



Peer Reviewed

Title:

Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto

Journal Issue:

[TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1\(2\)](#)

Author:

[Mignolo, Walter](#)

Publication Date:

2011

Publication Info:

TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World,
School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts, UC Merced

Permalink:

<http://escholarship.ucop.edu/uc/item/62j3w283>

Local Identifier:

ssh_a_transmodernity_11807

Abstract:

Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto

Copyright Information:



Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto

WALTER D MIGNOLO
DUKE UNIVERSITY

The ideas, many of which will unfold through years of engaged political work, need not be perfect, for in the end, it will be the hard, creative work of the communities that take them on. That work is the concrete manifestation of political imagination.

Fanon described this goal as setting afoot a new humanity. He knew how terrifying such an effort is, for we do live in times where such a radical break appears as no less than the end of the world. In the meantime, the task of building infrastructures for something new must be planned, and where there is some room, attempted, as we all no doubt already know, because given the sociogenic dimension of the problem, we have no other option but to build the options on which the future of our species rest. (Lewis Gordon, “Fanon and Development. A Philosophical Look” 2004).¹

1. A Brief History

In May of 2004, Arturo Escobar and I met with the collective from the modernity/coloniality project of Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The theme of this meeting was “Critical Theory and Decolonization.” The participants were invited to reflect upon the following topic in advance:

*How does Horkheimer’s “critical theory” project look to us today, when global and pluri-versal “revolutions” are taking place, out of the diversity and pluri-versity of the many local histories that in the past 500 hundred years (some in the past 250 or perhaps only fifty years) couldn’t avoid the contact, conflict, and complicity with the West (e.g., Western Christianity, its secularization and relation to/with capitalism and its obverse, Socialism/ Marxism)? What should “critical theory” aim to be when the *damnés de la terre* are brought into the picture, next to Horkheimer’s proletarians or today’s translation of the proletariat, such as the multitudes? What transformations are needed in the “critical theory” project if gender, race, and nature were to be fully incorporated into its conceptual and political framework? Finally, how can “critical theory” be subsumed into the project of modernity/coloniality and decolonization? Or would this subsumption perhaps suggest the need to abandon the twentieth-century formulations of a critical theory project? Or, would it suggest the exhaustion of the project of modernity?²*

The themes and questions that were proposed were not new, but rather, they continued prior reflections, conversations, and previously published articles. Enrique Dussel and Santiago Castro-Gómez had already introduced the reflection regarding critical theory, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres that of the agency of the *damnés de la terre* (the wretched of the earth), a category that relocates and regionalizes categories framed by other historical experiences (e.g., on the one hand, the

subalterns and the modern subalternity of Antonio Gramsci and the subalterns and the colonial subalternity of Ranajit Guha and the South Asian project and, on the other hand, the category of the multitude reintroduced on behalf of Spinoza by Paolo Virno, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt).³ From this meeting, the collective project was incorporating more and more of the category of decoloniality as a continuation of that of modernity/coloniality. A sequel took place in Berkeley in April of 2005, under the title of “Mapping the decolonial turn,” in an encounter organized by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, where members of the modernity/coloniality project discussed with members of the Caribbean Philosophical Association project entitled “Shifting the Geographies of Reason,” and with a group of philosophers and Latino cultural critics. Via these two meetings, it became clear that while modernity/coloniality are analytical categories of the colonial matrix of power, the category of decoloniality widened the frame and the objectives of the project. However, the same conceptualization of coloniality that is constitutive of modernity is already decolonial thinking in progress.

But the basic formulation of decolonial delinking (e.g., *desprendimiento*) was advanced by Aníbal Quijano in his ground-breaking article “Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad” (1991) [Coloniality and modernity/rationality]. The argument was that, on the one hand, an analytic of the limits of Eurocentrism (as a hegemonic structure of knowledge and beliefs) is needed. But that analytic was considered necessary rather than sufficient. It was necessary, Quijano asserted, “*desprenderse de las vinculaciones de la racionalidad-modernidad con la colonialidad, en primer término, y en definitiva con todo poder no constituido en la decisión libre de gentes libres*” [“It is necessary to extricate oneself from the linkages between rationality/modernity and coloniality, first of all, and definitely from all power which is not constituted by free decisions made by free people”].⁴ “Desprenderse” means epistemic de-linking or, in other words, *epistemic disobedience*. Epistemic disobedience leads us to decolonial options as a set of projects that have in common the effects *experienced* by all the inhabitants of the globe that were at the receiving end of global designs to colonize the economy (appropriation of land and natural resources), authority (management by the Monarch, the State, or the Church), and police and military enforcement (coloniality of power), to colonize knowledges (languages, categories of thoughts, belief systems, etc.) and beings (subjectivity). “Delinking” is then necessary because there is no way out of the coloniality of power from within Western (Greek and Latin) categories of thought. Consequently, de-linking implies epistemic disobedience rather than the constant search for “newness” (e.g., as if Michel Foucault’s concept of racism and power were “better” or more “appropriate” because they are “newer”—that is, post-modern—within the chronological history or archaeology of European ideas). Epistemic disobedience takes us to a different place, to a different “beginning” (not in Greece, but in the responses to the “conquest and colonization” of America and the massive trade of enslaved Africans), to spatial sites of struggles and building rather than to a new temporality within the same space (from Greece, to Rome, to Paris, to London, to Washington DC). I will explore the opening up of these spaces—the spatial paradigmatic breaks of epistemic disobedience—in Waman Puma de Ayala and Ottobah Cugoano.

The basic argument (almost a syllogism) that I will develop here is the following: if coloniality is constitutive of modernity since the salvationist rhetoric of modernity presupposes the

oppressive and condemnatory logic of coloniality (from there come the *dammés* of Fanon), then this oppressive logic produces an energy of discontent, of distrust, of release within those who react against imperial violence. This energy is translated into *decolonial projects that, as a last resort, are also constitutive of modernity*. Modernity is a three-headed hydra, even though it only reveals one head: the rhetoric of salvation and progress. Coloniality, one of whose facets is poverty and the propagation of AIDS in Africa, does not appear in the rhetoric of modernity as its necessary counterpart, but rather as something that emanates from it. For example, the Millennium Plan of the United Nations headed by Kofi Anan, and the Earth Institute at Columbia University headed by Jeffrey Sachs, work in collaboration to end poverty (as the title of Sach's book announces).⁵ But, while they question the unfortunate consequences of modernity, never for a moment is the ideology of modernity or the black pits that hide its rhetoric ever questioned: the consequences of the very nature of the capitalist economy—by which such ideology is supported—in its various facets since the mercantilism of the sixteenth century, free trade of the following centuries, the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, and the technological revolution of the twentieth century. On the other hand, despite all the debate in the media about the war against terrorism, on one side, and all types of uprisings, of protests and social movements, it is never suggested that the logic of coloniality that hides beneath the rhetoric of modernity necessarily generates the irreducible energy of humiliated, vilified, forgotten, or marginalized human beings. Decoloniality is therefore the energy that does not allow the operation of the logic of coloniality nor believes the fairy tales of the rhetoric of modernity. Therefore, decoloniality has a varied range of manifestations—some undesirable, such as those that Washington today describes as “terrorists”—and decolonial thinking is, then, thinking that de-links and opens (de-linking and opening in the title come from here) to the possibilities hidden (colonized and discredited, such as the traditional, barbarian, primitive, mystic, etc.) by the modern rationality that is mounted and enclosed by categories of Greek, Latin, and the six modern imperial European languages.

