

## Beyond Eurocentrism:

## The World-System and the Limits of Modernity

Two opposing paradigms, the Eurocentric and the planetary, characterize the question of modernity. The first, from a Eurocentric horizon, formulates the phenomenon of modernity as exclusively European, developing in the Middle Ages and later on diffusing itself throughout the entire world.<sup>1</sup> Weber situates the “problem of universal history” with the question: “to what combination of circumstances should the fact be attributed that in *Western civilization*, and in Western civilization only,<sup>2</sup> cultural phenomena have appeared which (as *we*<sup>3</sup> like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and value.”<sup>4</sup> According to this paradigm, Europe had exceptional internal characteristics that allowed it to supersede, through its rationality, all other cultures. Philosophically, no one expresses this thesis of modernity better than Hegel: “The German Spirit is the Spirit of the new World. Its aim is the realization of absolute Truth as the unlimited self-determination (*Selbstbestimmung*) of Freedom—that Freedom which has its own absolute form itself as its purport.”<sup>5</sup> For Hegel, the Spirit of Europe (the German spirit) is the absolute Truth that determines or realizes itself through itself without owing anything to anyone. This thesis, which I call the Eurocentric paradigm (in opposition to the world paradigm), has imposed itself not only in Europe

and the United States, but in the entire intellectual realm of the world periphery. The chronology of this position has its geopolitics: modern subjectivity develops spatially, according to the Eurocentric paradigm, from the Italy of the Renaissance to the Germany of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, to the France of the French Revolution;<sup>6</sup> throughout, Europe is central. The “pseudo-scientific” division of history into Antiquity (as antecedent), the Medieval Age (preparatory epoch), and the Modern Age (Europe) is an ideological and deforming organization of history; it has already created ethical problems with respect to other cultures. Philosophy, especially ethics, needs to break with this reductive horizon in order to open itself to the “world,” the “planetary” sphere.

The second paradigm, from a planetary horizon, conceptualizes modernity as the culture of the center of the “world-system,”<sup>7</sup> of the first world-system, through the incorporation of Amerindia,<sup>8</sup> and as a result of the *management* of this “centrality.” In other words, European modernity is not an *independent*, autopoietic, self-referential system, but instead is *part* of a world-system: in fact, its *center*. Modernity, then, is planetary. It begins with the *simultaneous* constitution of Spain with reference to its “periphery” (first of all, properly speaking, Amerindia: the Caribbean, Mexico, and Peru). Simultaneously, Europe (as a diachrony that has its premodern antecedents: the Renaissance Italian cities and Portugal) will go on to *constitute* itself as center (as a super-hegemonic power that from Spain passes to Holland, England, and France) over a growing periphery (Amerindia, Brazil, slave-supplying coasts of Africa, and Poland in the sixteenth century;<sup>9</sup> the consolidation of Latin Amerindia, North America, the Caribbean, and eastern Europe in the seventeenth century;<sup>10</sup> the Ottoman Empire, Russia, some Indian reigns, the Asian subcontinent, and the first penetration into continental Africa in the first half of the nineteenth century<sup>11</sup>). Modernity, then, in this planetary paradigm is a phenomenon proper to the system “center-periphery.” Modernity is not a phenomenon of Europe as an independent system, but of Europe as center. This simple hypothesis absolutely changes the concept of modernity, its origin, development, and contemporary crisis, and thus, also the content of the belated modernity or postmodernity.

In addition, we submit a thesis that qualifies the previous one: the centrality of Europe in the world-system is not the sole fruit of an internal superiority accumulated during the European Middle Ages over against other

cultures. Instead, it is also the fundamental effect of the simple fact of the discovery, conquest, colonization, and integration (subsumption) of Amerindia. This simple fact will give Europe the determining *comparative advantage* over the Ottoman-Muslim world, India, and China. Modernity is the fruit of these events, not their cause. Subsequently, the *management* of the centrality of the world-system will allow Europe to transform itself in something like the “reflexive consciousness” (modern philosophy) of world history; the many values, discoveries, inventions, technologies, political institutions, and so on that are attributed to it as its exclusive production are in reality effects of the *displacement* of the ancient center of the third stage of the interregional system toward Europe (following the diachronic path of the Renaissance to Portugal as antecedent, to Spain, and later to Flanders, England, etc.). Even capitalism is the fruit and not the cause of this juncture of European planetarization and centralization within the world-system. The human experience of 4,500 years of political, economic, technological, and cultural relations of the interregional system will now be hegemonized by a Europe—which had never been the “center,” and which, during its best times, became only a “periphery.” The slippage takes place from central Asia to the eastern, and Italian, Mediterranean; more precisely, toward Genoa, toward the Atlantic. With Portugal as an antecedent, modernity begins properly in Spain, and in the face of the impossibility of China’s even attempting to arrive through the Orient (the Pacific) to Europe, and thus to integrate Amerindia as its periphery. Let us look at the premises of the argument.

#### Expansion of the World-System

Let us consider the movement of world history beginning with the rupture, due to the Ottoman-Muslim presence, of the third stage of the interregional system, which in its classic epoch had Baghdad as its center (from A.D. 762 to 1258), and the transformation of the interregional system into the first *world-system*, whose center would situate itself up to today in the North Atlantic. This change in the center of the system will have its prehistory in the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries and before the collapse of the third stage of the interregional system; the new, fourth stage of the world-system *originates* properly in 1492. Everything that had taken place in Europe was still a moment of *another* stage of the interregional system. Which state



originated the deployment of the world-system? The answer is the state that will annex Amerindia, and from it, as a springboard or “comparative advantage,” will go on to achieve superiority by the end of the fifteenth century. The candidates are China, Portugal, and Spain.

## 1

Why not China? The reason is very simple. It was impossible for China<sup>12</sup> to discover Amerindia (a nontechnological impossibility; that is to say, empirically, but not historically or geopolitically, possible), for it had no interest in attempting to expand into Europe. For China the center of the interregional system (in its third stage) was in the East, either in Central Asia or in India. To go toward completely “peripheral” Europe? This could not be an objective of Chinese foreign commerce.

In fact, Cheng Ho, between 1405 and 1433, was able to make seven successful voyages to the center of the system (he sailed to Sri Lanka, India, and even eastern Africa<sup>13</sup>). In 1479, Wang Chin attempted the same, but the archives of his predecessor were denied to him. China closed in upon itself, and did not attempt to do what, at precisely that very moment, Portugal was undertaking. Its internal politics—perhaps the rivalry of the mandarins against the new power of the merchant eunuchs<sup>14</sup>—prevented its exit into foreign commerce. Had China undertaken it, however, it would have had to depart *toward the west* to reach the center of the system. The Chinese went east and arrived at Alaska and, it appears, even as far as California, and still to its south, but when they did not find anything that would be of interest to its merchants, and as they went further away from the center of the interregional system, they most probably abandoned the enterprise. China was not Spain for geopolitical reasons.

However, to refute the old “evidence,” which has been reinforced since Weber, we still need to ask: Was China culturally *inferior* to Europe in the fifteenth century? According to those who have studied the question,<sup>15</sup> China was neither technologically,<sup>16</sup> nor politically,<sup>17</sup> nor commercially, nor even because of its humanism,<sup>18</sup> inferior. There is a certain mirage in this question. The histories of Western science and technology do not take strictly into account that the European “jump,” the technological *boom* begins to take place in the sixteenth century, but that it is only in the seventeenth century that it shows its multiplying effects. The *formulation* of the modern technological paradigm (in the eighteenth century) is confused with the origin of

modernity, without leaving time for the crisis of the medieval model. No notice is taken that the scientific revolution—discussed by Kuhn—departs from a modernity that has already begun, the result of a “modern paradigm.”<sup>19</sup> It is for that reason that in the fifteenth century (if we do not consider the later European inventions) Europe does not have any superiority over China. Needham allows himself to be bewitched by this mirage, when he writes: “The fact is that the spontaneous autochthonous development of Chinese society did not produce any drastic change paralleling the *Renaissance and the scientific revolution* of the West.”<sup>20</sup>

To treat the Renaissance and the scientific revolution<sup>21</sup> as being *one and the same event* (one from the fourteenth century and the other from the seventeenth century) demonstrates the distortion of which we have spoken. The Renaissance is still a European event of a peripheral culture in the third stage of the interregional system. The scientific revolution is the result of the formulation of the modern paradigm that needed more than a century of modernity to attain its maturity. Pierre Chaunu writes: “Towards the end of the XV century, to the extent to which historical literature allows us to understand it, the far East as an entity comparable to the Mediterranean . . . does not result under any inferior aspect, at least superficially, to the far West of the Euro-Asiatic continent.”<sup>22</sup>

Let us repeat: Why not China? Because China found itself in the easternmost zone of the interregional system, whence it looked to the center: to India in the west.

## 2

Why not Portugal? For the same reason: that is, because it found itself in the farthest point west of the same interregional system, and because *it also looked, and always, toward the center*: toward India in the east. Columbus’s proposal (the attempt to reach the center through the West) to the king of Portugal was as insane as it was for Columbus to claim to discover a new continent (since he *only and always* attempted, and could not conceive another hypothesis, to reach the center of the third stage of the interregional system<sup>23</sup>).

The Italian Renaissance cities are the farthest point west (peripheral) of the interregional system, which articulated anew, after the Crusades (which failed in 1291), continental Europe with the Mediterranean. The Crusades ought to be considered a frustrated attempt to connect with the center of the system, a

link that the Turks ruptured. The Italian cities, especially Genoa (which rivaled Venice's presence in the eastern Mediterranean), attempted to open the western Mediterranean to the Atlantic, in order to reach once again through the south of Africa the center of the system. The Genoese placed all their experience in navigation and the economic power of their wealth at the service of opening for themselves this path. It was the Genoese who occupied the Canaries in 1312,<sup>24</sup> and it was they who invested in Portugal and helped the Portuguese to develop their navigational power.

Once the Crusades had failed, and because the Europeans could not foresee the expansion of Russia through the steppes (who, advancing through the frozen woods of the North, reached the Pacific and Alaska<sup>25</sup> in the seventeenth century), the Atlantic was the only European door to the center of the system. Portugal, the first European nation already unified in the eleventh century, will transform the reconquest<sup>26</sup> against the Muslims into the beginning of a process of Atlantic mercantile expansion. In 1419, the Portuguese discover the Madeiras Islands, in 1431 the Azores, in 1482 Zaire, and in 1498 Vasco da Gama reaches India (the center of the interregional system). In 1471, Portugal occupies the African-Muslim Ceuta, in 1448 El-Ksar-es-Seghir, in 1471 Arzila. But all of this is the continuation of the interregional system whose connection is the Italian cities: "In the twelfth century when the Genoese and the Pisans first appear in Catalonia, in the thirteenth century when they first reach Portugal, this is part of the efforts of the Italians to draw the Iberian peoples into the international trade of the time. . . . As of 1317, according to Virginia Rau, 'the city and the port of Lisbon would be the great centre of Genoese trade. . . .'"<sup>27</sup>

A Portugal with contacts in the Islamic world, with numerous sailors (former farmers expelled from an intensive agriculture), with a money economy, in "connection" with Italy, once again opened peripheral Europe to the interregional system. But despite this it did not stop being on the periphery. Not even the Portuguese could pretend to have abandoned this situation, for although Portugal could have attempted to dominate the commercial exchange in the sea of the Arabs (the Indian sea<sup>28</sup>), it never could produce the commodities of the East (silk fabrics, tropical products, sub-Saharan gold, etc.). In other words, it was an intermediary and always peripheral power of India, China, and the Muslim world.

