

A Decolonial Approach to Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Border Thinking and Global Coloniality

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Can we produce a radical anti-capitalist politics beyond identity politics? 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? Are we able to progress 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 much to contribute to this debate. It can add markedly both to a critical perspective beyond the outlined dichotomies and to a redefinition of capitalism as a world-system. First, however, I would like to forward three crucial clarifications.

Firstly, my essay is an intervention to provide an alternative (decolonial) way to think about political-economy and to map a different global cartography of power than what political-economy paradigms provide. All too often in the academic realm, the

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academic and existential position which I bring forth here is dismissed on the grounds that it is political. And indeed, this is a political text. But were we to dismiss all academic texts on the grounds of their political character, we would simply have no academic texts left! Among other things, what I set forth to show here, is precisely the political character of western knowledge construction. Unlike other traditions of knowledge, the western is a point of view that does not assume itself as a point of view. In this way, it hides its epistemic location, paving the ground for its claims about universality, neutrality and objectivity. The decisive difference between this essay and neo-liberal, neo-marxist, marxist, weberian, wallersteinian or globalisation political-economist academic production is, then, that I am not hiding the epistemic location from where I am thinking.

Secondly, 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 opposed 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/ spiritual/ sexual spaces and bodies. Postmodernism and post structuralism 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. And this also applies to the paradigms of political-economy.

Finally, my interest here lies in the continuities between the colonial past and current global colonial/ racial hierarchies. All too often, the social sciences and the humanities' focus on intricacies, nuances or indeterminacies of the historical process, contribute to the invisibility of coloniality. It is not accidental that the insistence on pointing at the continuities of colonial mechanisms of exclusion and oppression most often comes from the subaltern groups, and not from established scholars in the academic world. It is enough to participate in the World Social Forum and in general to come close to social movements in Latin America and elsewhere, to corroborate that the ideas which I present here are, indeed, up to date and pertinent to the vast majority of the world's population¹. These conceptualizations are, however, often classified as "outdated" within the academic realm. This conceptualization only confirms my point – that far from having overcome the linear evolutionist and paternalistic model of Europe being the developed and the rest being underdeveloped, academics continue labeling the conceptualizations of subaltern subjects as ideas that belong to the past, which, unsurprisingly, Europe has long-gone overcome. This not only brings about questions on the legitimacy of knowledge and knowledge production; it also shows that subalternized subjects are regarded as incapable of conceptualizing their own realities.

I argue that an epistemic perspective from racial/ethnic subaltern locations will significantly augment a radical decolonial critical theory beyond the ways traditional

¹ See, for example, Santos (2007) and Walsh and García (2002), the different communiqués of the Zapatistas at <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/>, the Charter of Principles from the World Social Forum at http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2, the principles of the Peace Community in San José de Apartadó (Colombia) at <http://cdpsanjose.org/?q=node/8>.

political-economy paradigms conceptualize capitalism as a global or world-system. The idea being to decolonize political-economy paradigms as well as world-system analysis and to propose an alternative decolonial conceptualization of the world-system. To this end I have divided this paper into seven parts. The first part provides an epistemic discussion about the implications of the epistemological critique of feminist and subalternized racial/ethnic intellectuals to western epistemology. The second part addresses 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 remainder of the essay explores notions of border thinking, transmodernity and socialization of power as decolonial alternatives to the present world-system.

1. Epistemological Critique

The contribution of racial/ethnic and feminist subaltern perspectives to epistemological questions is crucial to this essay. 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; Mignolo, 2000) reminded us that we always speak from a particular location in the power structures. No one 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) has stated, our knowledges are always situated. Black feminist scholars called their perspective ‘afro-centric epistemology’ (Collins, 1990) (which is not equivalent to the afrocentrist perspective) while the Latin American philosopher of liberation, Enrique

Dussel, called it ‘geopolitics of knowledge’ (Dussel, 1977) and following Fanon (1967) and Anzaldúa (1987) I use the term, ‘body-politics of knowledge.’

This is not only a question about social values in knowledge production, or about our knowledge being always partial knowledge. 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 privileged the myth of a *non-situated* ego, ego meaning the conscious thinking subject. 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 conceals who is speaking, as well as, obscuring the geo-political and body-political epistemic location in the structures of colonial power/knowledge from which the subject speaks².