2. The Epistemic Shift and the Emergence of Decolonial Thinking

My thesis is the following: decolonial thinking emerged at the very foundation of modernity/coloniality, as its counterpoint. And this occurred in the Americas, in Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean thinking. It later continued in Asia and Africa, unrelated to the decolonial thinking of the Americas, but rather as a counterpoint to the re-organization of colonial modernity with the British Empire and French colonialism. A third moment of reformulations occurred in the intersections of the decolonization movements in Asia and Africa, concurrent with the Cold War and the ascending leadership of the United States. From the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, decolonial thinking begins to draw its own genealogy. The purpose here is to contribute to this. In this sense, decolonial thinking is differentiated from post-colonial theory or post-colonial studies in that the genealogy of these are located in French post-structuralism more than in the dense history of planetary decolonial thinking.

The de-colonial epistemic shift is a consequence of the formation and founding of the colonial matrix of power, a point that Aníbal Quijano pioneered in an article in which he summarizes the platform of the modernity/coloniality project:

The critique of the European paradigm of rationality/modernity is indispensable—even more, urgent. But it is doubtful if the criticism consists of a simple negation of all its categories; of the dissolution of reality in discourse; of the pure negation of the idea and the perspective of totality in cognition. It is necessary *to extricate oneself from all the linkages between rationality/modernity and coloniality, first of all, and definitely from all power which is not constituted by free decisions made by free people*. It is the instrumentalisation of the reasons for power, of colonial power in the first place, which produced distorted paradigms of knowledge and spoiled the liberating promises of modernity. The alternative, then, is clear: the destruction of the coloniality of world power.⁶

Even though the meta-reflection about the decolonial epistemic shift is a recent development, epistemic decolonial practice arose “naturally” as a consequence of the formation and implementation of structures of domination—the colonial matrix of power or the coloniality of power—which Aníbal Quijano revealed towards the end of the 80s and continues to work on. Therefore, it is not surprising that the genealogy of decolonial thinking (that is, the thinking that arose from the decolonial turn) is found in the “colony” or in the “colonial period,” in the canonical jargon of the historiography of the Americas. That period of formation in the sixteenth century still does not include the English colonies in either the North or in the Caribbean; nor does it include those of the French. However, the decolonial turn re-appears in Asia and Africa as a consequence of the changes, adaptations, and new modalities of modernity/coloniality generated by the British and French imperial expansion starting from the end of the eighteenth century and continuing through to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

As a result, we find the first manifestations of the decolonial turn in the Hispanic viceroyalties, those of Anáhuac and Tawantinsuyu, in the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. We also find it in the English colonies and metropolis in the eighteenth century. Waman Puma de Ayala is the first case of the decolonial turn in the viceroyalty of Peru (as seen in his work *New Chronicle and Good Government*, sent to Phillip III in 1616); the second case being that of Otabbah Cugoano, an emancipated slave who was able to publish his *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* in London in 1787 (ten years after the Independence of the United States and the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith). Both works are decolonial political treatises that, thanks to the coloniality of knowledge, were not able to share the table of discussion with the likes of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke. To reinscribe them today in the genealogy of decolonial thinking is an urgent project. Without this genealogy, decolonial thinking would be nothing more than a gesture whose logic would depend on some of the various genealogies founded by Greece and Rome, and be re-inscribed in the European imperial modernity after the Renaissance, in some of the six imperial languages already mentioned: Italian, Castilian, and Portuguese during the Renaissance; French, English, German during the Enlightenment. Waman Puma and Cugoano thought and opened a space for the unthinkable in the imperial genealogy of modernity, as much in

their rightist aspects as in their leftist aspects. That is to say, the imperial genealogy of the Christian, Liberal, and Socialist/Marxist modernity.

Waman Puma and Cugoano opened *the doors to an other thinking*, to a border thinking, by way of the experience and memory of Tawantinsuyu in the former; and of the experience and memory of the brutal African slavery of the Atlantic in the latter. None of those who defended the indigenous peoples in the sixteenth century, nor those who protested against slavery in the eighteenth century initiated a mode of thinking from the space and the experiences of the colonial wound infringed upon the Indians and the Blacks, such as the imperial epistemology that classified the diversity of the New World (see Quijano in this same issue).⁷ European political theory (from Niccolò Machiavelli to Carl Schmitt, continuing with Thomas Hobbes and John Locke) was constructed on the basis of the experiences and the memory of kingdoms and principalities (Machiavelli), the formation of free states (Hobbes, Locke), and the crisis of the liberal state (Schmitt).

How does one interpret the metaphor of the previous paragraph, “opened the doors to an other thinking?” As de-linking and opening.⁸ Perhaps with another metaphor that cooperates with the intelligibility of the type of doors which I speak of in this case. It does not deal with the doors that lead towards *the truth (aletheia)*, but rather to other places; to the places of colonial memory; to the footprints of the colonial wound from where decolonial thinking is weaved.⁹ Doors that lead to other types of truths whose basis is not being but the coloniality of being, the colonial wound. Decolonial thinking presupposes, always, the colonial difference (and in certain cases that I am not going to analyze here, the imperial difference). That is, exteriority in the precise sense of the outside (barbaric, colonial) that is constructed by the inside (civilized, imperial); an inside founded upon what Castro-Gómez revealed as the hubris of the starting point,¹⁰ the presumed totality (totalization) of the gnosis of the Occident, we remember once again, in Greek and Latin and the six modern languages of imperial Europe. *The decolonial turn is the opening and the freedom from the thinking and the forms of living (economies-other, political theories-other), the cleansing of the coloniality of being and of knowledge; the de-linking from the spell of the rhetoric of modernity, from its imperial imaginary articulated in the rhetoric of democracy.* In dialogue with imperial critical reason, I would state the following: Martin Heidegger translated *aletheia* (truth) as “The open and free space of the clearing of being.”¹¹ Given that empowerment is the horizon of decolonial thinking (and not the “truth”), *“it is the open and free in the decoloniality of being.”* It does not matter how many critiques we make of imperialism or of empire. These are all shifts that go right around in a circle, biting us in the tail. Critics of the language of empire continue hiding the door, *the opening and the freedom that point towards decolonial thinking.* Metaphors such as “a world in which many worlds fit” and “another world is possible” are metaphors that reveal where this door is.

Decolonial thinking has as its reason of being and its objective the decoloniality of power (that is to say, of the matrix of colonial power). As noted in the previously cited article, Quijano also designed this program:

First of all, *epistemological decolonization is needed to clear the way for new intercultural communication, for an interchange of experiences and meanings, as the basis of another*

rationality which may legitimately pretend to some universality. Nothing is less rational, finally, than the pretension that *the specific cosmic vision of a particular ethnîe* should be taken as universal rationality, even if such an ethnîe is called Western Europe because this is actually to impose universalism on provincialism.¹²

Where, in the daily life of civil/political society, of the state and the market, do the signs of the rhetoric of modernity appear, hiding the logic of coloniality in the totalizing bubble of imperial modernity (or the universalizing cosmivision of a particular ethnic group)? These three spheres (civil/political society, state, market, or if it is preferred, daily life, government regulations, and production, distribution, and consumption of goods) are certainly not autonomous. The state and the market depend on the citizens and the consumers, which form civil and political society. The state and the market also need a segment of non-citizens (“illegal” immigrants and other forms of illegality) and of non-consumers (the growing segment of poverty all over the globe and in each country, particularly those of the ex-Third World and the ex-colonies of the ex-Second World). The citizens need the state and the market needs the consumers. But this is not all, since the state, citizens, consumers, and markets are all related via the national configuration of the state on one level, and they also interact with the market in a conflictive way. And it is here that the limits of the nation-state are opened onto the transnational level. On the level of civil society, the opening to the transnational today is manifested in migrations. Migrations generate a double effect: in the country of departure, and in the country of arrival. The events in France in November of 2005 are a paradigmatic case in the transnational sphere of economic and state consequences in the sphere of civil/political society in industrialized countries (particularly in the G7 in which the economic power is concentrated). At the level of the market (and with that I refer to economic control of urban and rural land; to the exploitation of labor and to production and consumption), the massive burning of automobiles in France reveals a place where the garden of civil society within the bubble of modernity meets with the invisible consequences of coloniality.

