

Enrique Dussel's Liberation Thought in the Decolonial Turn

NELSON MALDONADO-TORRES

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Liberation philosophy, as a Latin American project for critical thought, is one among many expressions of a shift in global power dynamics and in epistemic perspective that has taken place since the Second World War.* The European crisis, or more than a crisis, its own internal devastation after the war, opened at least three paths for the train of history and thought. On the one hand, the United States – which had proven itself as an international power through the expansion from the thirteen colonies, the war with Mexico, and the Spanish-American War – became after the Second World War a hegemonic force that would both assist and displace Northwestern Europe as the power-axis of the modern world-system. With this, Americanism – the triumphalist and assimilationist ideology of the United States which had already burst onto the scene with Theodore Roosevelt in the late nineteenth century – was decisively introduced to the rest of the world. This Americanist discourse would dictate the terms for the assimilation of non-Catholic European immigrants, some of which were seen as belonging to darker races.¹ This ideology has taken various turns with McCarthyism and Reagan in the context of the Cold War, and today it takes on a new spirit in formulations like that offered by Samuel P. Huntington, who has forcefully rearticulated Americanism with respect to immigrants and ethnic minorities in the United States.² But today, after the Cold War and the attacks of 11 September, it is no longer European immigrants that allegedly pose a “challenge” to U.S.-American identity, but rather Latin American (im)migrants, particularly Spanish-speaking Mexicans and Chicana/os.³ There is, accordingly, a particular importance today for exploring the decolonial potential of those cultural forms originating in Latin America, Mexico, and in the borderlands between

Mexico and the United States, among other "frontier" territories both to the north and south of this border.⁴

The second path that opened with the decline of Europe was, clearly, that of the Cold War rival of Americanism: Soviet communism. Soviet communism, or at least socialism (which is a different but related political system/ideology), would become for many a viable option for a different future, beyond both fascist and liberal Europe. Europe itself would come to be divided between these two newly regnant ideologies and neo-imperial geo-political projects. Other regions also suffered the force of this clash of political projects, while many nations tried to find a space between or in alliance with the two dominant blocs.

Now, the decline of Europe opened a third path, which we will call – following Frantz Fanon – that of the "wretched of the earth," as well as the "de-colonial turn."⁵ This door would be definitively forced open through the combination of the internal and external devastation of Europe, that is to say, not only by the perverse force of Nazism in its interior but also by the encouraging force of the decolonization of European territories abroad. In contrast to the Latin American liberation struggles of the nineteenth century, which took place in a context in which the weakening of Southern Europe left intact the fascination with the increasing strength of Northern Europe (especially France and England), mid-twentieth century Europe was destroyed by Nazism and completely demoralized. As the Martinican philosopher, politician, and poet Aimé Césaire would put it, this Europe was "indefensible" in the eyes of the entire world.⁶ Thus the newly-dependent nations and territories that had gained their formal independence in the nineteenth century – but which were still colonized (by economic forces and epistemological and symbolic structures) – awakened to a reality in which Eurocentrism gave rise to more suspicion than enchantment. The third path to open up after the Second World War, the "de-colonial turn" itself, is then characterized by a widespread disenchantment with Eurocentrism and a renewed affirmation of decolonization as a project.

This disenchantment – no longer of "tradition" or religion, as Weber had highlighted – but rather of those forms of Eurocentric knowledge that represent a central part of what Dussel calls the "myth of modernity," became a distinctive mark of the second most significant period of decolonization in world history.⁷ The first took place from the late-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, and included the Anglo-North-American, Haitian, and Latin American revolutions, and the second was centered in Africa, Asia, and in Latin American revolutions such as that of Cuba (not initially associated with Soviet communism). The decline of Europe was itself the reflection of a crisis in the world-system, which helped reveal the traces of colonialism that were still present even in those places that had already gained their independence during the first

phase of decolonization. As a result, the suspicion or disenchantment with respect to Eurocentrism would begin to appear in different regions, including some within Europe and the United States themselves.

It is my argument that Dussel's liberation philosophy – like the work of various other authors on a similar theoretical path – acquires its fullest significance within this historical frame, which takes into account not only the history of Latin American thought but also dialogues and sources for decolonization that emerge elsewhere as well as their relationship with each other. Enrique Dussel has been characterized by his incessant efforts to theoretically fortify, flesh out, and refine the vision of decolonization as a project, and his work represents an ensemble of provocative historical, philosophical, and theoretical interventions and contributions toward this unfinished task. Dussel's disenchantment with modernity and its oppressive forms of rationalization, as well as the inspiration he draws from those developing forms of creative action by the oppressed subjects of Latin America and other parts of the world, led him to articulate an ethic of liberation and an utopian ideal that he calls "transmodernity," both of which should be understood as explicit efforts to confer a definition and specific character to decolonization as a project.⁸

This essay seeks to shed light onto the general context into which Dussel's work inserts itself, and within which it acquires its proper meaning. I hope to contribute herein to the clarification, elaboration, and mutual articulation of seven principal theses. The **first** thesis forms part of the theoretical vision of a group of academics in the United States and Latin America, which suggests that just as one can speak of an (unfinished) project of modernity (J. Habermas), so too can one speak of an (unfinished) project of decolonization. These two projects are not entirely separable, since decolonization itself can be seen as a "permanent process" that "completes" or subsumes and exhausts the emancipatory elements of modernity.⁹ While I cannot do justice to this point here, this mutual imbrication should be borne in mind during this essay.¹⁰ The **second** thesis is that decolonization needs to be understood as de-coloniality, as Chicana theorist Chela Sandoval and Catherine Walsh have indicated elsewhere.¹¹ The **third** thesis is that the concept of decolonization gains additional weight if it is understood with reference to Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano's work on the coloniality of power. The **fourth** thesis refers to the work of Dussel and Habermas, and the idea is that modernity is to the unfinished project of the Habermasian Enlightenment what transmodernity is to the unfinished project of decolonization.¹² We can affirm similarly – and this is the **fifth** thesis – that the Dusselian liberation ethic is to the project of decolonization what discourse ethics is to the Enlightenment project of modernity in the sense that it encapsulates normative principles the application of which furthers the project of decolonization. Transmodernity can be seen as the application of liberation ethics to

history, and to the ethical recognition of the other as a subject of knowledge and culture. Thus the fourth and fifth theses are mutually-related. The **sixth** thesis is that decolonization has been part of the “interests” of subaltern subjects since the very beginning of the modern/colonial world system more than five-hundred years ago. The **seventh** thesis is that global consciousness of this interest, and its articulation as a project, firmly begins to take place in the middle of the twentieth century with the decline of Europe and the decolonization movements throughout the world. The social movements of the late 60s and early 70s, along with the reflections that appeared in the context of the celebration and protest of the five-hundred year anniversary of the “discovery” of America,¹³ would provide the intellectual and political project of decolonization with more substance and theoretical precision.¹⁴ This new consciousness represents a de-colonial ethico-political turn with particular characteristics that cannot be subsumed into the linguistic or pragmatic turns on which neo-Enlightenment and postmodern attitudes tend to be based. In the final instance, this work attempts to clarify the nature of this turn, and to make a series of comments with respect to the role of liberation ethics in that turn.