With Portugal we are in the anteroom, but still neither in modernity nor in

the world-system (the fourth stage of the system, which originated, at least, between Egypt and Mesopotamia).

## 3

Why does Spain begin the world-system, and with it, modernity? For the same reason that it was prevented in China and Portugal. Because Spain could not reach the center of the interregional system that was in Central Asia or India, could not go east (since the Portuguese had already anticipated them, and thus had exclusivity rights) through the south Atlantic (around the coasts of Western Africa, until the cape of Buena Esperanza was discovered in 1487), Spain had only one opportunity left: to go toward the center, to India, through the *Occident*, through the West, by crossing the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>29</sup> Because of this Spain bumps into, finds without looking, Amerindia, and with it the entire European medieval paradigm enters into crisis (which is the paradigm of a peripheral culture, the farthest western point of the third stage of the interregional system), and thus inaugurates, slowly but irreversibly, the first world hegemony. This is the only world-system that has existed in planetary history, and this is the modern system, European in its center, capitalist in its economy.

This essay situates itself explicitly (is it perhaps the first practical philosophy that attempts to do so "explicitly"?) within the horizon of this modern world-system, taking into consideration not only the center (as has been done *exclusively* by modern philosophy from Descartes to Habermas, thus resulting in a *partial*, provincial, regional view of the historical ethical event), but also its periphery (and with this one obtains a *planetary* vision of the human experience). My position is not informative or anecdotal: it is *sensu stricto* philosophical. I have already treated the theme in another work,<sup>30</sup> in which I showed Columbus's existential impossibility, as a Renaissance Genoese, of convincing himself that what he had discovered was not India. He navigated, according to his own imagination, close to the coasts of the fourth Asiatic peninsula (which Heinrich Hammer had already drawn cartographically in Rome in 1489<sup>31</sup>), always close to the Sinus Magnus (the great gulf of the Greeks, territorial sea of the Chinese) when he transversed the Caribbean. Columbus died in 1506 without having superseded the horizon of stage 3 of the interregional system.<sup>32</sup> He was not able subjectively to supersede the interregional system—with a history of 4,500 years of transformations, begin-



ning with Egypt and Mesopotamia—and to open himself to the new stage of the world-system. The first one who suspected a *new* (the *last new*) continent was Amerigo Vespucci, in 1503, and therefore, he was existentially and subjectively the first Modern, the first to unfold the horizon of the Asian-Afro-Mediterranean system as world-system, which for the first time incorporated Amerindia.<sup>33</sup> This revolution in the *Weltanschauung* of the cultural, scientific, religious, technological, political, ecological, and economic horizon is the *origin of modernity*, seen from the perspective of a world paradigm and not solely from a Eurocentric perspective. In the world-system, the accumulation in the center is for the first time accumulation on a world scale.<sup>34</sup> Within the new system everything changes qualitatively and radically. The very medieval European peripheral subsystem changes internally as well. The founding event was the discovery of Amerindia in 1492.<sup>35</sup> Spain is ready to become the first modern state;<sup>36</sup> through the discovery it begins to become the center of its first periphery (Amerindia), thus organizing the beginning of the slow shifting of the center of the older, third stage of the interregional system (Baghdad of the thirteenth century), which from peripheral Genoa (but the western part of the system) had begun a process of reconnection first with Portugal and now with Spain, with Seville to be precise. Genoese and other Italian wealth suddenly flows into Seville. The “experience” of the eastern Renaissance Mediterranean (and through it, of the Muslim world, of India and even China) is thus articulated with the imperial Spain of Charles V (who reaches into the central Europe of the bankers of Augsburg, to the Flanders of Amberes, and later, to Amsterdam, with Bohemia, Hungary, Austria, and Milan, and especially the kingdom of the Two Sicilies,<sup>37</sup> of the south of Italy, namely Sicily, Sardinia, the Balears, and the numerous islands of the Mediterranean). But because of the economic failure of the political project of the world empire, the emperor Charles V abdicates in 1557. The path is left open for the world-system of mercantile, industrial, and, today, transnational capitalism.

To demonstrate, let us make a comparative analysis, (among the many that may be analyzed—we would not want to be criticized as being a reductive economist because of the example that we have adopted!). It is not a coincidence that twenty-five years after the discovery of the silver mines of Potosí in Peru and the mines in Zacateca in Mexico (1546)—from which a total of 18,000 tons of silver arrived in Spain between the years 1503 and 1660<sup>38</sup>—

thanks to the first shipments of this precious metal, Spain was able to pay for, among the many campaigns of the empire, the great armada that defeated the Turks in 1571 in Lepanto. This led to the dominance of the Mediterranean as a connection with the center of the older stage of the system. However, the Mediterranean died as the road of the center toward the periphery in the west, because now the Atlantic was structuring itself as the center of the new world-system.<sup>39</sup>

Wallerstein writes: “Bullion was desired as a preciousness, for consumption in Europe and even more for trade with Asia, but it was also a necessity for the expansion of the European economy.”<sup>40</sup> I have read, among the many unpublished letters of the General Indian Archive of Seville, the following text of July 1, 1550, signed in Bolivia by Domingo de Santo Tomás: “It was four years ago, to conclude the perdition of this land, that a mouth of hell<sup>41</sup> was discovered through which every year a great many people are immolated, which the greed of the Spaniards sacrifice to their god that is gold,<sup>42</sup> and it is a mine of silver which is named Potosí.”<sup>43</sup> The rest is well known. The Spanish colony in Flanders will replace Spain as a hegemonic power in the center of the recently established world-system; it liberates itself from Spain in 1610. Seville, the first modern port (along with Amberes), after more than a century of splendor, will cede its place to Amsterdam<sup>44</sup> (the city where Descartes in 1636 will write *Le Discours de la Méthode*, and where Spinoza will live<sup>45</sup>), the new port controlling naval, fishing, and crafts power; to which flow agricultural exports and great expertise in all branches of production; the city that will, in many respects, bankrupt Venice.<sup>46</sup> After more than a century, modernity was already visible in this city’s definitive physiognomy: its port; the channels that as commercial ways reached to the houses of the bourgeoisie and the merchants (who used their fourth and fifth floors as cellars, from which boats were directly loaded with cranes); and a thousand other details of a capitalist metropolis.<sup>47</sup> From 1689 on, England will challenge and will end up imposing itself over Holland’s hegemony—which, however, it will have to share with France, at least until 1763.<sup>48</sup>

Amerindia, meanwhile, constitutes the fundamental structure of the first modernity. From 1492 to 1500 approximately 50,000 square kilometers are colonized (in the Caribbean, and farm land from Venezuela to Panama).<sup>49</sup> In 1515 these numbers will reach 300,000 square kilometers, with about 3 million dominated Amerindians; by 1550 Spain has colonized more than 2 million

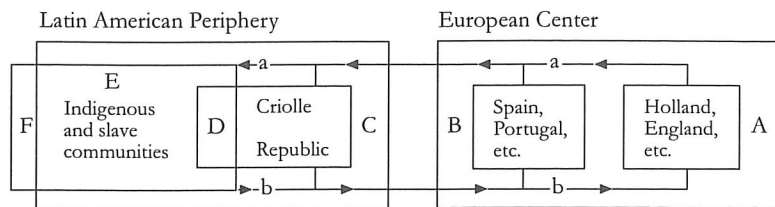


Figure 1. An Example of the Center-Periphery Structure in the Center and Colonial Periphery of the 18th Century

Notes. Arrow a: domination and export of manufactured goods; arrow b: transfer of value and exploitation of labor; A: power of the center; B: semiperipheral nations; C: peripheral formations; D: exploitation of Amerindian labor or slaves; E: indigenous communities; F: ethnic communities who retained a certain exteriority to the world-system

Source: Enrique Dussel, *Historia General de la Iglesia en América Latina* (Salamanca, 1983), 223.

square kilometers (an area greater than the whole of Europe of the center) and more than 25 million (a low figure) indigenous peoples,<sup>50</sup> many of whom are integrated into a system of work that produces value (in Marx's strict sense) for the Europe of the center (in the *encomienda*, *mita*, haciendas, etc.). We would have to add, from 1520 onward, the plantation slaves of African provenance (about 14 million until the final stage of slavery in the nineteenth century, including those in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States). This enormous space and population will give to Europe, center of the world-system, the definitive comparative advantage with respect to the Muslim, Indian, and Chinese worlds. It is for this reason that in the sixteenth century: "The periphery (eastern Europe and Hispanic America) used forced labor (slavery and coerced cash-crop labor [of the Amerindian]). The core, as we shall see, increasingly used free labor."<sup>51</sup>

For the goals of this philosophical work, it is of interest to indicate solely that with the birth of the world-system, the "peripheral social formations"<sup>52</sup> were also born: "The form of *peripheral* formation will depend, finally, at the same time on the nature of the accumulated pre-capitalist formations and the forms of external aggression."<sup>53</sup> These will be, at the end of the twentieth century, the Latin American peripheral formations,<sup>54</sup> those of the African Bantu, the Muslim world, India, Southeast Asia,<sup>55</sup> and China; to which one must add part of Eastern Europe before the fall of socialism (see fig. 1).

### Modernity as "Management" of the Planetary Center and Its Contemporary Crisis

We have thus arrived at the central thesis of this essay: that modernity was the fruit of the "management" of the centrality of the first world-system. We now have to reflect on what this implies.

There are, at the least, two modernities: the first is a Hispanic, humanist, Renaissance modernity, still linked to the old interregional system of Mediterranean, Muslim, and Christian.<sup>56</sup> In this, the "management" of the new system will be conceived from out of the older paradigm of the interregional system. That is, Spain "manages" centrality as domination through the hegemony of an integral culture, a language, a religion (and thus, the evangelization process that Amerindia will suffer); as military occupation, bureaucratic-political organization, economic expropriation, demographic presence (with hundreds of thousands of Spaniards and Portuguese who forever will inhabit Amerindia), ecological transformation (through the modification of the fauna and flora), and so on. This is the substance of the world empire project, which, as Wallerstein notes, failed with Charles V.<sup>57</sup> Second, there is the modernity of Anglo-Germanic Europe, which begins with the Amsterdam of Flanders and which frequently passes as the *only* modernity (this is the interpretation of Sombart, Weber, Habermas, and even the postmoderns, who will produce a "reductionist fallacy" that occludes the meaning of modernity and, thus, the sense of its contemporary crisis). This second modernity, to be able to manage the immense world-system suddenly opening itself to tiny Holland,<sup>58</sup> which from being a Spanish colony now places itself as the center of the world-system, must accomplish or increase its efficacy through simplification. It is necessary to carry out an abstraction (favoring *quantum* to the detriment of *qualitas*) that leaves out many valid variables (cultural, anthropological, ethical, political, and religious variables; aspects that are valuable even for the European of the sixteenth century) that will not allow an adequate, "factual"<sup>59</sup> or technologically possible management of the world-system.<sup>60</sup> This simplification of complexity<sup>61</sup> encompasses the totality of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), of the relationship with nature (a new technological and ecological position that is no longer teleological), of subjectivity itself (a new self-understanding of subjectivity), and of community (a new intersubjective and political relation). A new economic attitude (practico-productive) will now establish itself: the capitalism.