Where, then, do the symptoms of the unresolved tension between the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality, constitutive of two heads from the same body, emerge in daily life? Where does decolonial energy emerge and how is it manifested? These uprisings in France reveal a point of articulation between the sphere and the illusion of a world that is similarly thought of and constructed as THE world (rhetoric of modernity) and the consequences underlying this rhetoric (logic of coloniality). Within and from this world, what is apparent is the cruelty, irrationality, youth, and immigration that must be controlled by police and military power, imprisoning and using cases such as these in order to sustain the rhetoric of modernity. The liberal tendency will propose education, the conservative tendency expulsion, and the leftist tendency inclusion. All of these solutions leave intact the logic of coloniality: in the industrialized countries, developing countries, the ex-First World, the G-7—in the long run, the logic of coloniality returns like a boomerang, in a movement that began in the sixteenth century. In developing countries, the ex-Third World, the logic of coloniality continues its climbing march (today, literally, in the zone of the Amazon and in the West of Colombia, where the presence of yellow bulldozers are set up together with the helicopters and the military bases, the inescapable evidence of the march of modernity at all costs).

The boomerang returned from the outside the borders of the G7: the boomerang returned within (the Twin towers in New York, the train in Madrid, the bus and subway in London), but it also returned outside (Moscow, Nalchik, Indonesia, Lebanon). The fact that we condemn the violence of these acts—in which one never knows where the limits are between the agents of civil and political society, the states and the market—does not mean that we should close our eyes and keep on understanding these acts as they are presented to us by the rhetoric of modernity, in the mass media and in the official discourses of the state! In general, the media hides under a pretense of information. In particular, there are corners of the media where the dissenting analyses fight to make themselves heard. But these analyses disagree on the content but not the terms of the conversation. Decolonial thinking does not appear yet, not even in the most extreme leftist publications. And the reason is that decolonial thinking is not leftist, but rather another thing entirely: it is a de-linking from the modern, political episteme articulated as right, center, and left; it is an opening towards another thing, on the march, searching for itself in the difference.

To condemn terrorist violence does not mean that we yield to that thinking. That luxury can be given to persons with particular interests (and in certain cases, with limitations in their understanding of the global situation), such as former President George W. Bush and former Prime Minister Tony Blair. On the other hand, to understand this violence within the interpretive frame common to that of the Cold War (that is, an Occidental liberal, capitalist, and Protestant Christian against an Occidental-Oriental (i.e., Eurasian) Socialist in politics, Communist in economics and Orthodox Christian in religion, makes invisible again the opening towards a freedom that exists elsewhere and not in the confrontation between opposites in the same ideological system: liberalism vs. socialism. Where? For example, in the political decolonization movements that existed approximately between 1947 and 1970. Without a doubt, these movements failed; in a manner similar to the failure of socialism/communism in Russia. But both left footprints. I must mention two exceptions before going forward in order to, in reality, go towards the past.

One of the reasons for the “failure” of the decolonization movements is that, as in socialism/communism, they changed the content but not the terms of the conversation, and maintained the very idea of the state within a global capitalist economy. The appropriation of the state by native elites in Asia and in Africa (as before in the Americas, Haiti being a particular case, which we cannot analyze here, the construction of the colonial states by Creole elites of Iberian descendents in the south and British in the north), remained linked to and dependent from global imperial politics and economy. So much so that in certain cases, the decolonial states followed the same rules of the liberal game, as in India; in other cases, they attempted an approximation towards Marxism, as in the case of Patrice Lumumba (Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo). The enormous contribution of decolonization (or independence), as much in the first wave from 1776 to 1830 in the Americas as in the second in Asia and Africa, has been to plant the flag of decolonial pluri-versality against the flag and the tanks of imperial uni-versality. The limits of all these movements were those of not having found an opening and a freedom of an other thinking: that is, of a decolonization that would carry them, in the Zapatistas’ terms, towards a world that would fit many worlds (e.g., pluri-versality), that would reaffirm the conviction that another world is

possible in the World Social Forum. This includes not only the Zapatistas and the World Social Forum, but also Hugo Chávez. The epistemic-political platform of Hugo Chávez (metaphorically, the Bolivarian revolution) is not the same platform as that used by Fidel Castro (metaphorically, the Socialist revolution). The rules of the game that are being proposed by Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia are different from those of past movements. By 2010, it is clear also that Lula da Silva went engaged in the route of “dewesternization,” joining East Asian countries that, while maintaining capitalist economy, reject to be told by the IMF or by the European Union what is the “correct” course of action. If China had followed the IMF instructions, we can be sure that it would not be what it is now. It was their epistemic disobedience in economic theory first and political theory now that made possible “the miracle.”¹³

What I wish to say is that “that other world” that we begin to imagine cannot merely be liberal, Christian, or Marxist or a mix of the three, which would assure that the modern/colonial bubble, capitalistic and imperial, would triumph and that this triumph would assure what Francis Fukuyama celebrated as the end of history.¹⁴ Thus, I imagine what Fukuyama would think: that the entire population of China, the entire Islamic population from the Middle East to Central Asia and from Central Asia to Indonesia; all the Indigenous peoples of the Americas from Chile to Canada to Australia and New Zealand; the entire African population from south of the Sahara, and including the Diaspora in the Americas; all the Latino/as and other minorities in the USA; alas, that all those millions of peoples that quadruple or quintuple the population of the European Atlantic and North America, would yield at their master’s feet and to a way of life that is a paradise on earth that Western capitalism and the Democratic liberal state—maintained by a television and music industry without comparison; mummified by a technology that creates a new “trick” of fascination and jubilee each minute—is projected as a success without limits, an excellence without borders and as techno-industrial-genetic growth that assures paradise for all mortals. In this panorama, Marxism would continue as the opposition necessary in order to maintain the system. The end of history would thus be the triumph of liberalism, seconded by conservative Christianity against the constant protest of the Marxist Left and the Philosophy of Liberation. Thus it would be, until the end of time. Whether we like it or not, after the end of history came Afghanistan, Iraq, Katrina, and France 2005. Literally, an-other history is coming to the forefront in which planetary and pluri-versal decolonial thinking, growing since the foundational moment—sixteenth century—would lead the way toward a non-capitalist and imperial/colonial future.

Let us rethink from the position that we just arrived at the interpretation to which the decolonizing independence movements were reduced. They were interpreted as processes of imperial liberation: in the nineteenth century, England and France supported the decolonization of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies; in the twentieth century, the United States supported the decolonization of the French and English colonies. In reality, it was a liberation from one empire only to fall into the hands of another, and was supported by independence movements in the name of freedom. The possibility of decolonial thinking was silenced by official interpretations. The complains of Amílcar Cabral, of Aimé Césaire, of Frantz Fanon, were admired in order to be disqualified; just as the achievements of Patrice Lumumba were celebrated after cutting his body

into pieces. To rethink the decolonizing independence movements (in their two historic moments, in America and in Asia-Africa) means to think of them as moments of de-linking and opening within the processes of de-colonizing knowledge and being; moments that were veiled by the interpretative mechanism of the rhetoric of modernity, the concealment of coloniality and, in consequence, the invisibilization of the seed of decolonial thinking. In other words, the decolonizing independence movements were interpreted within the same “revolutionary” logic of modernity, according to the model of the Glorious Revolution in England, the French Revolution, and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. To rethink means to de-link the logic of decolonizing independence movements from the bourgeois and socialist revolutions.