I. Habermas and the unfinished project of modernity

The idea of an unfinished project of decolonization can be seen as a response – from the perspective of that form of thought that inaugurates the ethico-political decolonial turn – to the idea of an unfinished project of modernity, as proposed by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. It would be worthwhile, then, to trace out at least a broad sketch of what Habermas understands as the project of modernity.

As Habermas makes clear, the term modernity was first used at the end of the fifteenth century in order to distinguish a present time – finally and effectively Christian – from a pagan and Roman past,¹⁵ and this usage would mark later uses of the term. Modernity would always refer to the departure from classical antiquity, that is, primarily from the classical Greek and Roman worlds. This sort of understanding would bring about the entire debate between “ancients and moderns” that defined a large part of the Renaissance, which still posed the need for a return to the classics. The idea of such a return would be more systematically challenged during the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, in which the idea of a definitive escape from or surpassing of antiquity would be more decisively posed and more openly accepted. The Enlightenment compromise with the idea of the infinite progress of knowledge and the rational advance of moral and social orders would cement the definition of Europeans in terms of a contrast to antiquity, and would tip the balances decisively in favor of one side: modernity.

One of the most intense reflections of this tendency toward a definitive distance from the ancients was the modernist aesthetic that had its clearest expression in Baudelaire. This modernist aesthetic expresses and in part helps to produce the idea of a new – that is to say, modern – way of understanding time, subjectivity, and experience. This new perception of time would be expressed in the form of a rebellion against the normative weight of tradition and a projection into the future. Aesthetic modernity opens up a future beyond the dictates of tradition, but it lacks a constructive project of this future as a task. If modernist aesthetics helps to cement the *idea* of modernity, it does not provide an understanding of the historical and rational *project* that would find expression in the work of Enlightenment philosophers. While such a notion was already part of the Enlightenment, it would not come to be completely conscious and clear until the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, when Max Weber sought to explain the phenomenon of the “European miracle” or the exceptional character of Europe with respect to other regions.

It is Weber, a sociologist, who provides the coordinates for Habermas’ reflections on modernity, and the latter attempts to continue the project of modernity in social theory and, above all, in philosophy. The Weberian concept of modernity is well-known: he understands it as an incremental process of rationalization that is distinguished by the division of claims and arguments about the world into questions of knowledge, taste, and justice. These claims are elucidated in autonomous cultural spheres – of science, aesthetics, and morality – with their own criteria for judging truth, beauty, or moral character. The Enlightenment project of modernity consists of a strengthening of the autonomy of these spheres and the cultivation of ideas that help to clarify the criteria of rationality, taste, and normativity that govern determinations regarding judgments of the same.

For Habermas, the characteristic problem of modernity resides in the absolutization of particular cultural spheres and their characteristics. The project of modernity enters into difficulty when one of the spheres attempts to establish the criteria for legitimacy in the other spheres. This occurs, for instance, when the scientific sphere extends its truth-criteria into aesthetics, or when aesthetics reacts against the predominance of science in modernity by rejecting all attempts to establish truths, even those which are scientific. Something similar occurs when morality adopts forms of justification which pertain to the sciences, or when it subordinates questions of justice to aesthetic judgments. Habermas understands the crisis of modernity in part as the boundless expression of the different spheres. In the face of such excesses the modern subject has two options: the rejection of modernity through the reification of the criteria of any of the individual spheres (science, art, or morality), or the attempt to provide a new basis for the continuation of such a project. Of these two options, Habermas

decisively chooses the second.

During the course of his many works, Habermas has stood out not only by shedding light onto the structures of modern society and helping to better understand the nature of the judgments pertaining to each sphere, but also by providing a new way to understand how these judgments can be redeemed. He places particular emphasis on the moral sphere, as the elaboration of his discourse ethics makes evident. There is no space here to elaborate carefully and to do justice to the subtlety of the Habermasian discourse ethic, but we can at least indicate some key points. Firstly, the Habermasian ethic is part of his broader project of reinvigorating European modernity. He chooses to ground his ethics on the normative presuppositions of discourse, which he presents as an alternative to metaphysics and an epistemology based on consciousness.¹⁶ According to Habermas, the paradigm of consciousness does not prove adequate to justify the criteria of the cultural spheres nor does it help to maintain their respective autonomy. Moreover, for him, such an approach can only lead either to the imposition of the criteria of one sphere onto the others or to an absolute relativism that altogether abandons the hope and promise of the project of modernity. Only an approach based on discursive practice can, according to Habermas, provide clear and convincing foundations for cultural spheres. The rationalization of the life-world can only be carried out through an intersubjective view of rationality, which from the beginning makes reference to a shared world and to the fundamental role of language in our epistemic practices. It would be precisely on the basis of the paradigm of discursive practice that Habermas would attempt to provide clear criteria for the exercise of moral reason. Like his teacher Apel, Habermas explores the implicit norms in discursive practice, and anchors moral discourse in the rational character of the “performative contradiction.”

II. Philosophical Interventions in the Unfinished Project of DECOLONIZATION

While Habermas’s theoretical effort to continue the unfinished project of modernity maintains a distinction between the idea and the project of modernity, the project of continuing the unfinished work of decolonization requires a different distinction. I suggest that we use that which Mignolo offers between the *rhetoric of modernity* and the *logic of coloniality*,¹⁷ alongside which we also need to add the category of the *project of decolonization*. The rhetoric of modernity refers to that historical vision which proposes the gradual progression from a pagan or classical past to a European modernity in which the value of tradition is called into question and a form of rationalism is established as exemplar for the rest of civilization. Thinkers from Hegel to Husserl, Giddens, and Taylor maintain various versions of this rhetoric, and Habermas is

clearly one of them. This rhetoric is itself a part of and obscures a “darker side of modernity,” which we can render as “coloniality.” I will clarify later the specific meaning of Quijano’s concept of coloniality, but it suffices now to indicate that it deals with a matrix of power that produces racial and gender hierarchies on the global and local levels, functioning alongside capital to maintain a modern regime of exploitation and domination.¹⁸ Coloniality is not a permanent or transhistoric form of human relations, but refers instead to the unfolding of a history which coincides with the foundation and expansion of modernity. While coloniality has been an intrinsic part of modernity for more than five-hundred years, accounts like that of Habermas rarely if ever mention it. Herein lies, in part, the mythological character of the rhetoric of modernity.