It is important to distinguish the *epistemic* location from the *social* location. Just because one is socially located on 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 on the oppressed side of the colonial difference, think epistemically like the ones in 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. I claim that all knowledges are epistemically located in the dominant or the

² For thorough investigations into the Eurocentric characteristics of western philosophy and science see, among others, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2004, 2008), Oyewumi Oyeronke (1997), and Wynter (2007).

subaltern side of the power relations and that this positioning 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.

Rene Descartes, the founder of modern western philosophy, inaugurates a key moment in the history of western thought in which 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 modernity. All the attributes of God are now extrapolated to western man; I intentionally use the gendered term in this context³. Universal truth beyond spatial and temporal limits, privileges access to the laws of the Universe, and grants the capacity to produce scientific knowledge and theory placed in the mind of western man. The Cartesian *ego-cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) is the foundation of modern western science. By producing dualisms 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-Gomez called the ‘point zero’ perspective of Eurocentric philosophies (Castro-Gomez 2005). The *point zero* is the point of view that conceals itself; that is, it is the point of view that represents itself as being without a point of origin. It is this *god-eye view* that always hides its local and particular perspective under an abstract universalism. western philosophy privileges the ego politics of knowledge over the geopolitics of knowledge and the body-politics of knowledge. Historically, this has allowed western man to represent his knowledge as the only one capable of achieving a universal consciousness, and to dismiss non-western knowledge as particularistic and, so unable to achieve universality.

This epistemic strategy has been crucial for western global designs. As the west denies the location of the subject of enunciation, European/Euro-American colonial

³ Cf. Sylvia Wynter (2007).

expansion and domination construct a hierarchy of superior and inferior knowledge and, thus, of superior and inferior people around the world. We went from the 16th century characterization of ‘people without writing’ to the 18th and 19th century characterization of ‘people without history,’ to the 20th century characterization of ‘people without development’ and more recently, to the early 21st century of ‘people without democracy’. We went from the 16th century ‘rights of people’ (the Sepulveda versus de las Casas debate, in the school of Salamanca in the mid-16th century), to the 18th century ‘rights of man’ (the Enlightenment philosophers), and to the late 20th century ‘human rights’. This changing nomenclature is part of global the strategies 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) reminds us, the Cartesian *ego cogito, ergo sum* was preceded by 150 years (since European colonial started in 1492) of the European *ego conquiro* (I conquer, therefore I am). This ego required the the social, economic, political and historical conditions of imperialism to assume the god-like arrogance to be placed as the foundation of all *truthful* knowledge. It is the subjectivity of those of those central to the world, because they have conquered it — they were Imperial Beings. What are the decolonial implications of this epistemological critique to our knowledge production and to our concept of world-system?

2. Coloniality of Power as the Matrix of the Modern/Colonial World

Globalization studies, political-economy paradigms and world-system analysis — with only a few exceptions⁴ — have not derived the epistemological and theoretical implications of the epistemic critique coming from subaltern locations in the colonial

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divide and expressed in academia through ethnic studies and woman studies. They continue to produce knowledge from the western man's 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 geo- and body-politics of knowledge as points of departure to a radical critique.

If we analyze the European colonial expansion from a Eurocentric point of view, we survey a picture in which the origins of the so-called capitalist world-system is 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 *discovery* and, eventual, Spanish colonization of the Americas. From this perspective, the capitalist world-system would be primarily an economic system that determine the behavior of the major social actors through the logic of making profits as manifested in the extraction of surplus value and the ceaseless accumulation of capital on 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 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 on 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 appear if we move the locus of enunciation from the European man to an Indigenous women in the Americas, to, say Rigoberta Menchu in Guatemala or to Domitila 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

⁴ Some of these exceptions are Amin (1989, 1998, 2006) and Quijano (1998, 2000).

the foundations on which these paradigms are based. The first implication of shifting our geopolitics of knowledge is that what began with the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas in the late 15th 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, but was not the sole element of a complex *package*. In the Americas there emerged a broader, deeper, and more tangled power structure that an economic reductionist perspective of the world-system can account for. From the perspective of an indigenous woman in the Americas it was, a more complex world-system than political-economy paradigms and world-system analysis portrays. A European/ capitalist/ military/ christian/ patriarchal/ white/ heterosexual/ male arrived in the Americas and established simultaneously (spatially and temporally) several entangled global hierarchies that for purposes of clarity in this exposition I 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 at the core and the periphery where capital organized labor at the periphery operates within 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 patriarchy over other forms of gender relations (Spivak 1988; Enloe 1990);

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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 has 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).