3. Tawantinsuyu, Anáhuac, and the Black Caribbean: The “Greeces” and “Romes” of Decolonial Thinking.

Decolonial thinking arose and continues brewing in a conflictive dialogue with European political theory, for Europe and from there, for the world (e.g., the emergence of neoconservatives in the United States, continuing in America, directly and indirectly, from Schmitt’s theories). Border thinking, which could redundantly be called critique (even though sometimes this is necessary to avoid confusion), sprang forth from this conflictive dialogue after reading Waman Puma and Cugoano. In any case, if we call it critique, it would be in order to differentiate modern/postmodern critical theory (the Frankfurt school and its effects; post-structuralism) from critical decolonial theory, whose gestation is seen in the aforementioned authors. Decolonial thinking, upon de-linking itself from the tyranny of time as the categorical frame of modernity, also escapes the traps of post-coloniality. Post-coloniality (post-colonial theory or critique) was born in the trap of (post) modernity. It is from there that Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida have been the points of support for post-colonial critique (Said, Bhabha, Spivak). Decolonial thinking, on the contrary, builds from other *palenques*.¹⁵ In the case of Waman Puma, from the indigenous languages and memories that had to confront an incipient modernity; in Cugoano from the memories and experiences of slavery that had to confront the settlement of modernity in the economy and in political theory. Today, decolonial thinking, upon establishing itself on the experiences and discourses such as those of Waman Puma and Cugoano in the colonies of the Americas, also de-links (in a friendly manner) from postcolonial critique. We will see, first, what is constitutive of these two pillars of decolonial thinking in the colonization of the Americas and the slave trade. And, later, we will speculate about the consequences of these silences in European political theory and philosophy. I insist on the location, if it is still necessary to remember it, since we have already known for a long time that all thinking is located. However, in spite of knowing this, there is a general tendency to accept thinking that is constructed by European history and that experience is de-localized. These subtle slips can have grave consequences: in the eighteenth century, many Enlightenment intellectuals condemned slavery, but none ceased to think of the Black African as an inferior human being. These prejudices and blind spots continue in the geopolitics of knowledge. Decolonial thinking does a complete turnaround. Not as the complete opposite (e.g., such as

communism in the Soviet Union opposed liberalism in Western Europe and the United States), but rather as a displaced opposition. Displaced in relation to the internal oppositions that, in the history of modernity/coloniality were led by the theology of Bartolomé de las Casas and by the political economy of Karl Marx. That is to say: the entire planet, with the exception of Western Europe and the United States, has one thing in common: they all have to confront invasion by Western Europe and the United States, whether as diplomatic or war-related, beneficial or disastrous. At the same time, Western Europe and the United States have something in common: a history of five-hundred years of invasion, whether diplomatic or armed, of the rest of the world.

Waman Puma and Ottobah Cugoano opened an-other space, the space of decolonial thinking, via the diversity of experiences that were forced upon human beings by European invasions, as in these two cases. I will think of them as the foundations (similar to the Greek foundation of Western thought) of decolonial thinking. These historical foundations (of course, historical, not essential) create the conditions for an epistemic narrative that links up with the genealogy of global decolonial thinking (really an other in relation to the genealogy of postcolonial thought) that is found in Mahatma Gandhi, W.E.B. Dubois, José Carlos Mariátegui, Amílcar Cabral, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Fausto Reinaga, Vine Deloria Jr., Rigoberta Menchú, Gloria Anzaldúa, the Brazilian *Sem Terras* movement (Landless Movement), the Zapatistas in Chiapas, the Indigenous and Afro movements in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia, the World Social Forum and the Social Forum of the Americas. The genealogy of decolonial thinking is planetary and is not limited to individuals, but instead incorporates social movements (which refers to Indigenous and Afro social movements-Taki Onkoy for the former, maroonage for the latter) and the creation of institutions, such as the previously mentioned forums.

3.1

Waman Puma laid out the general thesis of the manuscript that he sent to Phillip III within the same title of the work, *Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno* (*The First New Chronicle and Good Government*). Basically, the thesis is the following: 1) a *new chronicle* is necessary because all of the Castilian chronicles have their limits. The limits that they have, however, are not limits within the same Christian theological paradigm from which they are narrated. For example, the difference that could exist between a Jesuit, a Dominican, or a soldier. Nor is it a question of if the Castilian chronicler was an eyewitness (an eyewitness of what? Of centuries of the history of Aymara or Nahuatl?). There were some internal disputes between those that upheld the privilege of the “I saw” and those that reflected upon the Indies in Castile (the physical place and the Greco-Latin-Christian epistemic place, such as López de Gómara against Bernal Díaz del Castillo). Those limits were not recognized (and perhaps not perceived either) between the Castilians. The one who could see them was Waman Puma. Not only could the Castilians themselves not perceive what Waman Puma perceived, but they were also not in a position to understand what Waman Puma perceived or the argument that he proposed to Phillip III. As a consequence, Waman Puma was “naturally” silenced for four hundred years. And when he was “discovered,” three interpretative trajectories appeared. One was that of the

conservatives that insisted on the Indian's lack of intelligence. The progressive academic position (Franklin Peace in Peru, Rolena Adorno in the USA, Mercedes López Baralt in Puerto Rico, Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, Peru-USA¹⁶) being that which understood the contribution of Waman Puma and his being silenced on the part of peninsular Hispanics and American Creoles in the south. And the third was the incorporation of Waman Puma into Indigenous thought as one of its founders (e.g., as Plato and Aristotle function for European thought). As a result, in the actual debates in the Constitutional Assembly in Bolivia, the Indigenous position privileges the presence and re-inscription of Tawantinsuyu and the legacies of decolonial thinking in the social and economic organization of Bolivia, while the liberal state privileges the continuation of the European model of the State. The Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos y Naciones Indígenas (Amawtay Wasi) in Ecuador created its curriculum and superior teaching objectives in connection with Tawantinsuyu and in Quichua, although they also “use” Castilian;¹⁷ while the State university continues to reproduce the Napoleonic university structure, enclosed within the legacies of Greek, Latin, and the six imperial modern European languages. In this case, Castilian is privileged at the expense of the total decline and omission of Quichua.

The epistemic and decolonizing potential is already present in the “new chronicle.” Waman Puma looked from and understood from the perspective of the colonial subject (the subject formed and created in Tawantinsuyu and in the keswaymara confronted by the sudden presence of Castilians and the world map by Ortelius) and not from that of the modern subject who, in Europe, began to think of itself as a subject during and starting from the Renaissance. He also had access to information to which the Castilians did not: few Castilians mastered Aymara and Quichua (also known as Quechua), and those who were able to understand these languages via their adventures in the Andes still remained far from understanding a language and a subjectivity that would equal their years of schooling in Latin and Greek and from living in the Peninsula. Imagine Waman Puma in Castile telling the histories of the Castilians and their Greco-Latin antiquities? Well, the Castilians would have felt humiliated and would have told this man that, in reality, he did not fully understand what they were about; Latin and Greek and Christianity are not things that one can understand in a few years. As a result, if the native (Andean or Castilian) did *not have privileges regarding the truth of history*, then both have a subjectivity and a singular geo-historical location (e.g., languages, traditions, myths, legends, memories) from which they understand themselves, others, and the world. And this singularity of experience cannot be denied to either one or the other (they were all men in this context), even though Castilians assumed that their local history and epistemology was universal, that is, the only right one to which the rest of people in the planet should bend.