Both Dussel and Mignolo dedicate numerous pages to the elaboration of a historical vision that breaks with the power and seduction of the rhetoric of modernity.¹⁹ I spend more time elsewhere describing the way in which Dussel redefines the Weberian and Habermasian definitions of modernity.²⁰ Here I wish to focus on Mignolo’s response to the concept of modernity as a project of rationalization. Mignolo’s ideas are compatible with and some are even anticipated by or developed from a different angle by Dussel. I focus on Mignolo here to invite readers of Dussel to consider the way in which the latter has influenced the thought of Latino intellectuals in the United States, and the ways in which they have also expanded it. Moreover, Mignolo seeks to integrate Dussel’s thought with that of Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, thereby giving greater weight to the thesis that I broadly formulate below, according to which the work of Quijano and Dussel represents a form of thought which is as central to the *discourse* of decolonization as is that of Weber and Habermas with respect to the *discourse* of modernity. This combination should not be understood in an exclusivist way, but rather it should itself be nourished by critical visions from other spaces of enunciation, histories, and realities, such as Afro-Caribbean thought and the theoretical work of women of color in the United States, Latin America, and elsewhere, to name only a few bodies of work that are increasingly coming into close contact.²¹

Both Habermas and Mignolo trace the origin of modernity to the Renaissance, as it is there that both a certain affinity as well as a distinction with respect to the classical past come to be affirmed. However, Mignolo adds the fact that the distinction between “the ancient and the modern” coincides with a distinction – as seen at the very beginning of the conquest of the Americas – between alphabetical European culture and the non-alphabetical languages. It is through this distinction that modernity results in both an impulse toward novelty and a radical difference between certain subjects (European) and others (colonial). To this we need to add – as indicated by Afro-Caribbean theorist Sylvia Wynter – that this very understanding of “the new” and “the modern” to a great extent relied for its plausibility on the idea of the “discovery” of a “new” world. In other words,

the *space* of the “new” world affected the form in which modern notions of *time* were defined and developed, and if this space in the new world was tempered in the forge of colonial relations, then this also results in modern notions of temporality that are indelibly marked by the logic of coloniality.²²

If modernity, in its original sense, refers to a Christian present beyond a pagan past, then later forms of modernity propose a secular future beyond a Christian past and an uncivilized or primitive world. Indeed, the “uncivilized” world of those subjects “without history” would come to represent during the Enlightenment the new referent with respect to which the modern would be defined.²³ European diatribes between theologians and philosophers about the role of Christianity in the modern world take for granted a colonial horizon, in accordance with which both Christianity and the emergent secular order are defined in relation to those that Wynter has called the liminal subjects of modernity.²⁴ We should also add – following Wynter – that although the symbolic system of representation and differentiation presupposed by modernity was colonial in the broad sense of the term, the subjects on whose backs this system was built were principally indigenous and black, and accordingly the possibility of their liberation usually entails particularly profound and complex challenges.²⁵ This makes it necessary to formulate colonial difference not only as a hierarchical dichotomy which is applied to colonial subjects, but rather as a symbolically, epistemologically, and institutionally heterogeneous structure which is to a great (but not exclusive) extent anchored in the genocide and slavery of indigenous peoples in the Americas and elsewhere and of black Africans in Africa and in the diaspora.²⁶

We find that at the precise historical moment when Habermas establishes a distinction between aesthetic modernity and the enlightened project that regards history as a rational progress, we also see the rearticulation of central elements of the colonial Renaissance view into an Enlightened perspective. This move consists of a shift in colonial discourse which redefines colonial difference as the space between those subjects with history and civilization and those subjects without. Habermas, however, does not touch upon nor does he seem even to perceive this problematic. Therefore, he fails to note that while the enlightened project of modernity turns on the demands put forth by those marginalized sectors inside Europe and the emancipation of the bourgeoisie, it hardly made reference to decolonization or did it see the latter as an imperative. Even when enlightened philosophers could formally criticize European imperial politics, the idea that colonized subjects were as human as Europeans, and therefore that they could and should be considered as historical subjects, was not among their central emancipatory proposals, if at all was it present. As a result, with only perhaps a few exceptions, the Haitian Revolution, for example, did not constitute one of the events that were celebrated in the Enlightenment.

We have seen that Habermas claims Weber as the key figure for interpreting the specific meaning of the project of modernity, since he also believes that it is with Weber that this project achieves its clearest and most acute consciousness. It is therefore with respect to Weberian social theory that Habermas would articulate his own philosophy, which leads him once again into the path of continuing the “oblivion of coloniality.” In this sense it is interesting that, after his reflections on the darker sides of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, Mignolo too pauses to discuss Weber. Mignolo agrees with Habermas on the centrality of Weber, but he adds that this centrality must also be understood with respect to coloniality. Mignolo recounts that:

In the sixteenth century, the colonial difference was located in space. Toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, the measuring stick was history and no longer writing.... At the beginning of the twentieth century, Max Weber transformed this lack (of alphabetic writing, of history) into a celebration of the possession of true knowledge, an Occidental achievement of universal value. I have had this overall picture in mind during the process of writing this book, as I was conceiving subaltern knowledges and border thinking as the response to Weber from the end of the twentieth century.²⁷

Here, Mignolo emphasizes what might well be called the dark side of Weber, and this dark side is not an impurity or a contingency, but rather a constitutive aspect of the Weberian view of modernity. Weber’s conception of European modernity as rationalization, and therefore of non-European cultures as less rational, expresses most sharply the project of modernity and its constitutive relationship with the logic of coloniality, and so just as the extension of Weber becomes for Habermas the essential task for defending the project of modernity, critiquing him becomes an indispensable ingredient for the task of forging the project of decolonization. Mignolo attempts to respond to Weber at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first from the positionality of subaltern knowledges. Habermas, on the other hand, shares with Weber a reductionist view of modernity, and thereby assumes the task – as a philosophical Sisyphus – of pushing the boulder of Eurocentrism once more to the top of the proverbial hill. Is Habermas destined to play such a role? The answer is no. The problem is that Habermas fails to engage in a transgresstopic critique that would allow him to break with the mythological view of Europe and to theorize about decolonial discursive forms that pose an historical horizon distinct from that of modernity: the horizon of decolonization and transmodernity.²⁸ While we should not naturalize the blindness of this German thinker, we should be simultaneously conscious of the fact that a transgresstopic decolonizing vision requires the very death of imperial identity.²⁹ And if this is what is in play – the very identity of people, and with it the conservation of the

benefits conferred by the racial system of modernity – then one should not be surprised by resistance and blindness in the face of coloniality and the perceived demands of the decolonial project. The communicative turn which Habermas assumes to support the rational project of modernity is not sufficiently radical to exorcise a coloniality which remains invisible to him. Habermas does not realize that modernity is based on a massive epistemological project of bad faith, to which he himself falls victim.³⁰

One might ask at this point if Mignolo's decolonizing or de-colonial project is in some sense natural, or if it derives from a critique of Weber's limitations, but neither option responds sufficiently to the underlying question. For starters, there is nothing "natural" about any epistemological project, since as Edmund Husserl insisted, for such a project to reach the level of theory presupposes the achievement of an attitude which is distinct from the "natural."³¹ According to Husserl, this would be a fully theoretical attitude which proposes "infinite tasks" of knowledge that surpass the needs of the moment, and Husserl explained (somewhat unconvincingly) the transition between the natural attitude on the one hand and the theoretical and phenomenological attitude on the other. What Husserl did indeed achieve was a recognition that the theoretical attitude sets out from, but is not reducible to the life-world, and that efforts by science to cut itself off from such a world represent exercises in what Jean-Paul Sartre would later call bad faith. But this very form of bad faith would become part of European common sense, to such a degree that it was prepared to sacrifice (up to a certain point but not totally) the historical sense that nourished its identity and defined its role as a historical subject on the altar of a universal knowledge conceived in abstract and alienating terms.