The first, Hispanic, Renaissance, and humanist modernity produced a theoretical and philosophical reflection of the highest importance, which has gone unnoticed by so-called modern philosophy (which is only the philosophy of the second modernity). The theoretical-philosophical thought of the sixteenth century has contemporary relevance because it is the first, and only, that lived and expressed the originary experience during the period of the constitution of the first world-system. Thus, out of the theoretical "recourses" that were available (the scholastic-Muslim-Christian and Renaissance philosophies), the central philosophical ethical question that obtained was the following: What right has the European to occupy, dominate, and manage the recently discovered cultures, conquered by the military and in the process of being colonized? From the seventeenth century on, the conscience (*Gewissen*) of the second modernity did not have to wrestle with this question: it had already been answered in fact. From Amsterdam, London, and Paris (in the seventeenth century and from the eighteenth century onward), "Eurocentrism" (the superideology that will establish the legitimacy, without falsification, of the domination of the world-system) will *no longer* be questioned, until the end of the twentieth century—among other movements, by liberation philosophy.

In another work I have touched on this ethical question.<sup>62</sup> Here I will only examine the theme in general. Bartolomé de las Casas demonstrates in his numerous works, using an extraordinary bibliographic apparatus, rationally and carefully grounding his arguments, that the constitution of the world-system as European expansion in Amerindia (in anticipation of the expansion in Africa and Asia) does not have any right; it is an unjust violence, and cannot have any ethical validity:

The common way mainly employed by the Spaniards who call themselves Christian and who have gone there to extirpate those pitiful nations and wipe them off the earth is by unjustly waging cruel and bloody wars. Then, when they have slain all those who fought for their lives or to escape the tortures they would have to endure, that is to say, when they have slain all the native rulers and young men (since the Spaniards usually spare only the women and children, who are subjected to the hardest and bitterest servitude ever suffered by man or beast), they enslave any survivors. . . . Their reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to swell

themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits. It should be kept in mind that their insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies.<sup>63</sup>

Later, philosophy will no longer formulate this problematic, which showed itself unavoidable at the origin of the establishment of the world-system. For the ethics of liberation, this question remains fundamental.

In the sixteenth century, then, the world-system is established in Seville, and philosophy questions, from out of the old philosophical paradigm, the praxis of domination, but it does not reach the formulation of the *new paradigm*. However, the origin of the new paradigm ought not to be confused with the origin of modernity. Modernity begins in 1492, more than a century before the moment in which the paradigm, adequate to its own new experience, is formalized, using Kuhn's terminology; the formulation of the new modern paradigm takes place in the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>64</sup> This new paradigm corresponds to the exigencies of *efficacy*, technological "factibility" or governmentalism of the management of an enormous world-system in expansion; it is the expression of a necessary process of *simplification* through "rationalization" of the life-world, of the subsystems (economic, political, cultural, religious, etc.). Rationalization, as construed by Werner Sombart,<sup>65</sup> Ernst Troeltsch,<sup>66</sup> and Max Weber,<sup>67</sup> is *effect* and not cause. But the effects of that *simplifying rationalization to manage the world-system* are perhaps more profound and negative than Habermas or the post-moderns imagine.<sup>68</sup>

The corporeal Muslim-medieval subjectivity is *simplified*: subjectivity is postulated as an *ego*, an I, about which Descartes writes: "Accordingly this 'I'—that is, the soul by which I am what I am—is *entirely* distinct from the body, and indeed is easier to know than the body, and would not fail to be whatever it is, even if the body did not exit."<sup>69</sup> The body is a mere machine, *res extensa*, entirely foreign to the soul.<sup>70</sup> Kant himself writes: "The human soul should be seen as being linked in the present life to two worlds at the same time: of these worlds, inasmuch as it forms with the body a personal unity, it feels but only the material world; on the contrary, as a member of the spirit world (*als ein Glied der Geisterwelt*) [without body] it receives and propagates the pure influences of immaterial natures."<sup>71</sup> This dualism—which Kant will apply to his ethics, inasmuch as the maxims ought



not to have any empirical or “pathological” motives—is posteriorly articulated through the negation of practical intelligence, which is replaced by instrumental reason, the one that will deal with technical, technological “management” (ethics disappears before a *more geometric* intelligence) in the *Critique of Judgment*. It is here that the conservative tradition (such as that of Heidegger) continues to perceive the *simplifying* suppression of the organic complexity of life, now replaced by a technique of the “will to power” (critiques elaborated by Nietzsche and Foucault). Galileo, with all the naïve enthusiasm of a great discovery, writes: “Philosophy is written in this grand book, the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the letters in which it is composed. It is written in the *language of mathematics*, and its characters are triangles, circles and other geometric figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth.”<sup>72</sup>

Heidegger said that the “*mathematical position*”<sup>73</sup> one must take before entities is to have the mathematics already known, “ready-to-hand” (in the axioms of science, for example), and to approach the entities only to use them. One does not “learn” a weapon, for instance, but instead one learns to make “use” of it, because one already knows what it is: “The *mathemata* are the things insofar as we take cognizance of them as what we already know them to be in advance, the body as the bodily, the plant-like of the plant, the animal-like of the animal, the thingness of the thing, and so on.”<sup>74</sup> The “rationalization” of political life (bureaucratization), of the capitalist enterprise (administration), of daily life (Calvinist asceticism or puritanism), the decorporalization of subjectivity (with its alienating effects on living labor, criticized by Marx, as well as on its drives, analyzed by Freud), the nonethicalness of every economic or political gestation (understood only as technical engineering, etc.), the suppression of practical-communicative reason, now replaced by instrumental reason, the solipsistic individuality that negates the community, and so on, are all examples of the diverse moments that are negated by this *simplification*, apparently necessary for the management of the centrality of a world-system that Europe found itself in need of perpetually carrying out. Capitalism, liberalism, dualism (without valorizing corporeality), and so on are *effects* of the management of this function which corresponded to Europe as center of the world-system: effects that are constituted through mediations in systems that end up totalizing themselves.

Capitalism, mediation of exploitation and accumulation (effect of the world-system), is later on transformed into an *independent system* that from out of its own self-referential and autopoietic logic can destroy Europe and its periphery, even the entire planet. And this is what Weber observes, but reductively. That is to say, Weber notes part of the phenomenon but not the horizon of the world-system. In fact, the formal procedure of simplification that makes the world-system *manageable* produces formal rationalized subsystems that later on do not have internal standards of self-regulation within its own limits of modernity, which could be redirected at the service of humanity. It is in this moment that there emerge critiques from within the center (and from out of the periphery, such as is mine) of modernity itself. Now one (from Nietzsche to Heidegger, or with the postmoderns) attributes to *reason* all culpable causality (as object “understanding” that takes place through analysis and disintegration)—this culpability can be traced back as far as Socrates (Nietzsche) or even Parmenides himself (Heidegger). In fact, the modern *simplifications* (the dualism of an *ego-alma* without a body, teleological instrumental reason, the racism of the superiority of one’s own culture, etc.) have many similarities with the *simplification* that Greek slavery produced in the second interregional system. The Greek Weltanschauung was advantageous to the modern man—not without complicity does he resuscitate the Greeks, as was done through the German romantics.<sup>75</sup> The subsumptive supercession (*Aufhebung*) of modernity will mean the critical reconsideration of *all* these simplifying reductions produced since its origin—and not only a few, as Habermas imagines. The most important of these reductions, next to that of solipsistic subjectivity, without community, is the negation of the corporeality of this subjectivity—to which are related the critiques of modernity by Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault, Levinas, and the ethics of liberation.

Because of all this, the concept that one has of modernity determines, as is evident, the claim to its realization (such as in Habermas), or the type of critique one may formulate against it (such as that of the postmoderns). In general, no debate between rationalists and postmoderns overcomes the Eurocentric horizon. The crisis of modernity (already noted by, as we have remarked frequently, Nietzsche and Heidegger) refers to internal aspects of Europe. The peripheral world would appear to be a passive spectator of a thematic that does not touch it, because it is a “barbarian,” a “premodern,” or, simply, still in need of being “modernized.” In other words, the Eurocentric view reflects on the problem of the crisis of modernity solely with the

European–North American moments (or now even Japanese), but it minimizes the periphery. To break through this “reductivist fallacy” is not easy. We will attempt to indicate the path to its surmounting.

If modernity begins at the end of the fifteenth century, with a Renaissance premodern process, and from there a transition is made to the properly modern in Spain, Amerindia forms part of “modernity” since the moment of the conquest and colonization (the mestizo world in Latin America is the only one that is as old as modernity<sup>76</sup>), for it contained the first “barbarian” that modernity needed in its definition. If modernity enters into crisis at the end of the twentieth century, after five centuries of development, it is not a matter only of the moments detected by Weber and Habermas, or by Lyotard or Welsch,<sup>77</sup> but also of those moments of a “planetary” description of the phenomenon of modernity.

To conclude, if we situate ourselves, instead, within the planetary horizon, we can distinguish at least two positions in the face of the formulated problematic. First, on the one hand, there is the “substantialist” developmentalist<sup>78</sup> (quasi-metaphysical) position that conceptualizes modernity as an *exclusively European* phenomenon that *expanded from the seventeenth century on throughout all the “backward” cultures* (the Eurocentric position in the center and modernizing in the periphery); thus, modernity is a phenomenon that must be concluded. Some who assume this first position (for example, Habermas and Apel), defenders of reason, do so critically, because they think that European superiority is not material, but formal, thanks to a new structure of critical questions.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, there is the conservative “nihilist” position (of Nietzsche or Heidegger, for instance), which denies to modernity positive qualities and proposes practically an annihilation without exit. The postmoderns take this second position (in their frontal attack on “reason” *as such*, with differences in the case of Levinas<sup>80</sup>), although, paradoxically, they also defend parts of the first position, from the perspective of a developmentalist Eurocentrism.<sup>81</sup> The postmodern philosophers are admirers of postmodern art, of the *media*, and although they theoretically affirm *difference*, they do not reflect on the origins of these systems that are the fruit of a rationalization proper to the management of the European centrality in the world-system, before which they are profoundly uncritical, and, because of this, they do not attempt to contribute valid alternatives (cultural, economic, political, etc.) for the peripheral nations, or the peoples or great majorities who are dominated by the center and/or the periphery.

The second position, from the periphery, is the one we defend. It considers the process of modernity as the already indicated rational management of the *world-system*. This position intends to recoup what is redeemable in modernity, and to halt the practices of domination and exclusion in the world-system. It is a project of liberation of a periphery negated from the very beginning of modernity. The problem is not the mere superseding of instrumental reason (as it is for Habermas) or of the reason of *terror* of the postmoderns; instead, it is a project of overcoming the world-system itself, such as it has developed for the past 500 years until today. The problem is the exhaustion of a “civilizing” system that has come to its end.<sup>82</sup> The overcoming of *cynical managerial reason* (planetary administrative), of capitalism (as economic system), of liberalism (as political system), of Eurocentrism (as ideology), of machismo (in erotics), of the reign of the white race (in racism), of the destruction of nature (in ecology), and so on presupposes the liberation of diverse types of the oppressed and/or excluded. It is in this sense that the ethics of liberation defines itself as transmodern (because the postmoderns are still Eurocentric).