Furthermore, as a colonial subject, Waman Puma was a border subjectivity (double consciousness, mestizo consciousness in today's terminology), a subjectivity in which there could not be any Castilians; not even Juan de Betanzos, who married an Inca princess. Border thinking stems from the imperial/colonial power difference in the formation of subjectivities. It is there that border thinking is not equivalent to a subject that inhabits the imperial house; but lies rather in the formation of subjects that inhabit the house of the colonial wound. The “new chronicle” is precisely that: an account in which Andean cosmology (keswaymara) begins to recover itself within a

conflictive dialogue with Christian cosmology, in all of its Castilian missionary diversity (Dominican, Jesuit, Franciscan), and with the bureaucratic mentality of the organizers of the State under the rule of Phillip III. Waman Puma and the Castilian chroniclers are separated by the epistemic colonial difference, a difference which was invisible to the Castilians, but visible as a great wall for Waman Puma. It is from the confrontation with this wall that Waman Puma writes. The fact that, for the Castilians and for those that see things from the diversity of European cosmology, that wall (the epistemic colonial difference) was invisible, caused Waman Puma's proposal to be incomprehensible and thus silenced.

What did Waman Puma propose? A "good government" based on a "new chronicle." This was natural. The Catalanian historian Josep Fontaná at one moment said that to do so does not take much time; there are as many histories as political projects (heard by those who listened during a conference during which he expressed this; if Fontaná had not stated this, it must be stated). The diversity of the political projects of the Castilians centered around a concept of history whose source was in Greece and Rome (Herodotus, Titus Livius, Tasso). The political project issued by Waman Puma or Taqi Onkoy was not linked to this concept. They were not supported by the memory of Greece and Rome (that is to say, there was no reason for them to seek such support, but not doing so added another element to the inferiority of these Indians that did not know the Bible nor the Greco-Roman thinkers).

How did Waman Puma propose this "good government"? In the first place, he structured the historical account according to a constant and coherent ethical-political critique. He equally criticized the Castilians, the Indians, the Black, the Moors, and the Jews. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the zone of Cuzco was without a doubt a "multicultural" society (as we would say today). But it was not a "multicultural" society within the empire, but rather within the colony. Is there a difference? "Multiculturalism" is "multiculturalism," it does not matter if we argue from an un-incorporated and de-localized epistemology. As a simple correlation, one can think about the "multicultural" society of the Peninsula: Christians, Moors, Jews, and converts that put into movement the three religious categories. On the other hand, in the colonies the pillars were made from Indians, Castilians, and Africans, especially from the end of the sixteenth century and forward. Furthermore, categories of *mestizaje* (racial mixing) and the three "basic" mixes appeared in the colonies as a result of the three pillars of the ethno-racial triangle: mestizo/a mulatto/a, and zambo/a (half Amerindian and half African).

Waman Puma's political theory is articulated via two principles: First, the critique of all identifiable human groups in the colonies, according to the classificatory categories of the moment. Nobody was safe from Waman Puma's critiques. But, what is the criteria that Waman employs in order to establish his criticism? Christianity. How?—asked a student in my third class about Waman Puma—How can it be decolonial thinking if he embraced Christianity? But he did. Let us reflect upon this. At the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was no Diderot, nor Rousseau, nor Kant, nor Spinoza, nor Marx, nor Freud. That is to say, secular criticism did not yet exist. Waman Puma historically and ethically adopted Christianity. This argument has two levels. One is the historical one. Superficially, Waman Puma would be a liar since

there was no Christianity before the arrival of the Castilians. The other level is epistemic-logical. In this reading, Christianity in Europe would not be anything but a regional version of certain principles that affect human conduct and that establish criteria for coexistence, for “good government.” Waman Puma’s argument should be read at this second level and not at the first. To read at the first level is Eurocentric and grants Western European Christianity (that which expanded to America) the possession of universal principles below the name of Christianity. In Waman Puma’s argument, Christianity is equivalent to that of the democracy of the pen and the word of the Zapatistas: democracy is not the private property of Western thought and political theory, but rather one of the principles of coexistence, of good living, that has no owner. Waman Puma seized upon Christian principles in spite of and against harmful Christians, just as the Zapatistas seize upon democracy in spite of and against a Mexican government that is complicit with the commercialization of democracy in Washington’s market. This analogy has a dual function: pedagogically, to familiarize us with Waman Puma’s situation of four and a half centuries ago; and politically and epistemically, to remind us of the continuity and the various manifestations of decolonial thinking throughout the centuries.

Second, once having carried out his critique of all human groups and also having identified the virtues of all human groups, Waman Puma proposes a “good government” composed of righteous individuals, regardless of their identity as Indian, Castilian, Moorish, or Black African. In other words, the “good government” is proposed as a space of coexistence and of the overcoming of colonial difference. The two powerful groups—politically and demographically—were without a doubt the Castilians and the Indians, and it is a logical possibility that Waman Puma does not hide his identification with the Indians, even though he could have opted to identify himself with the Castilians, assuming that subjectively he could never be a Castilian even though legally he was. As a result of the geo and bio-political shift that arises from decolonial thinking and counters the theopolitical shift (de-incorporated and de-localized or, better yet, localized in the non-place that separates God and its representatives on earth), “the starting point of the epistemology” is congruent with decolonial thinking: the starting point of epistemology founds and sustains imperial reason (theo- and geo-politically).¹⁸

Waman Puma constructed the idea of “good government” within Tawantinsuyu. Contrary to the Occidental modern utopias that Thomas More initiated a century before, Waman Puma’s utopia is not located in a non-place of time (Occidental modern utopias being settled within the non-space of a secular future), but rather within the reinscription of a space displaced by the Castilians. To be honest, what Waman Puma proposes is a “topia” of border reason and of decolonial thinking. This is border reason because his “topia” is structured within Tawantinsuyu. As it is known, Tawantinsuyu approximately means the “four sides or corners of the world.” For the person that is not familiar with the diagram of Tawantinsuyu, imagine the diagonals of a square (without the four sides, only the diagonals). The four spaces formed by the diagonals are its own four spaces, significant spaces within the structure and the social hierarchies. The center, the Incan period, was occupied by Cuzco, and in the zones and towns of the Incan period, all those that were organized within Tawantinsuyu occupied the town in question. It is within this schema that Waman Puma

situated Phillip III in the center of Tawantinsuyu, since it was demonstrated by the Pontifical World, and Phillip III occupied the throne as much in Castile as in Tawantinsuyu. Later, Waman Puma distributed the four spaces to each of the aforementioned groups. In one he situated the Indians, in another the Castilians, in another the Moors, and in yet another the Africans. As a result of Tawantinsuyu being a hierarchical structure, Waman Puma maintained that hierarchy via the distribution of the four spaces (details are not found here since our objective is to locate the emergence of colonial thinking and not to enter into an analysis of its organization). However, the “good government” was, on the one hand, proposed as a space of co-existence with Castile, and on the other hand, as one of co-existence between various communities (or nations) within Tawantinsuyu. That is to say, trans-national co-existence and inter-cultural co-existence. Inter-cultural and not multi-cultural, because in Waman Puma’s proposal, Phillip III is not the sovereign of a Hispanic political structure within Tawantinsuyu, but is rather the sovereign *of* Tawantinsuyu. Phillip III thus remains un-located within his memory, tradition, language formation, and political thinking.

This political theory of Waman Puma is a product of critical border thinking, and therefore of decolonial thinking.¹⁹ The last, most extensive section of “good government” is dedicated to the description of “labors and days” within Tawantinsuyu. The rhythm of the seasons, the coexistence in and with the natural world (the sun, moon, earth, fertility, water, *runas* [e.g., living beings who, in the West, are described as “human beings”]) coexist in harmony with “good living.” This harmony is significant at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the formation of capitalism was already demonstrating a disregard for disposable human lives (fundamentally, Indians and Blacks), subjected to the exploitation of labor, expropriated from their dwellings (the land in which they *were*), and their dwellings transformed into land as individual property. It was a moment in which the Europeans, in their economic projects, did not contemplate the harmony of life and the movement of the seasons, but rather concentrated all their efforts on the growth of production (gold, silver, coffee, sugar, etc.), no matter who died. The political theory of Waman Puma opposes European political theory; it is an alternative TO the monarchic regime and the capitalistic market. The “triumph” (up until today) of the imperial model relegated the model of Tawantinsuyu to a world of fantasies of the disoriented and uneducated Indian: an exemplary case of the colonization of being by means of the colonization of knowledge, to which Waman Puma responds with a (historically) fundamental project of decolonial thinking.