Years later, Habermas would continue this Husserlian reflection by proposing that the natural sciences are not divorced from the life-world, but rather express the diverse interests of the latter, including the interest in emancipation.³² Universality, however, claims to be beyond human interests, and thereby ends up – as Nietzsche had already diagnosed – betraying the emancipatory interests of the subject. The enigma here is that even in this project of knowledge there had to be some interest involved. Nietzsche draws attention to a slave morality that defined the values that gave meaning to the commitment to the idea of universality as proposed by the sciences, but if we follow Mignolo in his suspicion that this sort of compromise with abstract universality was in line with the imperial project of making global designs, then one might equally argue that this reflects the interests of a master's subjectivity and not that of a slave. The peculiar dialectic of this sort of a subjectivity – as indicated later by philosopher and poet Aimé Césaire – consists of a boomerang effect in which the sacrifice of the colonial subject on the altar of rationality generates positions which end up sacrificing the imperial subject itself on the same and worse – that is, genocidal – altars, which had

been designed and first put to use against colonized subjects. This is how Césaire interprets the significance of Nazism in Europe.³³

A related point is that while the imperial interests of the despotic subject remain hidden in universal abstractions, the same has not been the case with regards to the knowledge produced from the position of sub-alterity, which expresses its interests in a more direct manner. Mignolo elaborates this point in an elegant and provocative manner:

Within local histories of colonial mercantilism (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and colonial capitalism (late eighteenth to twentieth century), in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, the explicit connections between knowledge and interest are more difficult to hide: the links between knowledge and interests are motivated by the need for liberation, for decolonization, instead of emancipation. *That is, knowledge is linked to liberation and decolonization from the subaltern perspective, as emancipation was during the nineteenth century in Europe.* There cannot be knowledge detached from interest from a subaltern perspective since all subaltern perspective is "critical" in the sense that Horkheimer and Khatibi gave to the word.³⁴

Mignolo continues by confirming, at least in part, our prior understanding of the implications of his historical perspective with respect to the Habermasian view:

By questioning the emancipation view linking knowledge and interest, as argued by Habermas, I am not questioning the validity of his argument in the local history he is quarreling with. My point is that his argument implicitly and nonintentionally disqualifies other possibilities of linking knowledge with interests from a subaltern position for which Habermas's discussion is tangentially relevant.³⁵

Beyond indicating the limits of the Habermasian interest in knowledge, Mignolo emphasizes another important point in the first passage of the previously-cited paragraph, from which we can derive the fact that *just as the project of modernity obeys emancipatory interests, the project of decolonization finds its fundamental motives in the liberatory interests, not of a bourgeois subject, but rather of one which is enslaved and colonized.* It is precisely such expressions of interest that inspire Mignolo's historical vision: it neither arrives in "natural" form nor does it result from an internal critique of Weber. It originates from a different discursive and theoretical locus of enunciation: the gestures, "cries," and liberatory and emancipatory efforts (of slaves, in this case, and no longer merely enlightened subjects who reject despotism or tradition). This is not to say

that Mignolo's thought or that of anyone else directly expresses the decolonial interests of slaves and colonized subjects, but rather that his thought is inspired by and attempts to assist in fulfilling this interest in decolonization, helping to give the latter the weight of an historical project or vision in which "goodness" becomes the anchor for the "infinite tasks" of what Chela Sandoval has articulated as "de-colonial love."³⁶

In the particular case of Mignolo, his decolonial work originates in encounters with the thought of Chicana lesbian Gloria Anzaldúa, thereafter finding inspiration and intellectual support in the work of Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano, A. Khatibi, and Frantz Fanon. But these are not the only ones. There exists an entire gamut of thinkers with reference to which Mignolo articulates his work, and between whom he attempts to establish "bridges." In thinkers like Mignolo, and Sylvia Wynter, already mentioned briefly, as well as in the efforts of United States feminists of color like Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Chela Sandoval, to which we can add moreover pan-Africanists like W.E.B. Du Bois and Aimé Césaire and indigenous thinkers like Vine Deloria Jr. and Rigoberta Menchú: in all of these figures we see an emerging front of decolonial thought which gains self-consciousness and begins to establish links and define in distinct but shared forms the unfinished project of decolonization. Is it perhaps the case that the work of these and other thinkers form part of a certain heretical canon with respect to dominant forms of thought?³⁷ Perhaps they provide hermeneutical keys for a critical reading that still remains to be fully elucidated, having only scarcely gained serious attention in our honorable academy? To what point will conservatism, liberalism, and European Marxism – all children of modernity – define our horizons of thought and action? Is it even possible to think that "another world is possible" beyond the horizons of these ideologies? It is worth mentioning here, if only briefly, how some of these thinkers provide distinct critical responses to the project of modernity and offer resources for the decolonization of knowledge. I will focus here on the work of Quijano and Fanon, read through the interpretive frame of the ethico-political decolonial turn and liberation philosophy.

III. Sources for the decolonization of the self

I will attempt here to clarify more precisely the meaning of the unfinished project of decolonization and to indicate the relevance of liberation philosophy to such a project. The first point of clarification is that "decolonization" is not understood here only or principally with reference to the various historical forms of colonialism, but rather with reference to *coloniality*. This is a concept introduced by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano to refer to a matrix of power, which redefines subjectivity, gender, and labor relations through the category of race.³⁸ This matrix emerged in the context of the

conquest of the Americas, but cannot be reduced completely to the Spanish or Portuguese colonialism of the sixteenth century,³⁹ as it effectively became a part of the then nascent capitalism, part of gender and sexual hierarchies that had come from early European history, and part of the forms of knowledge that began to appear in modernity. This matrix, then, survived the decline of the Spanish and Portuguese empires, and continued even despite the success of the revolutions that ended colonial relations, such as those of nineteenth-century Latin America.

Quijano's theoretical work breathes new life into dependency theory. Like other dependency theorists, he believes that Latin America – among other regions of the world – suffers from neo-colonial market relations. But he adds that this dependency is not external to the regions in question, but rather results from organic constitutions of peripheral societies affected as they are by the coloniality of power. This is to say, it is the manner in which subjects are understood in each region – as worthy of wage-labor, as servants, as slaves, or as marginals – that dictates whether capital will or will not be able to develop. Dependency is therefore organic to societies like those in Latin America where indigenous and blacks did not represent a vital part of the process of capitalist production (in the sense of being waged laborers). The implication is that liberation or decolonization cannot be defined solely in terms of a compromise in relations with the external power, but must imply a radical change in the ways in which subjects are understood within the societies in question. The challenge is not only economic, but symbolic as well, and it does not only refer to the view that one has of the foreign oppressor of colonized societies: the task is to clarify how the identities within the colonized society themselves carry the seeds of dependency and unjust power relations. The work of Frantz Fanon and Gloria Anzaldúa provide meticulous examinations of the problems of identity in colonized territories.