The end of the present stage of civilization is heralded by three limits of the “system of 500 years,” as Noam Chomsky calls it. These limits are, first, the ecological destruction of the planet. From the very moment of its inception, modernity has constituted nature as an “exploitable” object, with the increase in the rate of profit of capital<sup>83</sup> as its goal: “For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; it ceases to be recognized as a power for itself.”<sup>84</sup> Once the earth is constituted as an “exploitable object” in favor of *quantum*, of capital, that can defeat all limits, all boundaries, the “great civilizing influence of capital” is revealed: nature now reaches its unsurmountable limit, where it is its own limit, the impassable barrier for ethical-human progress, and we have arrived at this moment: “The universality towards which it [nature] irresistibly strives encounters barriers in its own nature, which will, at a certain state of its development, allow it to be recognized as being itself the greatest barrier to this tendency, and hence will drive towards its own suspension.”<sup>85</sup> Given that nature is for modernity only a medium of production, it runs out its fate of being consumed, destroyed, and, in addition, accumulating geometrically upon the earth its debris, until it jeopardizes the reproduction or survival of life itself. Life is the absolute condition of capital; its destruction destroys capital. We have arrived at this state of affairs. The “system of 500 years” (modernity or capitalism)

confronts its first absolute limit: the death of life in its totality, through the indiscriminate use of an anti-ecological technology constituted progressively through the sole criterion of the *quantitative* management of the world-system in modernity: the increase in the rate of profit. But capital cannot limit itself. In this lies the utmost danger for humanity.

The second limit of modernity is the destruction of humanity itself. "Living labor" is the other essential mediation of capital as such; the human subject is the only one that can "create" new value (surplus value, profit). Capital that defeats all barriers requires incrementally more absolute time for work; when it cannot supersede this limit, then it augments productivity through technology; but this increase decreases the importance of human labor. It is thus that there is *superfluous* (displaced) *humanity*. The unemployed do not earn a salary, that is, money; but money is the only mediation in the market through which one can acquire commodities to satisfy needs. In any event, work that is not employable by capital increases, thus increasing unemployment and the proportion of needing subjects who are not solvent, including clients, consumers, and buyers—as much in the periphery as in the center.<sup>86</sup> The result is poverty, poverty as the absolute limit of capital. Today we know how misery grows throughout the entire planet. It is a "law of modernity": "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole. . . ."<sup>87</sup> The modern world-system cannot overcome this essential contradiction. The ethics of liberation reflects philosophically from this planetary horizon of the world-system, from this double limit that configures the terminal crisis of the civilizing process: the ecological destruction of the planet and the extinguishing in misery and hunger of the great majority of humanity. Before these co-implicating phenomena of planetary magnitude, the projects of many philosophical schools would seem naïve and even ridiculous, irresponsible, irrelevant, cynical, and even complicitous (certainly in the center, but even worse in the periphery, in Latin America, Africa, and Asia), for they are closeted in their "ivory towers" of sterile Eurocentric academicism. Already in 1968 Marcuse had asked, referring to the opulent countries of late capitalism:

why do we need liberation from such a society if it is capable—perhaps in the distant future, but apparently capable—of conquering poverty to a greater degree than ever before, or reducing the toil of labour and the time

of labour, and of raising the standard of living? If the price for all goods delivered, the price for this comfortable servitude, for all these achievements, is exacted from people far away from the metropolis and far away from its affluence? If the affluent society itself hardly notices what it is doing, how it is spreading terror and enslavement, how it is fighting liberation in all corners of the globe?<sup>88</sup>

The third limit of modernity is the impossibility of the subsumption of the populations, economies, nations, and cultures that it has been attacking since its origin and has excluded from its horizon and cornered into poverty. This is the theme of the exclusion of African, Asian, and Latin American alterity and their indomitable will to survive. There is more to say on this theme, but for now I want to emphasize that the globalizing world-system reaches a limit with the exteriority of the alterity of the Other, a locus of "resistance" from whose affirmation the process of the negation of negation of liberation begins.

Translated by Eduardo Mendieta

#### Notes

This essay is part of chapter 2 of *Ética de la Liberación* (Ethics of liberation), a work in progress.

- 1 As a "substance" that is invented in Europe and that subsequently "expands" throughout the entire world. This is a metaphysical-substantialist and "diffusionist" thesis. It contains a "reductionist fallacy."
- 2 The English translation is not adequate to the expression Weber uses, "Auf dem Boden," which means *within* its regional horizon. We want to establish that "in Europe" really means the development in modernity of Europe as the "center" of a "global system," and not as an *independent* system, as if "only-from-within itself" and as the result of a solely *internal* development, as Eurocentrism pretends.
- 3 This "we" is precisely the Eurocentric Europeans.
- 4 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958), 13; emphasis added. Later on Weber asks: "Why did not the scientific, the artistic, the political, or the economic development there [in China and India] enter upon that path of *rationalization* which is peculiar to the Occident?" (25). To argue this, Weber juxtaposes the Babylonians, who did not mathematize astronomy, and the Greeks, who did (but Weber does not know that the Greeks learned it from the Egyptians); he also argues that science



- emerged in the West, but not in India or China or elsewhere, but he forgets to mention the Muslim world, from whom the Latin West learned Aristotelian “experiential,” empirical exactitude (such as the Oxford Franciscans, or the Marcilio de Padua, etc.), and so on. Every Hellenistic, or Eurocentric, argument, such as Weber’s, can be falsified if we take 1492 as the ultimate date of comparison between the supposed superiority of the West and other cultures.
- 5 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York, 1956), 341.
  - 6 Following Hegel, in Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Frankfurt, 1988), 27.
  - 7 The world-system or planetary system of the fourth stage of the same inter-regional system of the Asiatic-African-Mediterranean continent, but now—correcting Frank’s conceptualization—factually “planetary.” See André Gunder Frank, “A Theoretical Introduction to 5000 Years of World System History,” *Review* 13, no. 2 (1990): 155–248. On the world-system problematic, see Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York, 1989); Robert Brenner, “Das Weltsystem: Theoretische und Historische Perspektiven,” in *Perspektiven des Weltsystems*, ed. J. Blaschke (Frankfurt, 1983), 80–111; Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago, 1974); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York, 1987); William McNeil, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago, 1964); George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics* (London, 1987); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge, UK, 1986); L. S. Stavrianos, *The World to 1500: A Global History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1970); William Thompson, *On Global War: Historical-Structural Approaches to World Politics* (Columbia, SC, 1989); Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes* (New York, 1984); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York, 1974); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World-Economy* (Cambridge, UK, 1984).
  - 8 On this point, as I already mentioned, I am not in agreement with Frank on including in the world-system the prior moments of the system, which I call interregional systems.
  - 9 Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, chap. 6.
  - 10 *Ibid.*, chaps. 4, 5.
  - 11 *Ibid.*, chap. 3.
  - 12 See Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (Boston, 1962), and Morris Rossabi, ed., *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries* (Berkeley, 1983). For a description of the situation of the world in 1400, see Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, 1982).
  - 13 In the museum of Masamba, a port city of Kenya, I have seen Chinese porcelain, as well as luxurious watches and other objects of similar origin.
  - 14 There are other reasons for this nonexternal expansion: the existence of “space” in the neighboring territories of the empire, which needed all its power to “conquer the South” through the cultivation of rice and its defense from the “barbarian

- North.” See Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 24, which has many good arguments against Weber’s Eurocentrism.
- 15 For example, see the following works by Joseph Needham: “The Chinese Contributions to Vessel Control,” *Science* 98 (1961): 163–168; “Commentary on Lynn White’s *What Accelerated Technological Change in the Western Middle Ages?*,” in *Scientific Change*, ed. A. C. Crombie (New York, 1963), 117–153; and “Les contributions chinoises à l’art de gouverner les navires,” *Colloque International d’Histoire Maritime* (Paris, 1966): 113–134. All of these discuss the control of shipping, which the Chinese had dominated since the first century after Christ. The Chinese use of the compass, paper, gunpowder, and other discoveries is well-known.
  - 16 Perhaps the only disadvantages were the Portuguese caravel (invented in 1441), used to navigate the Atlantic (but which was not needed in the Indian Ocean), and the cannon, which, although spectacular, outside naval wars never had any real effect in Asia until the nineteenth century. Carlo Cipolla, in *Guns and Sails in the Early Phase of European Expansion, 1400–1700* (London, 1965), 106–107, writes: “Chinese fire-arms were at least as good as the Western, if not better.”
  - 17 The first bureaucracy (as the Weberian high stage of political rationalization) is the state mandarin structure of political exercise. The mandarin are not nobles, or warriors, or aristocratic or commercial plutocracy; they are *strictly* a bureaucratic elite whose examination system is *exclusively* based on the dominion of culture and the laws of the Chinese empire.
  - 18 William de Bary indicates that the individualism of Wang Yang-ming, in the fifteenth century, which expressed the ideology of the bureaucratic class, was as advanced as that of the Renaissance (*Self and Society in Ming Thought* [New York, 1970]).
  - 19 Through many examples, Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962) situates the modern scientific revolution, fruit of the expression of the new paradigm, practically with Newton (seventeenth century). He does not study with care the impact that events such as the discovery of America, the roundness of the earth (empirically proved since 1520), and others could have had on the science, the “scientific community,” of the sixteenth century, since the structuration of the first world-system.
  - 20 Needham, “Commentary on Lynn White,” 139.
  - 21 A. R. Hall places the beginning of the scientific revolution in the 1500s (*The Scientific Revolution* [London, 1954]).
  - 22 Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique (1504–1650)* (Paris, 1955), 50.
  - 23 *Factually*, Columbus will be the first Modern, but not *existentially* (because his interpretation of the world remained always that of a Renaissance Genoese: a member of a peripheral Italy of the third interregional system). See Paolo Emilio Taviani, *Cristoforo Colombo: La genesi della scoperta* (Novara, 1982), and Edmundo O’Gorman, *La Invención de América* (Mexico, 1957).
  - 24 See J. Zunzunegi, “Los orígenes de las misiones en las Islas Canarias,” *Revista Española de Teología* 1 (1941): 364–370.

- 25 Russia was not yet integrated as periphery in the third stage of the interregional system (nor in the modern world-system, except until the eighteenth century with Peter the Great and the founding of St. Petersburg on the Baltic).
- 26 Already in 1095 Portugal had the rank of empire. In Algarve in 1249, the reconquest concluded with this empire. Enrique the Navigator (1394–1460) as patron introduced the sciences of cartography and astronomy and the techniques of navigation and shipbuilding, which originated in the Muslim world (he had contact with the Moroccans) and the Italian Renaissance (via Genoa).
- 27 Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 49–50. See also Charles Verlinden, “Italian Influence in Iberian Colonization,” *Hispanic Historical Review* 18, no. 2 (1953): 119–209, and Virginia Rau, “A Family of Italian Merchants in Portugal,” in *Studies in Honor of Armando Sapori*, ed. C. Cisalpino (Milan, 1957), 715–726.
- 28 See K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, UK, 1985).
- 29 My argument would seem to be the same as in J. M. Blaut, ed., *1492: The Debate on Colonialism, Eurocentrism, and History* (Trenton, NJ, 1992), 28, but in fact it is different. It is not that Spain was “geographically” closer to Amerindia: distance was only one criterion. Spain had to go *through* Amerindia not only because it was closer, but because this was the necessary route to the center of the system, a point that Blaut does not deal with. Gunder Frank (in Blaut, *1492*, 65–80) makes the same error, because for him 1492 represents only a secondary, internal change in the same world-system. However, if it is understood that the interregional system, in its stage prior to 1492, is the “same” system but not yet a “world” system, then 1492 assumes a greater importance than Frank grants it. Even if the system *is the same*, there exists a qualitative jump, which, in other respects, is the origin of capitalism proper, to which Frank denies importance because of his prior denial of relevance to concepts such as *value* and *surplus value*; in fact, he equates *capital* with *wealth* (use-value with a virtual possibility of transforming itself into exchange-value, but not capital accumulated in stages 1 through 3 of the interregional system). This is a grave theoretical error.
- 30 Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas* (New York, 1995).
- 31 See *ibid.*, appendix 4, where the map of the fourth Asiatic peninsula is reproduced (after the Arabian, Indian, and Malaccan), certainly a product of Genoese navigations, where South America is a peninsula attached to the south of China. This explains why the Genoese Columbus would hold the opinion that Asia would not be so far from Europe (South America = fourth peninsula of China).
- 32 This is what I call, philosophically, the “invention” of Amerindia seen as India, in all of its details. Columbus, existentially, neither “discovered” nor reached Amerindia. He “invented” something that was nonexistent: India in the place of Amerindia, which prevented him from “discovering” what was in front of him. See *ibid.*, chap. 2.
- 33 This is the meaning of the title of chapter 2, “From the *Invention* to the *Discovery* of America,” in my *Invention of the Americas*.