3.2

If Waman Puma is a gateway to the darker side of the Renaissance, Ottobah Cugoano is a gateway to the darker side of the Enlightenment. Cugoano is the lesser-known of four ex-slaves (Egnatius Sancho, John Marrant, and Loudah Equiano) that, in England during the second half of the eighteenth century, successfully arrived at the written page. Cugoano’s arrival in England is estimated to be around 1770. He would have been a slave in the English Caribbean plantations of Alexander Campbell. Born in 1757 in what is modern day Ghana, he was captured by Africans

themselves when he was approximately thirteen years old, and he was sold as a slave to European merchants. Cugoano arrived in England a little after what they would proclaim as the “Mansfield decision” of 1772 in favor of a runaway slave in the colonies. This decision, which by the way was accepted with great enthusiasm by some twenty thousand Africans in England, was of great importance in the process of the declaration of the illegality of slavery.²⁰

Two centuries of the commercialization of slaves and the exploitation of labor on the island plantations preceded the moment in which Cugoano published his decolonial political treatise in London in 1787. The title of the treatise is the following: *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Humbly Submitted to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, by Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa* (1787). The mastery that Cugoano has of the English language is comparable to that of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s mastery of the Castilian language, and the two represent similar cases of an Indian and an ex-African slave, in Castile and in England, respectively. Waman Puma, in contrast, did not have contact with the imperial space and his grammatical deficiency in Castilian is not an obstacle to the exposition of his ideas and arguments, accompanied by diagrams of maps, characters, and situations. To my knowledge, the political strength of both treatises has no parallel either in the Americas or in other places on the planet. English and French colonization had not yet begun.

Similar to Waman Puma, Cugoano does not have any other judgmental criterion except for Christianity. Enlightenment thinking, of which Cugoano is a part, had recently begun to be configured. The theo-politics of knowledge was still a frame of reference, against which the ego-politics of Enlightenment thinking reclaimed its right of existence. As with Waman Puma, Cugoano took the moral principles of Christianity to the letter, and from there projected his critiques of the excesses of the English Christians via the brutal exploitation of slaves. An example:

The history of those dreadfully perfidious methods of forming settlements, and acquiring riches and territory, would make humanity tremble, and even recoil, at the enjoyment of such acquisitions and become reverted into rage and indignation at such horrible injustice and barbarous cruelty. “It is said by the Peruvians, that their Incas, or Monarchs, had uniformly extended their power with attention to the good of their subjects, that they might diffuse the blessings of civilizations, and the knowledge of the arts which they possessed among the people that embraced their protection; and during a succession of twelve monarchs, not one had deviated from this beneficent character.” Their sensibility of such nobleness of character would give them the most poignant dislike to their new terrible invaders that had desolated and laid waste their country.²¹

I am interested in highlighting several elements of this paragraph: the manipulation of the language, as I have previously stated; the knowledge of and solidarity with the Indigenous population under Castilian colonization, which he equally looks at as the de-humanization of both, the Indian and the Black; and the direct and brutal critique of a Black slave toward the White merchants and exploiters (as direct and brutal as that of Waman Puma). These critiques (by Cugoano and Waman Puma) are not situated on the same level (e.g., paradigm) as the critique of de las Casas towards his own

countrymen. The critique of Cugoano and Waman Puma is located in *another space*, the space of the decolonial turn. In this sense, the paragraph is one of many similar others in which the critique is directed to the forms of government and the imperial community formed by Spain, Portugal, France and England. For Cugoano, the distinction between imperial nations makes no sense. The *colonial difference* does not stop at inter-imperial borders. For imperial difference, in contrast, national formation is at stake, and it has been since 1558, when Elizabeth I of England weaved into the British Empire the Black Legend against the abuses of the Castilians in America, thanks to the information and critique provided by Bartolomé de las Casas. Cugoano creates an echo of this, but at the same time chastises the English for their brutalities committed against the Black slaves, similar to or worse than those committed—two hundred years earlier—by the Castilians against the Indians. However, Elizabeth I did not make similar commentaries, criticizing the same brutality at the hands of the English as those that she condemned by the Castilians. Here we see the two sides of the same coin face-to-face, entangled and differentiated by the colonial differential of power. Cugoano's critique is located and thought from the colonial difference. The Black legend is located and thought from the imperial difference. Cugoano is neither deceived nor distracted with imperial polemics. For an ex-slave, all cats are black:

That base traffic of kidnapping and stealing men was begun by the Portuguese on the coast of Africa [...] The Spaniards followed their infamous example, and the African slave-trade was thought most advantageous for them, to enable themselves to live in ease and affluence by the cruel subjection and slavery of others. The French and English, and some other nations in Europe, as they founded settlements and colonies in the West Indies, or in America, went on in the same manner, and joined hand in hand with the Portuguese and Spaniards, to rob and pillage Africa as well as to waste and desolate inhabitants of the Western continents. (72)

The transformation of *human life into disposable material* is something more than the “bare life” that Giorgio Agamben discovered in the Holocaust.²² Cugoano contributed to the initiation of a critique that is reproduced today, for example, in the “necropolitics” of Achille Mbembe, who, departing from the “bio-politics” of Michel Foucault, displaces it into the epistemological space with the distancing and the opening of decolonial thinking.²³ Imperial/national divisions remain bare when observed from the consequences of the logic of coloniality: imperial conflicts over human goods. Agamben's reflections are important, but they are late, regional, and limited. Starting off from the refugees of the Second World War and the Holocaust means to ignore four-hundred years of history in which the refugees and the Holocaust are certain moments in a much longer chain of the disposability of human life and the violation of human dignity (not only of human rights). This was precisely one of Cugoano's strongest arguments, as we will see in a moment. The genealogy of decolonial thinking is un-known in the genealogy of European thinking. As such, Agamben returns to Hannah Arendt in the first case; to Heidegger in the second, and by the way ignores, is unaware of, or simply does not touch his subjectivity, the thinking of Aimé Césaire, canonical in the genealogy of decolonial thinking. In 1955, Césaire could see what perhaps few (if any) European

thinkers could “see,” so dispossessed that they were and are in the archive constructed by the colonial world. Césaire observed:

Yes, it would be worth while to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his demon, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not the crime in itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man as such, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the “coolies” of India, and the “niggers” of Africa.²⁴

Thus, the “bare life” that Agamben “discovered” and which enthused the White mentality of Occidental Europe and the United States, comes much later than what the Indians and the Blacks had already known since the sixteenth century: that the disposability of lives of White peoples was a novelty for Europe and Anglo-America. This novelty is also a part of the “White Man’s” blindness; blindness within the discovery of the disposability of human life that now allows for the construction of critical arguments based on the humiliation of the White man. Decolonial thinking, which also pays attention to the horrors of the Holocaust, links them to their historical gestation in the sixteenth century in their parallel histories in Europe, to the exploitation of Indians and Blacks in America and Africa, and also to Asian populations.