In light of Quijano's work, it becomes obvious – as previously indicated by Chela Sandoval with reference to the work of United States feminists of color, and as Catherine Walsh has insisted in recent conversations – that liberation must be reframed as de-coloniality.⁴⁰ Quijano adds key elements for thinking the unfinished project of decolonization as a project of de-coloniality, thereby contributing to both Latin American liberation philosophy as well as the intellectual project that Sandoval has deemed the "methodology of the oppressed" in the United States.⁴¹ With the concept of coloniality, Quijano provides a way of understanding sociologically the complex nature of colonial power and the specific challenges that confront the project of decolonization *qua* de-coloniality. Coloniality is a way of defining the type of power relations that de-coloniality attempts to undo and rearticulate in its own project. In this sense, de-coloniality could be understood as what Quijano calls the "socialization of power," which does not originate so much in the efforts of the enlightened bourgeoisie of the French Revolution

as in the more direct emancipatory/liberatory/decolonial exercise of the African subjects of the Haitian Revolution.⁴² *Interpreted in this way, one might say that Quijano, the sociologist, fulfills a similar role with respect to the unfinished project of decolonization as Habermas grants to Weber with respect to the unfinished project of modernity.*⁴³ This is to say, in the same way that Weber offers Habermas the tools to understand the advances and limitations of enlightened society, so too does Quijano provide a way to interpret modern/colonial power structures and to imagine a decolonial horizon. It should not seem strange, then, that Mignolo makes Quijano a crucial figure in his articulation of decolonization, which represents a direct response to Weber at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. But for Mignolo, Dussel's work is also central, which leads one to ask if it is possible to establish the sort of relationship between Quijano and Dussel as exists between Weber and Habermas. This would imply understanding the Dusselian liberation ethic and transmodernity as philosophical constructs that complement and give continuity to Quijano's formulations of coloniality and the socialization of power. It is perhaps just this sort of intuition that has led scholars and intellectuals interested in coloniality, decolonization, and liberation philosophy to carry out joint projects and to put Dussel and Quijano into dialogue in various contexts.⁴⁴ However, one might highlight the fact that neither Dussel nor Quijano have formulated their thought with the other as a central reference; what both do share is the sociology of dependency.

Both liberation theology and liberation philosophy, in which Dussel has being a protagonist, were heavily influenced by dependency theory. It is true that other veins of thought – such as that of Jewish-Lithuanian-French thinker Emmanuel Lévinas – influenced Dusselian philosophy of liberation from the beginning, but one could argue that even Dussel's appropriation of Lévinas is itself highly influenced by dependency theory—and vice versa. The perspective of Latin America as an alterity to Europe, where such alterity or exteriority is defined by power relations which result in the poverty and misery of the Latin American peoples, allowed Dussel to introduce ethics directly where dependency theory had emphasized economics and politics. So if, by virtue of the coloniality of power, dependency is as Quijano describes it – constitutive of the modern world system – then one would need to rethink the relevance of exteriority, or better, the form in which exteriority should be articulated with respect to coloniality.

As I have already suggested, the "coloniality of power" provides a more complex way of talking about colonization, and differs from the Habermasian concept of "colonization" of the "life-world" by the state system and the economy. Rather, coloniality describes a form of power which integrates relations between the "life world" and that other ill-fated world in which death prevails. One might say that this "death-world" is in the first instance the world of colonial racial slavery and by extension the

colonized world itself, governed by racial, sexual, and gender hierarchies. In opposition to the world which Habermas describes, the world of the colonized rarely has a solid nation state or an economic system which, through their excesses, interfere in people's lives.⁴⁵ In the context of the colonized, it is not only the life-world which is in crisis (and which is better defined as a "death-world"), but rather all of the cultural systems and spheres. That it is a death-world does not mean that life ceases to exist in the colonized world, but rather enunciates a space in which "crisis" governs as the ordinary life of the system, the culture, and the people. We are speaking, then, of a space in which both systems and structures of meaning militate against the very lives of the subjects within their reach. We are speaking of something more profound than a "crisis": we are speaking of a *condemnation or damnation*.⁴⁶

In this way we arrive at the idea that the fundamental problem of the colonial world is not so much the reification of the cultural systems and spheres and their "colonization" of the life-world, but rather the complicity of various attempts to produce these systems and spheres with the racist perspective of Eurocentric modernity and thus the existence of *colonial attitudes* and projects in the attempt at modernization. *From this perspective, the central difficulty for science, aesthetics, and morality is not when their justification or delimitation is in doubt, but rather when whatever possible justification, delimitation, or reorientation is already predicated on a Eurocentric and racist vision of the world, according to which indigenous, black, and other "colored" populations do not represent an intrinsic part of the human species, or more specifically, of the "nation" (as is the case with many of the skepticisms that pass as radical).* The so-called *mestizaje*⁴⁷ of Latin American nations is not an exception to this, since it tends itself to reproduce a racist logic in which subjects with a clearer complexion are comfortably incorporated into the *mestizo* ideal whereas "indigenous" and blacks continue to be "Indians" and negroes, doomed to remain on the margins of society until their desired disappearance. This sort of subsumption, then, represents a subtle form of genocide, although it may take place in the long term and through a racial mixing which whitens the subjects in question. In this way, death continues to be presupposed as a normative ideal of those cultural spheres that militate against an expansive post-colonial view of the human. The crisis of the sciences outside Europe takes root, firstly, in the reproduction of a point-of-view that legitimates the marginalization of those who appropriate the discourse of modernity: their crisis finds its expression in Eurocentrism.⁴⁸ It is this same Eurocentrism that keeps European sciences and philosophical perspectives blind with respect to coloniality and to the need to decolonize the sciences and create new theoretical discourses.⁴⁹ The "death-world" and the "life-world" of modernity are therefore connected by links that inhibit any radical challenge to their mutual constitution.