It is not an accident that the thinkers from the south and their conceptualization of the world-system, from decolonial perspectives, will question 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 16th century initiates a new global colonial power matrix that by the late 19th century came to cover the whole planet. To take Quijano's argument a step further, I conceive of 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). These include 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. The idea of race and racism becomes the organizing principle that structures all of the multiple hierarchies of the world-system (Quijano 1993) — and this is a new aspect of the *coloniality of power* perspective. 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 at the periphery and ‘free wage labor’ at the core. In this conceptualization, then, 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).

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 the majority of men in the world (who are 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 entangled whole European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal

world-system (Grosfoguel 2002)⁵. European patriarchy and European notions of sexuality, epistemology and spirituality were exported to the rest of the world through colonial expansion as the hegemonic criteria to racialize, classify and pathologize the rest of the world's population within a sliding scale of superior and inferior races.

3. From Global Colonialism to Global Coloniality

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. This is why we cannot think of decolonization in terms of a conquering power overseeing the juridical-political boundaries of a state, that is, of decolonization as 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 insufficient to the task because global coloniality is not reducible to the presence or absence of a colonial administration (Grosfoguel 2002) or to political/economic structures of power. One of the most powerful myths of the 20th century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the

⁵ To call “capitalist” the present world-system 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 the “European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system.” It is an important one, 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”.

misconception 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 last 50 years. We continue to live within the same *colonial power matrix*. With juridical-political decolonization we moved from a period of *global colonialism* to the current period of *global coloniality*.⁷ *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 stratifications of European versus non-Europeans remain in place and are entangled with ‘the international division of labor’ and accumulation of capital on 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; such domination is 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, the World Bank, the Pentagon and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see for example Lander, this issue). Peripheral zones remain in a colonial situation even though are not any longer under any particular 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* at a time when 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 misnamed 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 exception that confirms the rule. Japan was never colonized nor dominated by Europeans and, like the west, played an active role in building its own colonial empire. China, although never fully colonized, was marginalized through the use of colonial entrepôts such as Hong Kong and Macao, and also 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 past 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 produce merely an illusion of independence, development, and progress. Their economic and political systems were shaped by their

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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 also in the production of subjectivities and knowledge. In sum, part of the Eurocentric fallacy is that we live in a *post*-colonial era and that the world, and particularly its metropolitan centers, is in no need of decolonization. Within this conventional definition, coloniality is reduced to the presence of colonial administrations. However, as the work of Peruvian sociologist Quijano (1993, 1998, 2000) demonstrates 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 incomplete 20th century dream of decolonization. This forces us to examine new decolonial utopian alternatives beyond Eurocentric and *third worldist* fundamentalisms.

4. Border Thinking

So far, the history of the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system has privileged the culture, knowledge, and epistemology produced by the west (Spivak 1988; Mignolo 2000). No culture in the world remains untouched by European modernity; there is no absolute outside of this system. Western monologism and monotopic global design relates to other cultures and peoples from a position of superiority and does not acknowledge non-western cosmologies and epistemologies. The imposition of Christianity on the *savages* and *barbarians* in the 16th century, followed by the imposition of the *white man's burden* and his *civilizing mission* in the 18th and 19th century, the imposition of the *developmental project* in the 20th century and, more recently, the imperial project of martial interventions under the banners of *democracy* and *human rights* in the 21st 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 a Eurocentric global problem as 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 *par excellence* of the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system. On the one hand 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 that many of the elements we consider today to be part of modernity, such as democracy, were formed in global relations between the west and the non-west. Europeans took many of its notions of utopian thought from the non-western historical systems encountered in the colonies and appropriated them as part of Eurocentric modernity. Third world fundamentalisms respond to the imposition of Eurocentric 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 Chicana(o) thinkers such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and José David Saldivar (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/redefines 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, 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.

A good example of this is the Zapatista struggle in Mexico. The Zapatistas are not anti-modern fundamentalists; 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,

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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.