At arriving at this point, it is convenient for us to return to the location not only of geo-historical location of the knowing subject, but also to the epistemological (and the correlation between both) correlation with the sensing (aesthesis) body. That is, the geo- and body-politics of knowing and understanding. In the history of ideas, of philosophy, of science **in** Europe and **from** Europe, this matter is taken for granted because it was assumed that what was important was *that which and about which one thinks, and not from where and starting from where one thinks*. Let us look at an example. With the glorious prose that reminds us of Wagner’s music, Jean-Jacques Rousseau announced his epistemic, ethical, and political location—in the *Discourse sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755)—in this manner: “As my subject interests making in general, I shall endeavor to make use of a style adapted to all nations, or rather, forgetting time and place, to attend only to men to whom I am speaking. I shall suppose myself in the Lyceum of Athens, repeating the lessons of my masters, with Plato and Xenocrates for judges, and the whole human race for audience.”²⁵ Waman Puma and Ottobah Cugoano could only with great difficulty imagine the Lyceum in Athens as a scenario for their words; neither would they forget time and space. I can imagine—that their subject is of interest to humanity in general, since it concerns a civilization that has come to dispose of human lives. For Ottobah Cugoano this understanding was clear in his “evilness” of slavery. For Waman Puma, it was perhaps not as clear yet, although he has witnessed a significant amount of atrocities. But, their experience has already been articulated by their dwelling in the colonial difference. Rousseau wrote a paragraph that reveals the fascination of the desire and will to speak

for the human race, in a moment in which the massive transformation of human life into disposable material (that for the first time began to occur in the history of the “human race” in the sixteenth century) already carried with it two centuries of history. As Cugoano stated some twenty years later, and Waman Puma some two centuries before, Rousseau was worried about inequality. Observing the scene in Europe, in its present and in its history (but not attentive to the inequalities and the wound inflicted by the colonial difference), Rousseau observed:

I conceive that there are two kinds of inequality among the human species: one, which I call *natural or physical*, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind or of the soul; and another, which may be called *moral or political inequality* because it depends on a kind of convention, and is established, or at least authorized by the consent of men. This latter consist of the different privileges which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others; such as that of being more rich, more honored, more powerful, or even in a position to exact obedience. (186)

It makes no sense for Rousseau to ask himself about the source of *natural inequality* since that question, according to him, had already been responded to in the simple definition of the word: inequality is natural, and therefore there is nothing more to ask. It makes even less sense to ask himself, Rousseau continues, if there is any *essential* connection between the two inequalities because to ask this question would signify asking, according to Rousseau, if those that are in power and in the position to mandate are necessarily better than those that obey. This type of question, Rousseau concludes, would be appropriate in a discussion held in an interview between slaves and their masters; but it would be totally inappropriate and incorrect if such questions were directed towards free men and men of reason in search of the truth (186). Rousseau, of course, condemned slavery. But from such condemnation during his time (similar to many other men of the eighteenth century, including Kant), it was inconceivable to accept more than the equality of African Blacks. Natural inequality is a principle sufficient enough to distinguish the injustice of slavery and the inferiority of the African Black with the same stroke of a pen.

Ottobah Cugoano performed a 180 degree shift from the debates about the rights and natural law that White men and women were occupied with during the eighteenth century. While Waman Puma responded to the imperial debate waged by the pen of a pleiad of missionaries and men of the Arts (de las Casas, Acosta, Murúa, who are mentioned at the conclusion of the *New Chronicle...*), Cugoano responded to popular ideas during the Enlightenment and at a moment of intellectual development in England, Germany, and France. Within the list of names that dominated the intellectual, philosophical, and political terrain, one finds the names of George Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1734), David Hume's *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), and Ephraim Lessing's *Education of Humankind* (1780). The political treatise is, at the same time, economic. The economic analyses of the relationships between slavery and the market that Cugoano offers is also a 180 degree shift from the treatise of Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, published some ten years prior to that of Cugoano. Furthermore,

having titled his discourse *Thoughts and Sentiments*, Cugoano directly alludes to Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). In short, Cugoano's treatise is a brutal ethical critique of the imperial predators and robbers of men (expressions that appear repeatedly in his discourse) in the name of Christian ethics; and an analysis of the economy and of slavery, constantly insisting on the disposability of the lives of Blacks ("our lives are accounted of no value"). Cugoano concludes his discourse with concrete proposal to end slavery, compensate the African nations for the damages inflicted upon them, and legalize labor. Independent of the fact that these questions that Cugoano poses are still open today, what is important for my argument is the identification of the decolonial turn. Anthony Bogues (without using the expression decolonial turn) marks, without vacillation, Cugoano's de-linking and opening in the field of political theory. In relation to the debates and topics of discussion between philosophers and European political authors from England, Germany and France, Bogues states: "Cugoano's political discourse suggests the existence of a different stream that articulates notions about natural liberty and natural rights. For Cugoano, the fundamental natural right was the right of the individual to be free and equal, not in relationship to government but in relationship to other human beings."²⁶ Bogues adds that Cugoano's argument, which demands the equality of Blacks in a world in which political theory and the concept of humanity are in the hands of the Whites (e.g., natural inequality), *complements the decolonial turn by proposing that human beings (modeled after the experience of Black-African slavery) are equal and free vis-à-vis other human beings and not the state*. Rousseau's argument assures, in contrast, equality in opposition to the state and maintains the natural inequality between men. This is a shift that separates Cugoano from the rest of the White abolitionists who argue against slavery but maintain the inferiority of the Negro. As such: "When we add these things together, we cannot escape the conclusion that there existed in Cugoano's slave narrative a political counternarrative that moved in a *different direction* than the political horizons of the Enlightenment" (45). The *different* direction taken by Cugoano on the political horizon of the Enlightenment, is precisely what I attempt to describe here as the decolonial turn and the germination of decolonial thinking in the very foundation of the modern/colonial world, and therefore, of capitalism as we understand it today. The strength and energy of decolonial thinking was always "there," in the exterior; in that which was denied by imperial/colonial thinking.

4. By Way of Conclusion.

We could continue the argument by including Mahatma Gandhi among the figures who are central to the decolonial turn. To mention him here is important for the following reason: Cugoano and Gandhi are united, at distinct points on the planet, by the British Empire. Waman Puma and Cugoano are united by the continuity of Western European imperialisms in America. We could continue with Frantz Fanon, and connect him to Cugoano through the imperial wound of the Africans and also through the imperial complicity between Spain, England, and France (in spite of their imperial conflicts). With this, I would like to highlight the following: the genealogy of

decolonial thinking is structured in the planetary space of colonial/imperial expansion, contrary to the genealogy of European modernity that is structured in the temporal trajectory of a reduced space, from Greece to Rome, to Western Europe and to the United States. The common element between Waman Puma, Cugoano, Gandhi, and Fanon is the wound inflicted by the colonial difference (e.g., the colonial wound).

The decolonial turn (i.e., the epistemic disobedience) of Waman Puma and of Cugoano took place on the horizon of monarchies, prior to the emergence of the modern (bourgeois) state and the emergence of the three secular imperial ideologies: conservatism, liberalism, and socialism/Marxism.²⁷ They opened up the decolonial option, and on the horizon of both, theology was the queen of knowledge. A second part of this manifesto (in progress) explores the decolonial horizon (Gandhi, Cabral, Du Bois, Fanon, Anzaldúa, Indigenous social movements in Bolivia and Ecuador, Afro social movements in Colombia and Ecuador, the World Social Forum and the Social Forum of the Americas, etc.) on the horizon of the imperial modern state.

The genealogy of decolonial thinking is pluri-versal (not uni-versal). As such, each knot on the web of this genealogy is a point of de-linking and opening that re-introduces languages, memories, economies, social organizations, and at least double subjectivities: the splendor and the miseries of the imperial legacy, and the indelible footprint of what existed that has been converted into the colonial wound; in the degradation of humanity, in the inferiority of the pagans, the primitives, the under-developed, the non-democratic.

Our present situation asks, demands a decolonial thinking that articulates genealogies scattered throughout the planet and offers “other” economic, political, social, subjective modalities. This process is in progress and we see it every day, in spite of the bad news that arrives from the Middle East, from Indonesia, from Katrina, and from the interior war in Washington.

Notes

¹ Gordon, Lewis R. "Fanon and Development: A Philosophical Look." *Africa Development/Afrique Development* XXIX, no. 1 (2004): 94.