The fundamental characteristic of the colonial death-world resides in a geopolitical marker that designates it as a *space-for-death*. This is to say, human death is made more understandable in the colonized world, where it tends to be black and indigenous populations who suffer most from this state of affairs, but it also includes all racialized subjects. It is fundamentally from there, from that space of death, that a distinct ethical claim is born, the claim for a liberatory ethic that includes transmodernity as a future possibility. Habermasian discourse ethics responds to the threat of violence against the European "life-world," just as liberation ethics responds to the need for decolonization of the colonial "death-world." But here one ought not merely place bets upon one ethic or the other, since the "life-worlds" and "death-worlds" that exist in different parts of the world are intimately related and mutually-constitutive. The task, then, is to articulate a philosophical vision and an ethic of liberation that overcomes this very division between the two worlds through the elimination of the "death-world," and this requires a particular sort of *attitude* and openness to dialogue with thinkers, artists, and activists who have diagnosed the crisis of modernity from within various contexts. Eurocentrism, as a form of knowledge based on bad faith, hinders the creation of this radical attitude, and so in order to oppose it, philosophers like Enrique Dussel turn to the various sources of thought around them to construct the theoretical scaffolding or the architectonic arguments for such an attitude. It is possible, no doubt, to be more radical than Dussel in this respect, and indeed necessary to a certain degree, but those who have read his books cannot help but feel a sense of admiration for his heretical attempts at subverting the Western philosophical tradition. And if we focus on the spirit more than the writings of this great teacher (as valuable as those writings are), we will sense a profound challenge and a provocation to move beyond our own limitations. Thinkers like Habermas, on the other hand, cling more tightly to a specific philosophical tradition while sustaining the pretension that their elucidations have the status of universal truth, or else they end up in an elitist provincialism which limits the application of their theory to Europe alone. Allusions in his work to a "discursive community" are reductivist insofar as they fail to question the "language" and philosophical tradition which appeals to such a "community." The task of decolonization requires that we adopt an *attitude* that breaks with the European project of bad faith which can only see modernity and not its constitutive darker sides, like coloniality. I would like to conclude with some ideas regarding this attitude and some contributions to the liberation ethic and the "methodology of the oppressed" that it supports.

Following Frantz Fanon, I propose that we interpret the "exteriority" of colonized subjects in modernity/coloniality through the idea of the *condemned*.⁵⁰ The condemned, more than alterity properly speaking, represents a position of sub-alterity, and this is neither the alter-ego of Husserl nor Levinasian otherness nor the subject of the

Habermasian discursive community.⁵¹ "Condemned" refers literally to that subject who wants to give generously but cannot, because what he or she possesses has been taken away or stolen.⁵² Thus the term refers directly to both an ethic of generosity or the gift as well as to a form of power which militates against this ethic. This form of power is not only – as it appears in the work of Habermas – the colonization of the life-world by state institutions or capital, but rather a violent "taking away" that is characteristic of coloniality. This "taking away" begins precisely with the dehumanization suffered by indigenous and blacks at the dawn of modernity/coloniality, through which coloniality transforms the "life-world" of these enslaved subjects into a literal "death-world." The condemned do not need to anticipate death to achieve authenticity nor do they have *time* to subsume the traumas they suffer in civilization into the unconscious, as Fanon has made clear.⁵³ The condemned lives in the hell of coloniality, trapped in a malign logic that evades the movement of the dialectic. Those living in the "death-world" search less for authenticity than for liberation, which should be understood primarily as a paradoxical wager for the life of the condemned. In this way all liberation ethics, as Dussel makes clear in his work, is and ought to be fundamentally an ethic of life.

De-coloniality, as we have seen, is in the "interests" of the condemned, and this sort of resistance, critique, and search for alternatives to the colonial matrix of power is perhaps as old as coloniality itself. This resistance is born with the "cry of horror" in the face of the horror of the negation of the humanity of those very same colonized/racialized/enslaved subjects.⁵⁴ "Horror" is different from both Heideggerian "angst" and the "astonishment" that, according to Husserl, inaugurates the theoretical attitude, as it reveals not so much the finitude of the ego or the infinitude of the tasks of knowledge, but rather the ill-fated existence of the "death-world." This horror refers not so much to the death of the self as to the death of the condemned, the death of the subject who is considered dead before actually dying, or whose life has no value. "Horror" in face of death, and the *love* which is constitutive of it, represent the existential root, as it were, of the "interest" in de-coloniality, as well as the very condition of possibility for the emergence of a "de-colonial attitude" and of the fundamental task of the *despojo*, or the exorcism through which the subject attempts to "cleanse" or free itself from the profound traces and marks of colonization.⁵⁵ The "de-colonial attitude" is defined as the aspiration of subjects who become involved in the project of decolonization. It generates politics, artistic and cultural visions, epistemologies, theories, and new sciences, as Wynter, Gordon, Sandoval among others inspired in their work make clear, that themselves seek to aid in the decolonization of both common sense and the more specialized and refined spheres of modernity. These decolonial projects are dedicated to the incessant task of elucidating the perverse forms in which the logic of coloniality operates, as a death-logic which is constitutive of

modernity, and to opening up a horizon in which human life might be possible in all its abundance.

The “de-colonial attitude,” then, inspires critical analyses of human reality, new sciences, and a particular type of critical theory, and it also proposes a form of thought and coexistence in which gratitude, receptivity, and giving can be incorporated into daily life. This presupposes the creation of epistemological perspectives that help to undermine sexism, racism, and numerous other social ills that persist in or have themselves been created by modern society. The ethic that underlies such a “de-colonial attitude” is one which generates epistemologies and politics which affirm the idea that “another world is possible.”⁵⁶ When this project is understood as a critical response to coloniality, this places the condemned in the role of the epistemological and political subject capable of forging such a world. The condemned, in this sense, cannot be reduced to either “the people” of the modern nation-state or the multitude theorized by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, and much less to Heideggerian *Dasein*.⁵⁷ The condemned is the political subject that advances the unfinished project of decolonization, the subject who “cries out in horror” in the face of the *scandal* (Kierkegaard, Lévinas) of the modern/colonial “death-world” and aspires – through the decolonial praxis of love (Fanon, Sandoval), through an ethic of the liberation of life (Dussel), and through a decolonizing and liberatory politics inspired by the “decolonial attitude” – to create a transmodern world “in which many worlds fit” and where the global dictatorship of capital, property, and coloniality no longer reign (Duchrow and Hinkelammert).⁵⁸ It is with respect to this historical project and these labors of “decolonial love” that Dussel’s work gains its fullest significance. Enrique Dussel is one of the most important thinkers for the ethico-political decolonial turn, and his work represents a vital part of those efforts that define and fortify the unfinished project of decolonization.⁵⁹

Notes

* A previous version of this paper was originally presented in Spanish in a conference in celebration of Enrique Dussel's 70th birthday at the University of Mexico City (Mexico City), 9-11 November 2004. A longer version was prepared in Spanish. This English version was prepared by George Ciccariello Maher, and revised by the author.

¹ I am grateful to Shimmerlee Jirón-King for key references on this point.

² See his chapter on the "Hispanic Challenge" in Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

³ See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Decolonization and the New Identitarian Logics after September 11: On Žižek, Huntington and Beyond," *Radical Philosophy Review* 8, n. 1 (2005).

⁴ This essay forms part of a broader reflection whose goal is to establish links between Philosophy of Liberation and the "methodology of the oppressed" as articulated by Chicana theorist Chela Sandoval. Laura Pérez has also written provocatively on the possibility and relevance of such a theoretical elaboration. See Laura Pérez, "Enrique Dussel's *Ética de la liberación* (1998) and U.S. Ethnic Studies," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, Texas, 21 November 2004. For Dussel and Sandoval, see Enrique Dussel, *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta; México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana--Iztapalapa, y Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1998); and Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

⁵ For a more complete explanation of the "decolonial turn" see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

⁶ Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955).