5. Transmodernity or Critical Cosmopolitanism as Utopian Projects

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 between 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's project — that is, the project of what needs to be done is to fulfill the incomplete and unfinished project of modernity — Dussel's transmodernity is the project to fulfill the 20th Century's 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 eurocentric modernity from the subaltern cultures and epistemic location of colonized people around the world. In Mignolo's interpretation of Dussel, transmodernity would be equivalent to 'diversality as a universal project' which is a result of 'critical border thinking' as an epistemic intervention from the diverse subalterns (Mignolo 2000). Subaltern epistemologies could provide, following Mignolo's

(2000) redefinition of Caribbean thinker Edward 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. Or, westerners 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 nor to an isolated parochial particularism. It is a call for critical border thinking as the strategy or mechanism towards a decolonialized 'transmodern world' as a universal project that moves us beyond Eurocentrism and fundamentalism.

During the last 510 years of the European/Euro-American capitalist/patriarchal modern/colonial world-system we *processed* from the 16th Century 'Christianize or we'll shoot you,' to the 19th Century 'civilize or we'll shoot you,' to 20th Century 'develop or we'll shoot you,' to the late 20th Century 'neoliberalize or we'll shoot you,' to the early 21st century 'democratize or we'll shoot you.' This set of demands entailed 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 that is legitimated. Other 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, specifically from 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 neither pure nor absolute; they have been affected and produced by European modernity, but never fully subsumed nor instrumentalized by it. 'Critical border thinking' emerges as a critique of modernity towards a pluriversal (Mignolo 2000) 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. . Such border thinking emerges from the geopolitics of knowledge of this relative exteriority, or margins. However, to achieve this radical potential, this utopian project if you like, it is necessary to transform the systems of domination and exploitation of the present colonial power matrix of the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system.

6. Anti-capitalist 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 in 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 within 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 contributed significantly to popular disillusionment with leftist projects. Liberal or radical democracy cannot be fully

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accomplished if the colonial/racist dynamics treat 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 otherness. 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 within the modern/colonial world, their defense is not as subversive as it might seem at first. ‘Black’, ‘Indian’, ‘African’, or national identities such as ‘Colombian’, ‘Kenyan’, or ‘French’ are colonial constructions after all. Defending these identities could serve some progressive purposes, depending on what is at stake in specific 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-capitalist struggle against the system.

The system of exploitation provides a crucial site for 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 class based, racial, sexual, or gender based. The 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 notions of autonomy arising from the old modern/colonial pattern of power, such as freedom (of press, of religion, or of 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 proposal for a 'socialization of power' as opposed to a 'statist nationalization of production' is vital here (2000). 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 communal 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 personal or commercial property. He envisions 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,

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capitalist private property. He envisages social private authority as working with public non-state institutional public authority and individual liberties as working with collective development. This vision avoids the problem that in liberal and socialist discourse, the state is always the institution of public authority, opposing an alternate private development.

Development projects that focus on policy changes at the level of the nation-state are obsolete in today's world-economy and they lead to development illusions. A system of domination and exploitation that operates on a world-scale, such as the capitalist world-system, cannot have a national solution, and inversely, 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, lead to a transformation of the modern/colonial 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' began by the European colonial expansion with conquest of the Americas in the 16th century.

Many peripheral countries were robbed 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 on the periphery and the transfer of wealth from the south to transnational corporations and financial institutions in the north. The space to 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-capitalist global decolonial utopian alternatives beyond binary colonialist and nationalist and binary eurocentric fundamentalist and third world fundamentalist ways of thinking.

7. Towards a ‘Radical Universal Decolonial 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 call a ‘radical universal decolonial anti-capitalist diversity’ as part of a greater 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-capitalist diversity’ is a concrete universal that builds a decolonial universal by respecting the multiples of local particularities in the struggles against patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality and eurocentric 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 leads us to what Walter Mignolo (2000) has characterized as 'diversality as a universal project' to decolonize eurocentric modernity, while Quijano's socialization of power makes a call for a new form of radical anti-capitalist 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 for the socialization of power. This last depends on the different decolonial epistemic/ethical responses of subaltern groups in 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-capitalist 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 and anti-imperialist project but provide diverse institutional forms and conceptions of the project of socialization of power according to their diverse, multiple epistemologies. To reproduce the eurocentric socialist global designs of the 20th century, that departed from a unilateral eurocentered epistemic center, would simply repeat the mistakes that led the left to global disaster. This is a call for a universal that is 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* (to fight for a world where other worlds are possible).

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