² We insist on the geo-politics of knowing or of knowledge: Horkheimer and the Frankfurt School are able to be read in distinct manners, not in the sense of the hermeneutical plurality of each reading, but rather, as I have just stated, in the geo-political distribution of intellectual labor by way of the colonial difference (and also of the imperial difference, see below). Geopolitically, a type of interpretation that would correspond to the place occupied by the Frankfurt School in the genealogy of European thinking was articulated by Enrique Dussel in his *La filosofía de la liberación* (1977). The first chapter was entitled “Geopolitics and Philosophy.” Other readings would be oriented toward and via the epistemic colonial difference in the pluri-versal genealogy of decolonial thinking (as I present here). Of course, another phenomenon can also occur: that the Frankfurt School (and its equivalents) be employed by local *intelligentsia* in the ex-colonies as a sign of (Eurocentric) distinction from sectors of the population that are supposedly behind with respect to the latest ideas/goods that come from factories in Europe or the United States. In this last topic there is a complex range of possibilities.

³ The concept of the “damnés de la terre” refers to Fanon’s conceptualization in *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002).

-
- ⁴ Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad" *Perú indígena* 29 (1991): 19. The English translation is taken from Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21.2 (2007): 177. Emphasis in bold and italics mine.
- ⁵ Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty. Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005) and Kofi Anan, Plan of the Millennium, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/msummit/millenni/undocindex.htm>. The imperial/colonial project, articulated in modernity/coloniality, covers all sides. The Millennium Plan invites us to remain seated and observe how the great thinkers of the imperial projects are conscious of the imperial injustices. As Bartolomé de las Casas did in the past, the Waman Pumas of today are invited to subordinate themselves to the good methods of imperial critical reasoning.
- ⁶ Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," 177, my italics.
- ⁷ See, for instance, Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3 (2000): 533-80.
- ⁸ I refer to the notion of "epistemic de-linking" in the previous citation by Quijano. In the sense of the colonial difference, epistemic de-linking differs from the use that Samir Amin gave to the term "la déconnection" (translated to English as "de-linking"). Amin has maintained himself in the bubble of the modern episteme and his de-linking gave rise to a change in content, not in the terms of the conversation. "Epistemic de-linking," in contrast, signals the moment of fracture and breakage, a moment of opening. In this sense, "opening" also differs in the sense of the concept in Agamben's: *L'aperto: L'uomo e l'animale* (Torino, Italy: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002), translated to English as "the open." In decolonial thinking the opening is precisely the de-linking from naturalized dichotomies such as "man and animal." Such a distinction would be unthinkable as a starting point neither for Waman Puma nor for Ottabah Cugoano. See the following sections.
- ⁹ The concept of *colonial wound* comes from Gloria Anzaldúa, in one of her much celebrated statements: "The U.S. Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds"--*Borderlands/La Frontera*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 25. Obviously, the expression has an exchange value in all of those situations in which Europe and the United States inflicted and continue to inflict the friction of the civilizing, developing, and modernizing mission.
- ¹⁰ Santiago Castro-Gómez, *La hybris del punto cero: ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)* (Bogota: Instituto Pensar, Universidad Javeriana, 2005).
- ¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 95.
- ¹² Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," 177, my italics.
- ¹³ More detail about this on my *The Darker Side of Western Modernity. Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham: Duke U.P., 2011.
- ¹⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Bard, Avon Books, 1992).
- ¹⁵ Using the term *palenque* allows one to take into consideration the Afro and Indigenous histories of maroon and independence movements and communities, respectively.
- ¹⁶ See <http://www.ensayistas.org/filosofos/peru/guaman/introd.htm>.
- ¹⁷ The political motivation and educational philosophy of the conceptualization of curriculum and the structure of cycles of learning (and of unlearning what has been learned in the process of the coloniality of knowledge in order to decolonize knowledge and being), are explained in detail in *Sumak Yachaypi, Alli Kawsaypipash Hachakuna (Aprender en la Sabiduría y el Buen Vivir)* (Quito: Universidad Intercultural Amawta Wasi-UNESCO, 2004). Part of the process of gestation can be seen in *Boletín Icci-Rimai*, del 2001, <http://icci.nativeweb.org/boletin/33/>
- ¹⁸ Ego-politics displaced but never eliminated theo-politics. Both are reunited, among many other places, in the political thinking of Carl Schmitt, especially in *Politische Theologie. Vier Kapitel, Zur Lehre von der Souveränität* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2009 [1922]).
- ¹⁹ During meetings of the doctoral program in Cultural Studies at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in Quito (July 2005), in one of our classes with Catherine Walsh, we discussed the critique of Waman Puma towards the Africans.

Edison León called into question the possibility of thinking of Waman Puma as decolonial, precisely due to his critiques. At that moment my reading of Waman Puma was a little less familiar, but I thought of taking it up again precisely for a seminar that I would give in the Fall of 2005 at Duke. Thus, re-reading Waman Puma revealed aspects (as always in the reading of this complex and rich text), to which I had not previously paid attention. What I support here are portions of the conversations with Catherine and Edison and from my re-reading, posterior to the conversations, of this subject.

²⁰About this point, for example see Emma L. Powers, “The Newsworthy Somerset Case: Repercussions in Virginia,” *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter* 23.3 (2002): n.p. Available in the Historical Research section of the Colonial Williamsburg website.

²¹Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1999), 65. All of the citations of Cugoano come from this edition. The quoted paragraph within the quotation comes from *History of America* (1777) by William Robertson (1721-1793).

²²Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

²³Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

²⁴Aimé Césaire, *Discourse sur le colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review, 2000), 36. The first complete Castilian translation is *Discurso sobre el colonialismo* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2006).

²⁵The citation is taken from Peter Gay, ed., *The Enlightenment. A Comprehensive Anthology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 188. All of the citations of Rousseau are taken from this edition.

²⁶The citations of Anthony Bogues are taken from “The Political Thought of Quobna Cugoano: Radicalized Natural Liberty,” *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 45.

²⁷Immanuel Wallerstein, *After Liberalism* (New York: New Press, 1995).

Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. *L'aperto: L'uomo e l'animale*. Torino, Italy: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002.
- _____. *Homo Sacer*. Trans. Heller-Roazen, Daniel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Borderlands/La frontera*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.
- Bogues, Anthony. "The Political Thought of Quobna Cugoano." *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 25-46.
- Castro-Gómez, Santiago. *La hybris del punto cero: ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)*. Bogota: Instituto Pensar, Universidad Javeriana, 2005.
- Césaire, Aimé. *Discurso sobre el colonialismo*. Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2006.
- _____. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Trans. Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000.
- Cugoano, Quobna Ottobah. *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Les damnés de la terre*. Paris: La Découverte, 2002.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Bard, Avon Books, 1992.
- Gay, Peter, ed. *The Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973.
- Gordon, Lewis R. "Fanon and Development: A Philosophical Look." *Africa Development/Afrique Development* XXIX 1 (2004): 71-94.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Parmenides*. Trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Mignolo, Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Powers, Emma L. "The Newsworthy Somerset Case: Repercussions in Virginia." *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter* 23 3 (2002): n.p.
- Quijano, Aníbal. "Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad." *Perú indígena* 29 (1991): 11-20.
- _____. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies* 21 2-3 (2007): 168-78.
- _____. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." *Nepantla: Views from South* 1 3 (2000): 533-80.
- Sachs, Jeffrey D. *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for our Time*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2005.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Politische Theologie. Vier Kapitel, Zur Lehre von der Souveränität*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2009 [1922].
- Sumak Yachaypi, Alli Kawsaypipash Hachakuna (Aprender en la Sabiduría y el Buen Vivir)*. Quito: Universidad Intercultural Amawta Wasi-UNESCO, 2004.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. *After Liberalism*. New York: New Press, 1995.