⁷ See Enrique Dussel, *El encubrimiento del Indio: 1492. Hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad.*, 2da ed. (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Cambio XXI, 1992).

⁸ On the ethic of liberation and transmodernity, see Dussel, *Ética de la liberación*; Enrique Dussel, *Filosofía ética de la liberación*, 3rd ed., 5 vols., vol. 1-2 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones La Aurora, 1987; reprint of *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*. 1973); Enrique Dussel, "Modernity, Eurocentrism, and Trans-Modernity: In Dialogue with Charles Taylor," en *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1996); Enrique Dussel, *Posmodernidad y transmodernidad: diálogos con la filosofía de Gianni Vattimo* (Puebla, Mex.: Universidad Iberoamericana, Golfo Centro; Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente; Universidad Iberoamericana, Plantel Laguna, 1999); Enrique Dussel, "World System and 'Trans'-Modernity," *Nepantla: Views from South* 3, no. 2 (2002).

⁹ On the Modernity/Coloniality group, see Ramón Grosfoguel, "Colonial Difference, Geopolitics of Knowledge, and Global Coloniality in the Modern/Colonial World-System," *Review* 25, no. 3 (2002): 203-24; Arturo Escobar, "Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program" (paper presented to the International Conference of European Latin Americanists, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, July 3-6, 2002); and "Prefacio a la edición castellana. <<Un paradigma otro>>: colonialidad global, pensamiento fronterizo y cosmopolitanismo crítico" in Walter D. Mignolo, *Historias locales/diseños globales: colonialidad, conocimientos subalternos y pensamiento fronterizo*, trad. Juan María Madariaga y Cristina Vega Solís (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2003). It would be in this preface that Mignolo would indicate that what he refers to as "an other paradigm" "designates that disordered and potent space in which

the unfinished project of modernity would be completed, but not from the perspective of modernity, but rather from the perspective of coloniality as a permanent process of decolonization" (58) [Tr: my trans.]. The Afro-Caribbean theorist Sylvia Wynter has proposed a similar idea with regard to modern humanism, while Enrique Dussel has insisted for more than a decade that we should understand transmodernity as the "subsumption" of the non-mythical emancipatory aspects of modernity. See Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt y Rex Nettleford (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 5-57; and Enrique Dussel, *El encubrimiento del Indio: 1492*. On decolonization as an unfinished project, see also Ramón Grosfoguel and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Latin@s and the 'Euro-American' Menace: The Decolonization of the US Empire in the 21st Century," in *Latin@s in the World-System*, ed. Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, y José David Saldívar (Paradigm Press, 2005), 3-27.

¹⁰ I attempt to do more justice to Dussel, Mignolo, and Wynter's idea of the mutual imbrication of modernity and decolonization in Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*. In this essay I focus more on clarifying the notion of a decolonizing project and on suggesting the role of an ethics of liberation in this project.

¹¹ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Along these lines, see Catherine Walsh, "Interculturality and the Coloniality of Power. An 'Other' Thinking and Positioning from the Colonial Difference," in *Coloniality, Transmodernity, and Border Thinking*, eds. Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, y José David Saldívar (forthcoming).

¹² This thesis is articulated in Ramón Grosfoguel y Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Latin@s and the 'Euro-American' Menace." For its most complete articulation with relation to the political economy of the world-system, see Ramón Grosfoguel, "Subaltern Epistemologies, Decolonial Imaginaries and the Redefinition of Global Capitalism," *Review* 28 (forthcoming, 2005). For its elucidation in the context of philosophy and critical theory, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*.

¹³ [Tr: I maintain the accent here to emphasize that the reference is to the entire Western hemisphere.]

¹⁴ Dussel's intellectual orientation testifies to these distinct moments. In the first place, the young Dussel embarks upon his voyage to (postwar) Europe with intellectual preoccupations which were strongly influenced by questions and concerns regarding the Second World War. However, it would not be until the late 60s and early 70s that he would begin work on his Philosophy of Liberation. And it would not be until even later – in his presentations on the "discovery" in 1991 and 1992 – that he would articulate the idea of the "myth" of modernity and the need for the non-mythical subsumption of the latter within a broader project that he would call transmodernity. Also consider the fact that Sylvia Wynter proposes her thesis on the incomplete character of modern European humanism, and the need to elaborate a "new poetics of the *propter nos*," also in the context of discussions about the significance of 1492 five-hundred years after the fact. See Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View." In a similar vein, Aníbal Quijano articulated some of his richest and most provocative theses within this context. See, for example, "Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad," *Perú indígena* 29 (1991). We should also add, among a number of other possible examples, that Mignolo's definitive divorce from European semiotics and his development of a "colonial semiosis" also dates from this period. See *Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

¹⁵ My account here is based on Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, ed. Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 38-58.

¹⁶ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1987).

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- ¹⁷ Walter Mignolo, "The Rhetoric of Modernity and the Logic of Coloniality," in *Coloniality, Transmodernity, and Border Thinking*, ed. Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, y José David Saldívar (forthcoming).
- ¹⁸ Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en América Latina," *Anuario Mariateguiano* 1997; Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad."
- ¹⁹ See, among other writings, Dussel, *El encubrimiento del indio*; Enrique Dussel, *Historia General de la Iglesia en América Latina. Tomo I: Introducción general a la historia de la iglesia en América Latina* (Salamanca, Sp.: Ediciones Sígueme, 1983); Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*; and Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: UP, 2000) 3.
- ²⁰ See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*.
- ²¹ In addition to the previously-cited work by Sylvia Wynter and Chela Sandoval, we should add that of Francesca Gargallo and Lewis Gordon, among various others. See Francesca Gargallo, *Ideas feministas latinoamericanas* (México, D.F.: Universidad de la Ciudad de México, 2004); Lewis R. Gordon, *Existencia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Lewis R. Gordon, ed., *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
- ²² See Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," *The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003).
- ²³ Mignolo, *Local Histories*, 3.
- ²⁴ See Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View"; Sylvia Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
- ²⁵ On the position of indigenous and black subjects in the institutional and symbolic power structure of modernity, see Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View"; and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Imperio, raza y religión," in *Enciclopedia iberoamericana de las religiones: religion e imperio*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Madrid: Trotta, forthcoming in 2005-2006).
- ²⁶ On the "structural heterogeneity of the colonial world" see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Liberation Theology and the Search for the Lost Paradigm: From Radical Orthodoxy to Radical Diversality," in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005). On the way in which the racial discourse of modernity was anchored in the perception and treatment of indigenous and blacks, see prior note.
- ²⁷ Mignolo, *Local Histories*, 3.
- ²⁸ On transgresstopic critique, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Post-imperial Reflections on Crisis, Knowledge, and Utopia: Transgresstopic Critical Hermeneutics and the 'Death of European Man'," *Review: A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations* 25, no. 3 (2002): 277-315.
- ²⁹ See also Maldonado-Torres, "Post-Imperial Reflections."
- ³⁰ For an application of the concept of bad faith to various expressions of racism, see Lewis R.

Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1995).

- ³¹ See Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man," in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).
- ³² See Jürgen Habermas, *Conocimiento e interés: la filosofía en la crisis de la humanidad europea* (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 1997).
- ³³ See Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme*.
- ³⁴ Mignolo, *Local Histories*, 147. [Tr: it is perhaps worth mentioning that the Spanish translation for the AKAL edition fails to grasp the *distinction* made here between liberation and emancipation, which thereby leads to a translation which is potentially confusing, and not benignly so. See Mignolo, *Historias locales*, 218-219.]
- ³⁵ Mignolo, *Local Histories*, 147. While in this passage Mignolo reveals Habermas' blindness with astonishing precision, we need to add that, from the perspective advanced here, he still concedes too much to the German philosopher. The problem is not only that Habermas "disqualifies" or is not interested in other knowledges, but rather that his understanding of his own history is incorrect or limited insofar as he fails to take into account the constitutive dark sides in his historical account and theoretical construction. I believe that this results from Mignolo's conception of local histories, as expressed in his book on the subject. The dichotomy between local histories and global designs is theoretically productive in many ways, but it runs the risk of understanding the local as something isolated which is exposed to the violence of global designs, but which is not transgressed by histories broader than the "local." I am grateful to Freya Schiwy for having called my attention to the possible limits of this Mignolian conception of the local and the global, which helped me to articulate my concerns differently. Mignolo's analyses of the dark sides of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, however, not only demonstrate Habermas' blindness with respect to subaltern knowledges, but also put in question the Frankfurt School's understanding of its own history and identity. It is clear why Mignolo does not venture into a more powerful critique of Habermas: such a critique would break some of the analytical power of the category of local history, and would put at risk the project of authorizing subaltern local histories. Moreover, this sort of critique would introduce the possibility of a form of knowledge that surpasses local histories, thereby reintroducing the category of universality. Mignolo's attitude is certainly understandable given the many disastrous and imperial voyages of the category of the universal, but a radical critique of Habermas and his Eurocentrism requires that we enter into such debates, as does a political position of radical diversity. Perhaps we are entering here into the possibility and the need for a left-Mignolonism?
- ³⁶ See Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952); Sandoval, *Methodology*.
- ³⁷ I use the idea of "heresy" here in the sense in which it appears in Anthony Bogues, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
- ³⁸ See, among others, Quijano, "Colonialidad"; "'Raza, 'etnia, y 'nación': cuestiones abiertas," in *José Carlos Mariátegui y Europa: la otra cara del descubrimiento*, ed. Roland Forgues (Lima, Peru: Amauta, 1992).
- ³⁹ See Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, "Americanness as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System," *International Social Science Journal* 134 (1992).
- ⁴⁰ Sandoval, *Methodology*; Catherine Walsh, "Interculturality and the Coloniality of Power."
- ⁴¹ See Sandoval, *Methodology*.

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- ⁴² See Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995).
- ⁴³ Quijano is definitively a key sociologist in the articulation of the unfinished project of modernity, as was in a certain way Immanuel Wallerstein and even more still the sociologist and legal scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos, whose work is as relevant as Quijano's in these areas.
- ⁴⁴ Here it is particularly relevant to mention Arturo Escobar, Ramón Grosfoguel, Agustín Lao-Montes, Walter Mignolo, José David Saldívar, Freya Schiwy, Catherine Walsh and the author of this essay. We owe a debt to Grosfoguel y Lao-Montes for having insisted on such a dialogue and having begun to take both thinkers seriously in their work.
- ⁴⁵ Quijano has long insisted on the incomplete character of Latin American nation-states, for example.
- ⁴⁶ The meaning of condemnation is established below with reference to the work of Frantz Fanon. Fanon understands colonization as a "sentence" [Tr: in Spanish, *condena*] and colonized subjects as "condemned." The latter represent for Fanon the primary political subjects of decolonization, and he sees them as endowed with resources to defy the theo-dicy (and with Wynter and Gordon we should add the bio-dicy) of modernity. See Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1991). [Tr: the Spanish translation of Fanon is *Los condenados de la tierra*, "the condemned of the earth."]
- ⁴⁷ [Tr: literally refers to the mixing or fusion of various cultures and ethnicities in Latin America.]
- ⁴⁸ On Eurocentrism, see J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993); Enrique Dussel, "Modernity, Eurocentrism, and Trans-Modernity," Edgardo Lander, "Eurocentrism, Modern Knowledges and the 'Natural' Order of Global Capital," tr. M. Past, *Nepantla: Views from South* 3, no. 2 (2002): 245-68; and Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533-80.
- ⁴⁹ Attempts to break with this tendency include the forthcoming book by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Cognitive Global Justice: Prudent Knowledges for a Decent Life* and the electronic journal project *Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise* < <http://www.jhfc.duke.edu/wko/>>.
- ⁵⁰ My account of Fanon is based principally on the following texts: Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, y Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*. [Tr: see note 47 above.]
- ⁵¹ I develop this further in Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*.
- ⁵² See Émile Benveniste, "Gift and Exchange in the Indo-European Vocabulary," in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997) 33-42; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "The Cry of the Self as a Call from the Other: The Paradoxical Loving Subjectivity of Frantz Fanon," *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture* 36, no. 1 (2001).
- ⁵³ See Fanon, *Black Skin*.
- ⁵⁴ For an analysis of the "cry of the living subject," see Franz Hinkelammert, *El grito del sujeto* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1998). For a phenomenological analysis of the cry of the colonized in relation to the work of Frantz Fanon, see Maldonado-Torres, "The Cry of the Self as a Call from the Other," 2001.
- ⁵⁵ A clear example of this sort of exorcism appears in Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: the New*

Mestiza=La frontera (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1991).

- ⁵⁶ The idea that “another world is possible” forms a central part of the platform of the World Social Forum. Boaventura de Sousa Santos elaborates a decolonial social science that seeks to give substance to the practices of the Forum. See Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The World-Social Forum: Toward a Counter-Hegemonic Globalization* <http://www.ces.fe.uc.pt/bss/documentos/wsf.pdf> (2003 [cited 2003]).
- ⁵⁷ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: Modernity, Empire, Coloniality,” *City* 8, no. 1 (2004): 44. I develop this point further in “On the Coloniality of Being,” in Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, y José David Saldívar, eds. (forthcoming), a version of which was presented at the Center for Global Studies in the Humanities at Duke University in November of 2003. Walter D. Mignolo has also entered into these questions in a recent presentation in which he takes advantage of the difference in the context of postcolonial political theory between the subaltern and the condemned.
- ⁵⁸ Ulrich Duchrow and Franz Hinkelammert, *La vida o el capital: alternativas a la dictadura global de la propiedad* (México, D.F.: Dríada, 2004).
- ⁵⁹ This is one of the central theses in Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*.

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