- 34 See Samir Amin, *L'accumulation à l'échelle mondiale* (Paris, 1970). This work is not yet developed on the world-system hypothesis. It would appear as though the colonial world were a *rear* or *subsequent* and *outside* space to European medieval capitalism, which is transformed “in” Europe as modern. My hypothesis is more radical: the fact of the discovery of Amerindia, of its integration as periphery, is a *simultaneous* and *coconstitutive* fact of the restructuration of Europe *from within* as center of the only new world-system that is, only now and *not before*, capitalism (first mercantile and later industrial).
- 35 I refer to Amerindia, and not America, because during the entire sixteenth century, the inhabitants of the continent were thought to be “Indians” (wrongly called because of the mirage that the interregional system of the third stage still produced in the still-being-born world-system. They were called Indians because of India, center of the interregional system that was beginning to fade). Anglo-Saxon North America will be born slowly in the seventeenth century, but it will be an event “internal” to a growing modernity in Amerindia. This is the *originating* periphery of modernity, constitutive of its first definition. It is the “other face” of the very same phenomenon of modernity.
- 36 Unified by the marriage of the Catholic king and queen in 1474, who immediately founded the Inquisition (the first ideological apparatus of the state for the creation of consensus); by a bureaucracy whose functioning is attested to in the archives of the Indies (Sevilla), where everything was declared, contracted, certified, archived; by a grammar of the Spanish language (the first national language in Europe), written by Nebrija, who in his prologue warns the Catholic kings of the importance for the empire of *only one language*; by Cisneros’s edition of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (in seven languages), which was superior to Erasmus’s because of its scientific care, the number of its languages, and the quality of the imprint, begun in 1502 and published in 1522; by military power that allowed it to recoup Granada in 1492; by the economic wealth of the Jews, Andalusian Muslims, Christians of the reconquest, the Catalans with their colonies in the Mediterranean, and the Genoese; by the artisans from the antique caliphate of Cordoba, and so on. Spain in the fifteenth century is far from being the semiperipheral country that it will become in the second part of the seventeenth century—the only picture of Spain with which the Europe of the center remembers it, as Hegel or Habermas do, for example.
- 37 The struggle between France and the Spain of Charles V, which exhausted both monarchies and resulted in the economic collapse of 1557, was played out above all in Italy. Charles V possessed about three-fourths of the peninsula, allowing Spain to transfer through Italy to its own soil the links with the system. This was one of the reasons for all the wars with France: for the wealth and the experience of centuries were essential for whoever intended to exercise new hegemony in the system, especially if it was the first planetary hegemony.
- 38 This produced an unprecedented increase of prices in Europe, which was convergent with an inflation of 1000 percent during the sixteenth century. Externally

- this will liquidate the wealth accumulated in the Turkish-Muslim world, and will even transform India and China internally (see Earl Hamilton, *El florecimiento del capitalismo y otros ensayos de historia económica* [Madrid, 1948]; Earl Hamilton, *International Congress of Historical Sciences* [Stockholm, 1960], 144–164; and D. Ingrid Hammarström, “The Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century,” *Scandinavian Economic History I* [1957]: 118–154). Furthermore, the arrival of Amerindian gold produced a complete continental hecatomb of Bantu Africa because of the collapse of the kingdoms of the sub-Saharan savannah (Ghana, Togo, Dahomey, Nigeria, etc.) that exported gold to the Mediterranean. To survive, these kingdoms increased the selling of slaves to the new European powers of the Atlantic, with which American slavery was produced. See Pierre Bertaux, *Africa: Desde la prehistoria hasta los Estados actuales* (Madrid, 1972); V. M. Godinho, “Création et dynamisme économique du monde atlantique (1420–1670),” *Annales ESC* (1950): 10–30; Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique (1504–1650)* (Paris, 1955), 57; F. Braudel, “Monnaies et civilisation: De l’or du Soudan à l’argent d’Amérique,” *Annales ESC* (1946): 12–38. The whole ancient third interregional system is absorbed slowly by the modern world-system.
- 39 All of the subsequent hegemonic power will remain until the present on their shores: Spain, Holland, England (and France partly) until 1945, and the United States in the present. Thanks to Japan, China, and California in the United States, the Pacific appears for the first time as a counterweight. This is perhaps a novelty of the next century, the twenty-first.
- 40 Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 45.
- 41 This is the entrance to the mine.
- 42 For the past thirty years this text has kept me alert to the phenomenon of the fetishism of gold, of “money,” and of “capital.” See Enrique Dussel, *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx* (Estella, Spain, 1993).
- 43 *Archivo General de Indias* (Seville), 313. See also Enrique Dussel, *Les évêques latinoaméricains défenseurs et évangélistes de l’indien (1504–1620)* (Wiesbaden, 1970), 1, which was part of my doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne in 1967.
- 44 Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 165.
- 45 It should be remembered that Spinoza (Espinosa), who lived in Amsterdam (1632–1677), descended from an Ashkenazi family from the Muslim world of Granada, who were expelled from Spain and exiled to the Spanish colony of Flanders.
- 46 Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 214.
- 47 *Ibid.*, chap. 2, “Dutch Hegemony in the World-Economy,” where he writes: “It follows that there is probably only a short moment in time when a given core power can manifest *simultaneously* productive, commercial, and financial superiority *over all other core powers*. This momentary summit is what we call hegemony. In the case of Holland, or the United Provinces, that moment was probably between 1625–1675” (39). Not only Descartes, but also Spinoza, as we already indicated, constitute the philosophical presence of Amsterdam, world center of

- the system (and—why not?—of the self-consciousness of humanity *in its center*, which is not the same as a mere *European* self-consciousness).
- 48 See *ibid.*, chap. 6. After this date, British hegemony will be uninterrupted, except in the Napoleonic period, until 1945, when it loses to the United States.
- 49 See Pierre Chaunu, *Conquête et exploitation des nouveaux mondes (XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris, 1969), 119–176.
- 50 Europe had approximately 56 million inhabitants in 1500, and 82 million in 1600 (see C. Cardoso, *Historia económica de América Latina* [Barcelona, 1979], 114).
- 51 Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 103.
- 52 See Samir Amin, *El desarrollo desigual: Ensayo sobre las formaciones sociales del capitalismo periférico* (Barcelona, 1974), 309.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 312.
- 54 The colonial process in Latin America ends, for the most part, at the beginning of the nineteenth century.
- 55 The colonial process of these formations ends, for the most part, after the so-called World War II (1945), given that the North American superpower requires neither military occupation nor political-bureaucratic domination (proper only to the old European powers, such as France and England), but rather the management of the dominion of economic-financial dependence in its transnational stage.
- 56 *Muslim* here means the most “cultured” and civilized of the fifteenth century.
- 57 I think that *management* of the new world-system according to old practices had to fail because it operated with variables that made the system unmanageable. Modernity *had begun*, but it had not given itself a new way to manage the system.
- 58 Later on, it will also have to manage the system of the English island. Both nations had limited territories, with small populations in the beginning, without any other capacity than their creative “bourgeois attitude” to existence. Because of their weakness, they had to greatly reform the management of the planetary metropolitan enterprise.
- 59 The technical “factibility” will become a criterion of truth, of possibility, of existence; Vico’s “*verum et factum conventuntur*.”
- 60 Spain, and Portugal with Brazil, undertook as states (world empire) (with military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastical resources, etc.) the conquest, evangelization, and colonization of Amerindia. Holland, instead, founded the East India Company (1602), and later that of the “Western Indies.” These companies (as well as the subsequent British, Danish, etc.) are capitalist enterprises, secularized and private, which function according to the “rationalization” of mercantilism (and later of industrial capitalism). This highlights the difference between the rational management of the Iberian companies and the management of the second modernity (a world-system not managed by a world empire).
- 61 In every system, complexity is accompanied by a process of “selection” of elements that allow, in the face of increase in such complexity, for the conservation of the “unity” of the system with respect to its surroundings. This necessity of



- selection-simplification is always a "risk" (see Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme: Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie* [Frankfurt, 1988]).
- 62 See Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, chap. 5. During the sixteenth century there were three theoretical positions before the fact of the constitution of the world-system: (1) that of Gines de Sepulveda, the *modern* Renaissance and humanist scholar, who rereads Aristotle and demonstrates the natural slavery of the Amerindian, and thus confirms the legitimacy of the conquest; (2) that of the Franciscans, such as Mendieta, who attempt a utopian Amerindian Christianity (a "republic of Indians" under the hegemony of the Catholic religion), proper to the third Christian-Muslim interregional system; and (3) Bartolomé de las Casas's position, *the beginning of a critical "counterdiscourse" in the interior of modernity* (which, in his work of 1536, a century before *Le Discours de la Méthode*, he titles *De unico modo* [The only way], and shows that "argumentation" is the rational means through which to attract the Amerindian to the new civilization). Habermas speaks of "counterdiscourse," suggesting that it is only two centuries old (beginning with Kant). Liberation philosophy suggests, instead, that this counterdiscourse begins in the sixteenth century, perhaps in 1511 in Santo Domingo with Anton de Montesinos, decidedly with Bartolomé de las Casas in 1514 (see Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, 17–27).
- 63 Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, trans. Herma Briffault (Baltimore, 1992), 31. I have placed this text at the beginning of volume 1 of my work *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana* (Buenos Aires, 1973), because it synthesizes the general hypothesis of the ethics of liberation.
- 64 Frequently, in the contemporary histories of philosophy, and of course of ethics, a "jump" is made from the Greeks (from Plato and Aristotle) to Descartes (1596–1650), who takes up residence in Amsterdam in 1629 and writes *Le Discours de la Méthode*, as we indicated above. That is, there is a jump from Greece to Amsterdam. In the interim, twenty-one centuries have gone by without any other content of importance. Studies are begun by Bacon (1561–1626), Kepler (1571–1630), Galileo (1571–1630), and Newton (1643–1727), and Campanella writes *Civitas Solis* in 1602. Everything would seem to be situated at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the moment I have called the second moment of modernity.
- 65 See Werner Sombart, *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (Leipzig, 1902), and W. Sombart, *Der Bourgeois* (Munich, 1920).
- 66 See Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (Tübingen, 1923).
- 67 See Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt, 1981). Habermas insists on the Weberian discovery of "rationalization," but he forgets to ask after its cause. I believe that my hypothesis goes deeper and further back: Weberian rationalization (accepted by Habermas, Apel, Lyotard, etc.) is the apparently necessary mediation of a deforming simplification (by instrumental reason) of practical reality, in order to transform it into something "manageable,"

