, the solution to global inequalities requires the need to imagine anti-systemic global decolonial utopian alternatives beyond colonialist and nationalist, Eurocentric fundamentalist and Third World fundamentalist binary ways of thinking.

## **Towards a "Radical Universal Decolonial Anti-Systemic Diversity" Project**

The need for a common critical language of decolonization requires a form of universality that is not anymore a monologic, monotopic imperial global/universal

design, from the right or the left, imposed by persuasion or force to the rest of the world in the name of progress or civilization. This new form of universality I will call a "radical universal decolonial anti-systemic diversity" as a project of liberation. As opposed to the abstract universals of Eurocentric epistemologies, that subsumes/dilute the particular into the same, a "radical universal decolonial anti-systemic diversity" is a concrete universal that builds a decolonial universal by respecting the multiples local particularities in the struggles against patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality and eurocentered modernity from a diversity of decolonial epistemic/ethical historical projects. This represents a fusion between Dussel's "transmodernity" and Quijano's "socialization of power". Dussel's transmodernity lead us to what Walter Mignolo (2000) has characterized as "diversity as a universal project" to decolonize eurocentered modernity, while Quijano's socialization of power makes a call for a new form of radical anti-systemic universal imaginary that decolonizes Marxist/Socialist perspectives from its Eurocentric limits. The common language should be anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-imperialist and against the coloniality of power towards a world where power is socialized, but open to a diversity of institutional forms of socialization of power depending on the different decolonial epistemic/ethical responses of subaltern groups in diverse locations of the world-system. Quijano's call for a socialization of power could become another abstract universal that leads to a global design if it is not redefined and reconfigured from a transmodern perspective. The forms of anti-systemic struggles and socialization of power that emerge in the Islamic world are quite different than the ones that emerge from indigenous peoples in the Americas or Bantu people in West Africa. All share the decolonial anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist project but providing diverse institutional forms and conceptions to the project of socialization of power according to their diverse, multiple epistemologies. To reproduce the Eurocentric socialist global designs of the twentieth century left, which departed from a unilateral eurocentered epistemic left center, would just repeat the mistakes that led the twentieth century left-wing global disaster. This is a call for a universal that is a pluriversal (Mignolo 2000), for a concrete universal that would include all the epistemic particularities towards a "transmodern decolonial socialization of power." As the Zapatistas say, "luchar por un mundo donde otros mundos sean posibles."



## Notes

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