- governable, given the complexity of the immense world-system. It is not only the internal manageability of Europe, but also, and above all, planetary (center-periphery) management. Habermas's attempt to sublimate instrumental reason into communicative reason is not sufficient because the moments of his diagnosis on the origin itself of the process of rationalization are not sufficient.
- 68 The postmoderns, being Eurocentric, concur, more or less, with the Weberian diagnosis of modernity. That is, they underscore certain rationalizing aspects or media (means of communication, etc.) of modernity; some they reject wrathfully as metaphysical dogmatism, but others they accept as inevitable phenomena and frequently as positive transformations.
- 69 René Descartes, *Le Discours de la Méthode* (Paris, 1965).
- 70 See Enrique Dussel, *El dualismo en la antropología de la Cristiandad* (Buenos Aires, 1974), and Enrique Dussel, *Método para una Filosofía de la Liberación* (Salamanca, 1974). Current theories of the functions of the brain definitively put in question this dualistic mechanism.
- 71 Immanuel Kant, *Kants Werke* (Darmstadt, 1968), 940.
- 72 Stillman Drake, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* (New York, 1957), 237–238.
- 73 See Enrique Dussel, *Para una de-structuración de la historia de la ética* (Mendoza, 1973).
- 74 Martin Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?*, trans. W. B. Barton (Chicago, 1967), 73.
- 75 See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989), 224.
- 76 Amerindia and Europe have a premodern history, just as Africa and Asia do. Only the hybrid world, the syncretic culture, the Latin American *mestiza* race that was born in the fifteenth century has existed for 500 years; the child of Malinche and Hernán Cortés can be considered as its symbol. See Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* (Mexico City, 1950).
- 77 See, among others, Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (Paris, 1979); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ, 1979); Jacques Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique, essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas," *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale* 69, no. 3 (1964): 322–354; Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la Différence* (Paris, 1967), and *De la Grammatologie* (Paris, 1967); Odo Marquart, *Abschied vom Prinzipiellen* (Stuttgart, 1981); Gianni Vattimo, *La fine della Modernità* (Milan, 1985).
- 78 This Spanish word, *desarrollismo*, which does not exist in other languages, points to the fallacy that pretends the same development (the word *Entwicklung* has a strictly Hegelian philosophical origin) for the center as for the periphery, not taking note that the periphery is not backward (see Franz Hinkelammert, *Ideologías del desarrollo y dialéctica de la historia* [Santiago, 1970], and his *Dialéctica del desarrollo desigual: El caso latinoamericano* [Santiago, 1970]). In other words, it is not a temporal *prius* that awaits a development similar to that of Europe or the United States (like the child/adult), but instead it is the asymmetrical position of the dominated, the simultaneous position of the exploited (like the free lord/

slave). The “immature” (child) could follow the path of the “mature” (adult) and get to “develop” herself, while the “exploited” (slave), no matter how much she works, will never be “free” (lord), because her own dominated subjectivity includes her “relationship” with the dominator. The “modernizers” of the periphery are developmentalists because they do not realize that the relationship of planetary domination has to be overcome as a prerequisite for “national development.” Globalization has not extinguished, not by the least, the “national” question.

- 79 See Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, along with his debates with P. Winch and A. MacIntyre.
- 80 We will see that Levinas, the “father of French postmodernism” (from Derrida on), neither is postmodern nor negates reason. Instead, he is a critic of the *totalization* of reason (instrumental, strategic, cynical, ontological, etc.). Liberation philosophy, since the end of the decade of the 1960s, studied Levinas because of his radical critique of domination. In the preface to my work, *Philosophy of Liberation* (New York, 1985), I indicated that the philosophy of liberation is a “postmodern” philosophy, one that took its point of departure from the “second Heidegger,” but also from the critique of “totalized reason” carried out by Marcuse and Levinas. It would seem as though we were “postmoderns” *avant la lettre*. In fact, however, we are critics of ontology and modernity from (*desde*) the periphery, which meant and *still* means something entirely different, as we intend to explain.
- 81 Up to now, the postmoderns remain Eurocentric. The dialogue with “different” cultures is, for now, an unfulfilled promise. They think that mass culture, the *media* (television, movies, etc.), will impact peripheral urban cultures to the extent that they will annihilate their “differences,” in such a way that what Vattimo sees in Turin, or Lyotard in Paris, will be shortly the same in New Delhi and Nairobi; and they do not take the time to analyze the *hard* irreducibility of the hybrid cultural horizon (which is not *absolutely* an exteriority, but which for centuries will not be a univocal interiority to the globalized system) that receives those information impacts.
- 82 See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC, 1991).
- 83 In Stalinist “actually existing” socialism, the criterion was the “increase in the rate of production,” measured, in any event, by an approximate market value of commodities. It is a question at the same time of fetishism. See F. Hinkelammert, *Crítica a la razón utópica* (San José, Costa Rica, 1984), 123.
- 84 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York, 1973), 410.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Pure necessity without money is no market, it is only misery, growing and unavoidable misery.
- 87 Karl Marx, *Capital* (New York, 1977), 799. Here we must remember that the *Human Development Report, 1992* (New York, 1992) has demonstrated in an

incontrovertible manner that the richest 20 percent of the planet consumes today (as never before in global history) 82.7 percent of goods (incomes) of the planet, while the remaining 80 percent of humanity only consumes 17.3 percent of the goods. Such concentration is the product of the world-system we have been delineating.

- 88 Herbert Marcuse, “Liberation from the Affluent Society,” in *To Free a Generation: The Dialectics of Liberation*, ed. David Cooper (New York, 1967), 181.

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Globalization, Civilization Processes,  
and the Relocation of Languages and Cultures

1

Globalization, in transnational corporate lingo, is conceived as the last of three stages of global transformation since 1945. In a more sociohistorical vocabulary, globalization could be linked with Western expansion since 1500 and cast in terms of either Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system<sup>1</sup> or in Norbert Elias's "civilizing process."<sup>2</sup> Whereas Wallerstein's model allows for a rereading of modernity as a global economic system (see Dussel in this volume), Elias's research tells the story of a growing awareness in the emerging European consciousness of its mission to Christianize and civilize the world. The very self-description by European intellectuals of the notion of "civilization," which will become then the foundation of the colonial "civilizing mission," is basically a construction of the European Enlightenment. However, the general idea (as Elias amply demonstrates) is already at work in the European Renaissance. It is a paradoxically and highly ethnocentric move, indeed, to assume that from 1500 Europe has to civilize the world, when other civilizations (such as the Chinese, Indian, Islamic, Incan, Aztec, and Mayan) have been in place, so to speak, for centuries before a group of ascending

barbarous communities began to posit themselves as a new center (which for them was the center) of the world, in the name of Christianity and of Europe.<sup>3</sup> The very concept of "civilization" gained a universal scope once Europe began to expand all over the planet and, as such, repressed the already existing self-conceptualization of highly sophisticated social organizations (e.g., China, the Islamic world, Inca, and Mexico). "Civilization" then became a trademark of Christian Europe and a yardstick by which to measure other societies. The comparison was, on the one hand, a series of forced understanding and, on the other, a justification to carry and implant civilization in the rest of the planet, which had been declared either lacking some properties or having them in excess. It will take us too far away from the topic to describe the equivalent of the European notion of "civilization" among communities that much earlier reached the level of social sophistication that Elias describes as the European "civilizing process."

When in 1959, for example, J. Needham and L. Wang published their monumental *Science and Civilization in China*, they were still writing within the double bind of the very concept of "civilization": on the one hand, something that belonged to Europe as a treasure that shall be enjoyed by the entire planet; on the other hand, "civilization" was something that other cultures and communities had as an "object" to be studied by those who not only invented the idea of the "civilizing mission" but also, and concomitant with it, a discipline called "civilizational studies." "Civilization" then has a double edge: the ideological justification of European economic expansion and the foundation of a field of study that located Europe as the locus of enunciation and other civilizations of the planet as the locus of the enunciated. In what follows, I will first explore the complicities between the conception of languages and literatures, the boundaries of the humanities and the cultures of scholarship in the past five hundred years, a period we identify as modernity and also as globalization enacted in the very constitution and expansion of the Western world-system (see Dussel in this volume). In this process, Latin American independence from Spain and Portugal, in the nineteenth century, created the conditions for the articulation—in the very process of nation-building—of the dichotomy civilization/barbarism (*Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, 1845, by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Argentinian intellectual and later president, 1872–78). Sarmiento's formula became a canonical figure of Latin American culture and, at the same time, a



justification for internal colonialism. Second, I will make an effort to identify the instances where the civilizing mission began to crack and the oppositions civilization/barbarism, first world/third world, and developed/undeveloped are superseded by the self-relocation and restitution of thinking and theorizing within and by barbarians, third-world people, the underdeveloped, women, and people of color. I will close by exploring the significance of Brazilian “anthropologist” (*antropólogo*, as he calls himself) Darcy Ribeiro’s work, mainly in two of his books: *O processo civilizatório* (1968) and *Las Américas y la civilización* (1969). I will propose that these two books are a displacement of Elias’s concept of “civilizing process” and Sarmiento’s internal colonialist version of the civilizing mission as well as of the connivance between disciplinary foundations and colonial powers (mainly in the case of anthropology). Elias describes the differences in the use of “civilization” first in England and France to indicate a sense of national pride and then in Germany, where the same feeling was expressed by the word *culture*. Furthermore, “civilization” is self-conceived as a process, and “culture,” a product. “Civilization” can be carried and expanded all over the planet, but not “culture.” This distinction was dramatic for intellectuals of the colonized world, such as Sarmiento in Argentina, who assumed that the local culture had to be improved by the growing and expanding European civilization.

The distinction between civilization and culture, as process and product, contributed to the internal colonialism enacted by intellectuals from colonized areas who fought against the “barbarism” of their culture in pro of the European civilization. The current relocation of languages and cultures in the last stage of globalization is contributing to redress and rearticulate a distinction that for centuries worked out so well that it was even supported by intellectuals in the periphery who were being self-colonized in the name of self-determination. Darcy Ribeiro’s work—as we shall see at the end of this article (as well as in Dussel in this volume)—sets the stage for a decentering of theoretical practice and its foundation in local histories.<sup>4</sup> More recently, the publication in extended version and in book form of Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*<sup>5</sup> has located the debate in the context of globalization. The following section addresses, from a different perspective, Huntington’s analysis of languages, cultures and globalization.

## 2

A few decades before the emergence of an unknown (from the perspective of European observers) continent and unknown people inhabiting it, geographical boundaries coincided with the boundaries of humanity. Outlandish creatures with two heads, three arms, and the like, were supposed to inhabit that region beyond known geographical boundaries. The limits of geography coincided with the limits of humanity. In a matter of two or three decades, however, both boundaries (of the world and of humanity) began to be transformed radically. The outlandish creatures once inhabiting the unknown corners of the world were replaced by the savages (or cannibals) inhabiting the New World. Geographical boundaries and the boundaries of humanity were relocated by both the transformation of knowledge generated through cross-cultural interactions among people who until then had been unaware of one another, as well as by the growing awareness of the earth’s expansion beyond the limits of the known. The cannibals and the savages were located in a space that began to be conceived as a New World (figure 1).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, spatial boundaries were transformed into chronological ones. In the early modern period, a transformation took place between geographical and human boundaries; at the end of the nineteenth century, savages and cannibals in space were converted into primitives and exotic Orientals in time. Whereas the sixteenth century was the scene of a heated debate about the boundaries of humanity—having Las Casas, Sepulveda, and Victoria as main characters in that controversy—toward the nineteenth century the question was no longer whether primitives or Orientals were human but, rather, how far removed from the present and civilized stage of humanity they were. Lafitau (*Moeurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, 1724) has been credited as being one of the landmark thinkers in this process of converting the savages/cannibals into primitives/Orientals and in relocating them in a chronological scale as opposed to a geographical distance. The “denial of coevalness”<sup>6</sup> was the end result of relocating people in a chronological hierarchy rather than in geographical places. The relocation of languages, peoples, and cultures in time rather than in space, found in Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* (1822), its most systematic formulation, had not been contested until the past fifty years by intellectuals engaged with the movements of liberation

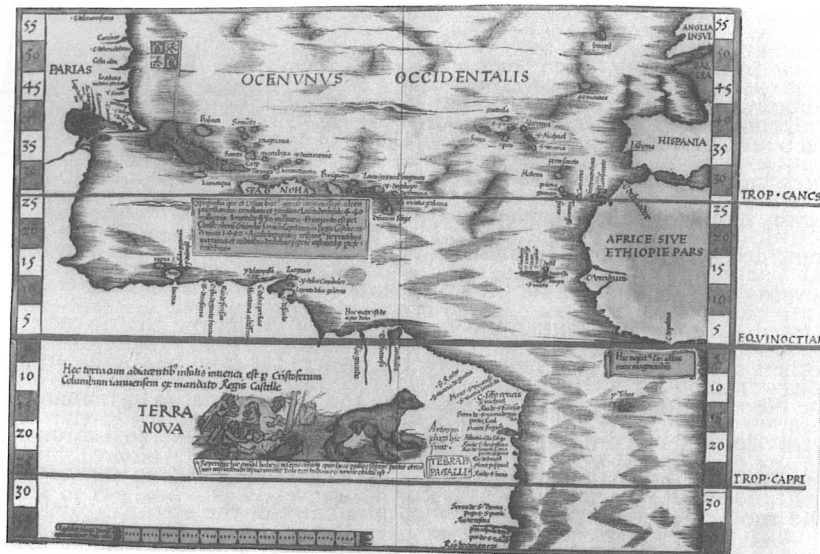


Figure 1. *Tabula Terre Nova* (1513) by Martin Waldseemüller

and decolonization. Today, Hegel's *Philosophy of History* is a common reference for intellectuals in/from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, writing to cast out Hegel's arrangements of cultural differences in a time frame having the European idea of civilization and Western Europe as a point of arrival. The current stage of globalization, driven by transnational corporations, is nonintentionally contributing to the restitution of space and location and to the multiplication of local histories. That is, the current stage of globalization and its emphasis on the market is contributing to the denial of the denial of coevalness, a strategic principle of the three previous stages of globalization under the banners of Christianization (Spanish Empire), Civilizing Mission (British Empire and French Colonization), and Development/Modernization (U.S. Imperialism).

The denial of the denial of coevalness, as a project and a desire for intellectual decolonization, today has to confront the new version of the savages, cannibals, and primitives of yesterday, recast in terms of the underdeveloped. Although savages/cannibals were people to be converted to Christianity, primitives to be Civilized and Orientals to be Westernized, Underdeveloped people instead have to be Modernized. Progress and Modernity replaced the Christian mission of Spain and Portugal, the civilizing mission of France and

England, and became the new goal of the U.S. imperial version of previous colonialisms. However, old ideas and prejudices did not vanish: they survive in the present, recast in a new vocabulary. The three stages of globalization enacted by Western expansion previous to the transnational and global marketplace that I am presupposing here are not to be seen in a Hegelian linear chronology but, rather, in a spatial coexistence of memory (see below), and as diachronic contradictions. Paradoxically, the last stage of globalization (transnational corporations [TNCs] and technoglobalism) is creating the conditions to think spatially rather than chronologically. Spatialization brings to the foreground the fact that there are no people in the present living in the past (as the Hegelian model of universal history proposed), but that the present is a variety of chronological circles and temporal rhythms. Thus, economic globalization is facilitating the intellectual task of denying the denial of coevalness, in the removal of the civilizing mission and in the conceptualization of the civilizing process as one to which the entire humanity contributed and is contributing.

The links between languages and the boundaries of humanity shaped the idea of literature, cultures of scholarship, and civilization in European modernity. Modernity, the period of globalization that today is witnessing a radical transformation, is characterized by and shaped from a particular articulation of languages (English, French, German, Italian), literatures of these languages (with their legacy in Greek and Latin), and cultures of scholarship (mainly in English, French, and German). Italian remains the foundation for Renaissance studies and maintains its clout from its close relation with Latin. Wallerstein has noted about cultures of scholarship that "At least 95 percent of all scholars and all scholarship from the period of 1850 to 1914, and probably even to 1945, originates in five countries: France, Great Britain, the Germanies, the Italies, and the United States. There is a smattering elsewhere, but basically not only does the scholarship come out of these five countries, but most of the scholarship by most scholars is about their own country. . . . This is partly pragmatic, partly social pressure, and partly ideological: these are the important countries, this is what matters, this is what we should study in order to learn how the world operates."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the languages and the scholarship of the countries came from where the civilizing mission spread. Notice that Spain and Portugal are no longer part of the languages and scholarship of the modern European world.

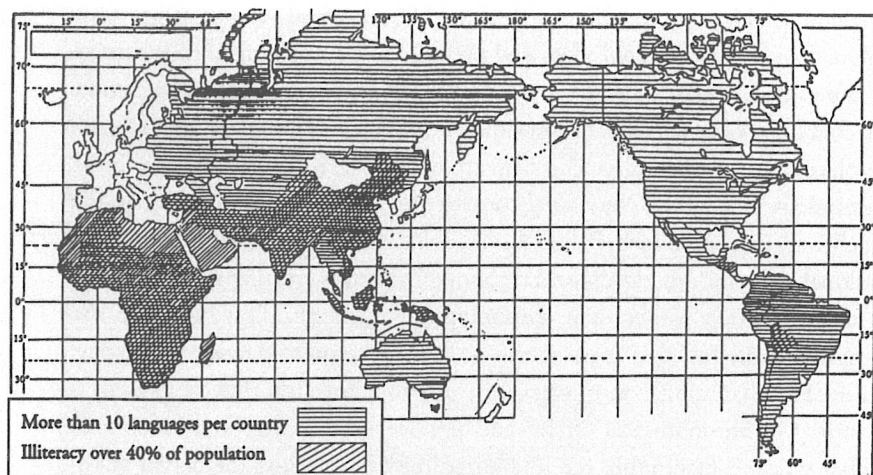


Figure 2. Relationship of illiteracy to countries with more than ten languages  
 Source: Florian Coulmas, *Linguistic Minorities and Literacy* (Berlin, 1984).

Let's press this issue further by exploring once more the conversion of the human differences in space into the human differences in time, and by introducing two new players to the game: languages and literacies, on the one hand, and the links among the boundaries of humanity, linguistic maps, and the processes of civilization on the other. The complicities between languages and the boundaries of humanity have been clear since the beginning of Western expansion in the early modern period. If we dig into the archives, we can find similar examples in which languages were taken as one of the foundations upon which to enact identity politics; language served to define the boundaries of a community by distinguishing it from other communities. The connivance among certain languages, alphabetic writing, and the boundaries of humanity was not new in the Renaissance/early modern period.<sup>8</sup> What was new was the planetary proportion and the long duration in which such complicities began to be articulated.

The linguistic map shown in figure 2 will give a better idea of the correlation between geographical locations and theoretical production. First, you can see the correlation between geocultural and geolinguistic locations of modernity (white on the map) and the geocultural domains where European modernity was not relevant or was received (willingly or not), as a foreign element to be incorporated or resisted from the perspective of vernacular

languages and cultures. Second, you can see (horizontal lines) that the majority of the planet (with the exception of European countries) comprises geocultural areas with more than ten languages each. Although this situation is in the process of being corrected, the fact remains that if European countries were not counted as countries with more than ten languages, it was because imperial and national languages were the only ones to count as such; the rest were counted as dialects. The discourse of the civilizing mission was double-sided: one for nation-building, the other for colonial expansion. The map also shows (diagonal lines) that in most areas of the world (with the exception of European countries), more than 40 percent of the population is illiterate. All sorts of conclusions can be drawn from this statistic. One of them could entail, for instance, celebration of the low illiteracy rate in European countries and the linking of this achievement with the natural intellectual development of the people living in that particular area of the planet, where the agents and the agency of the civilizing mission were located. On the other hand, one could link lower linguistic diversity and lower illiteracy rates in Europe to the process of colonial and global expansion since 1500. This date could also be used to locate the process in which intellectuals living in the part of the planet that began to be self-constructed as Europe, and as a territory where human civilization attained its highest mark, put a heavy premium on the "letter" as a distinctive sign of the concept of civilization that Renaissance and Enlightenment intellectuals forged for themselves.<sup>9</sup> Guizot, for instance, apparently believed and explicitly stated that "civilization" was a pure European phenomenon (*Histoire de la civilisation en Europe*, 1828; *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, 1830).

Turning now to the complementary statistics in figure 3, we can see that there are about one hundred languages accounting for 95 percent of the world population. Of these one hundred, 75 percent of the world population speaks twelve. Of those twelve, six are colonial and, therefore, the languages of European modernity. Their ranking by quantity of speakers is English, Spanish, German, Portuguese, French, Italian. Chinese is the most spoken language on the planet, above English. Although English enjoys the power of being accompanied and supported by the geocultural location of capitalism during the period of the British Empire and, in the past half-century, in the United States, Spanish, although displaced as a relevant language of modernity (dominated by French, German, and English), has more speakers than French and German. Russian, the second displaced language from European modernity,



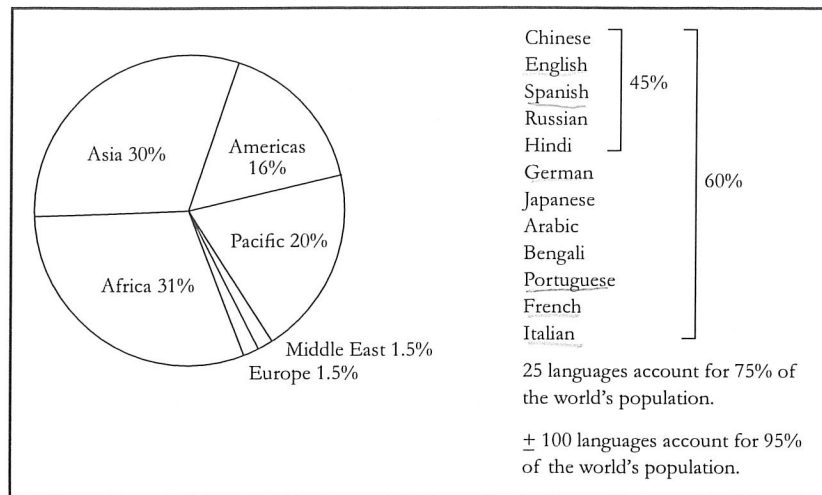


Figure 3. Distribution of world languages by continent and population  
 Source: Florian Coulmas, *Linguistic Minorities and Literacy* (Berlin, 1984).

managed, nevertheless, to have a marginal presence through literature and has more speakers than German. Hindi is between Russian and German. Finally, Japanese, Arabic, and Bengali are languages whose number of speakers exceeds that of Portuguese, French, and Italian. But that is not all. Globalization and the enactment of the civilizing mission through the agency of colonial languages made it possible for these languages to be spoken far beyond their place of "origin." Thus, the delinking between languages and territories, the double-sided politics of languages (one for the nation, one for the colonies), and, finally, the increasing massive migrations made possible by the very industrial revolution and the means of transportation, reveal the splendors and miseries of the colonial languages: on the one hand, the story of their planetary scope; on the other, the story of their impossible control by their respective academies of national languages. In the meantime, the three languages of high modernity (English, German, French) remain the hegemonic languages of scholarship and world literature. Certainly, well-established languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Hebrew were not suppressed by modern colonial languages, as was the case of less-established ones such as Quechua, Aymara, or Nahuatl, which suffered the impact of Latin and Spanish, supported by the infrastructure of what Darcy Ribeiro called "mercantile empires with a salvation mission" to distinguish Spanish (as well as Portuguese and Russian) empire(s) from "colonial-capitalistic mercantilism" (Holland

Table 1 Speakers of Major Languages (Percentages of World Population\*)

Language	1958	1970	1980	1992
Arabic	2.7	2.9	3.3	3.5
Bengali	2.7	2.9	3.2	3.2
English	9.8	9.1	8.7	7.6
Hindi	5.2	5.3	5.3	6.4
Mandarin	15.6	16.6	15.8	15.2
Russian	5.5	5.6	6.0	4.9
Spanish	5.0	5.2	5.5	6.1

\*Total number of people speaking languages spoken by 1 million or more people  
 Source: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996). Percentages calculated from data compiled by Professor Sidney S. Culbert, Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Seattle, on the number of people speaking languages spoken by 1 million people or more and reported annually in the *World Almanac and Book of Facts*. His estimates include both "mother-tongue" and "nonmother tongue" speakers and are derived from national censuses, sample surveys of the population, surveys of radio and television broadcasts, population growth data, secondary studies, and other sources.

and England, seventeenth century) and from the "industrial imperialism" enacted by England in the nineteenth century and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century.

Let's now turn toward Huntington's comment on language and civilization in this global era (see tables 1 and 2). Huntington's main argument is to disprove that English is (becoming) a universal language, the language of a unified civilization. He is right to say that when a Korean businessman and a Chinese banker speak in English they are not carrying in that conversation the weight of English/American civilization. Furthermore, there are far more speakers of Mandarin than English speakers. As a matter of fact, the totality of speakers of languages spoken in China is almost equal to the totality of speakers of colonial languages (see table 2). If we add to this the number of speakers of Hindi, Russian, Bengali, and Arabic, the number of speakers of noncolonial languages largely outweighs the number of speakers of colonial languages.

But the question is not so much the number of speakers as it is the hegemonic power of colonial languages in the domain of knowledge, intellectual production, and cultures of scholarship. In the domain of literature, for instance, one can write in English and still add to it the density of Spanish/Latin American memories, as Latino/as are doing in this country.

Table 2 Speakers of Principal Chinese and Western Languages

Language	1958		1992	
	No. of Speakers (in millions)	Percentage of World	No. of Speakers (in millions)	Percentage of World
Mandarin	444	15.6	907	15.2
Cantonese	43	1.5	65	1.1
Wu	39	1.4	64	1.1
Min	36	1.3	50	0.8
Hakka	19	0.7	33	0.6
Chinese languages	581	20.5	1119	18.8
English	278	9.8	456	7.6
Spanish	142	5.0	362	6.1
Portuguese	74	2.6	177	3.0
German	120	4.2	119	2.0
French	70	2.5	123	2.1
Western languages	684	24.1	1237	20.8
World total	2845	44.5	5979	39.4

Source: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996). Percentages calculated from language data compiled by Professor Sidney S. Culbert, Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Seattle, and reported in the *World Almanac and Book of Facts* for 1959 and 1993.

English in postpartition India doesn't carry the same memory as national English in Britain; in the same way that English spoken in England by Third World immigrants doesn't carry the same cultural and ideological weight as the King's English. In other words, what the current stage of globalization is enacting is (unconsciously) the uncoupling of the "natural" link between languages and nations, languages and national memories, languages and national literature. Thus, it is creating the condition for and enacting the relocation of languages and the fracture of cultures. Indeed, the very concept of culture (and civilization in Huntington's perspective) is difficult to sustain as homogenous spaces for people of common interests, goals, memories, languages, and beliefs. It is true, as Huntington underlines, that after decolonization "native" languages are gaining ground as they are linked either to state politics or to social movements and in literature. Cultures of scholarship are also being relocated. Thus, if English is becoming the universal language of scholarship, English is not carrying with it the conceptual weight

and value of Western scholarship. My contention is that something similar to what happens in literature is happening in cultures of scholarship: a border gnoseology is emerging at the intersection of Western epistemology and non-Western knowledge, characterized as "wisdom" by the former.

In June of 1996 a World Conference on Language Rights took place in Barcelona, Spain, and more than one hundred NGOs attended. One of the main goals of the conference was to approve a universal declaration of language rights, which intends to be a complimentary resolution to the declaration of human rights. The final goal is to have this declaration approved by the OUN. The conference was presided over by Rigoberta Menchú, the well-known Maya-Quiche intellectual and activist from Guatemala. This event, I submit, is the consequence of a radical transformation of those colonial beliefs that linked languages with the boundaries of humanity from the early stages of modernity and globalization. Toward the 1970s, the power of national states began to be eroded by the configuration of transnational economic alliances (the years of OPEC, of Japan entering the world market, the consolidation of the TNC). The weakening of the state was counterbalanced by the strengthening of communities that had been repressed precisely during the years of nation-building and state consolidation. Asia and Africa were the locations of decolonization movements. Latin Americans experienced a revival of indigenous movements for their rights, their lands, their languages.<sup>10</sup> Rigoberta Menchú emerges from these processes. What all this amounts to, among other important consequences, is the clear and forceful articulation of a politics and philosophy of language that supplants the (al)location to which minor languages had been attributed by the philosophy of language underlying the civilizing mission and the politics of language enacted by the state both within the nation<sup>11</sup> and in the colonies.<sup>12</sup>

In Latin America, the increasing influence and internationalization of indigenous organizations<sup>13</sup> had a remarkable impact on the politics of language and education. The rise of what began to be called "new ethnicity" did not emerge all at once, of course. Behind this development there was a long tradition of rebellions, resistances, and adaptations controlled either by colonial or national powers (or both) and omitted in the teaching of national histories, cultures, and national literary practices.<sup>14</sup> Spanish, a subaltern language in the European modernity, became the official and hegemonic language in areas with a dense Amerindian population such as the Andes (Bolivia, Peru,

Ecuador) and Mesoamerica (Mexico, Guatemala). From the point of view of the Amerindian population, languages were critical in maintaining a sense of continuity from colonial times through the nation-building period and up to the end of the twentieth century. The changes witnessed in the 1970s, the emergence of a new Indian consciousness, were propelled by Indians who had been employed by the state, either as community development workers or as schoolteachers. They were looking not only for a new Indian identity but also for the chance to put pressure on those in positions of power and in government in order to influence the future of Indian polity. On the other hand, technological globalization contributed to the process, because indigenous activists and their international supporters could be linked through the web of transnational information networks. One of the paradoxes of globalization is that it allows subaltern communities within the nation-state to create transnational alliances beyond the state to fight for their own social and human rights. The right to have and use languages located in a subaltern position by the discourse of the civilizing mission and the public policy of the state is one of the restitutions claimed under language and human rights. That is, the links between languages and the boundaries of humanity are entering into a process of disintegration whose consequences we may not yet foresee.

Parallel to social movements and the premium placed on the language issue was the emergence of intellectuals of Amerindian descent for whom their "mother tongue" was naturally an Amerindian language (Aymara, Quechua, Maya, Nahuatl). The emergence of a new community of intellectuals in the cultural landscape of Latin America fits Gramsci's description of the "organic intellectual": "Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields."<sup>15</sup> For historical reasons, related to the history of colonialism itself, intellectuals of Amerindian descent in Latin America do not have the influence in the public spheres that African American or Latino/a intellectuals have in the United States. One area where they have been active and influential is education and in contesting the state ideology regarding language and memories.<sup>16</sup> More than a restitution of an authentic past, the intellectual articulation of history and education shall be understood in the process of nation-building and colonial

and imperial world order. To make a long story short, at the end of the nineteenth century, when the institutionalization of national languages was at its height<sup>17</sup> and the cannibals of the early colonial period were converted into the primitives of the era of colonial expansion and the standard of civilization was also stipulated among the major European powers,<sup>18</sup> the civilizing mission and the concept of "civility" became a regulative principle in interstate, imperial, and neocolonial discourses in the Americas.

A case in point is the notion of "frontier" at the end of the century in the United States as well as in Argentina: the frontier was the movable (westward) landmark of the march of the civilizing mission, the line dividing civilization from barbarism. The frontier, however, was not only geographic but epistemologic as well: the location of the primitive and the barbarian was the "vacant land," from the point of view of economy, and the "empty space" of thinking, theory, and intellectual production.<sup>19</sup> As Barran persuasively states it: "The subjugation of the 'barbarian' sensibility was simplified by the fact that it (the barbarian sensibility) was ill-adapted to theorize itself, since theory was precisely its negation. That absence of self-theoretical reflection did not make possible the formation of a 'barbarian' counterculture, consciously programmed. Theory and pre-elaborated plans were, instead, the essence of 'civilization' and their agents were the intellectuals of the new society."<sup>20</sup> Thus, the organic intellectuals of the Amerindian social movements (as well as Latino, African American, and women's) are precisely the main agents of the moment in which "barbarism" appropriates the theoretical practices and elaborated projects, engulfing and superseding the discourse of the civilizing mission and its theoretical foundations. The "frontier of civilization" in the late nineteenth century has become the "borderland" of the end of the twentieth century. Borderlands, contrary to frontiers, are no longer the lines where civilization and barbarism meet and divide, but the location where a new consciousness, a border gnosis, emerges from the repression subjected by the civilizing mission.<sup>21</sup> Border gnosis is not a counterculture, but the denial of the denial of "barbarism"; not a Hegelian synthesis, but the absorption of the "civilizing" principles into the "civilization of barbarism": a "phagocytosis" of civilization by the barbarian (as Argentinian philosopher Rodolfo Kusch will have it), rather than the barbarian bending and entering civilization. It is also an act of "anthropofagia," as Brazilian writer Mario de Andrade and Brazilian poet and literary critic Haroldo de Campos word it. What we are facing here is no longer spaces in between or hybridity, in the convivial



images of contact zones, but the forces of “barbarian” theorizing and rationality, to which this paper would like to contribute, integrating and superseding the restrictive logic behind the idea of “civilization” by giving rise to what the civilizing mission suppressed: the self-appropriation of all the good qualities that were denied to the barbarians. “Border gnoseology” (rather than epistemology) in all its complexity (geocultural, sexual, racial, national, diasporic, exilic, etc.) is a new way of thinking that emerges from the sensibilities and conditions of everyday life created by colonial legacies and economic globalization.<sup>22</sup>

At this point I need to come back to Wallerstein’s observation about cultures of scholarship between 1850 and 1945 and to the distribution of the scientific labor at the moment of high modernity and capitalist global expansion,<sup>23</sup> and to pursue their transformation after 1945, when the center of the cultures of scholarship began to be relocated in the United States. But before looking at the transformation of scholarly labor after 1945, let’s briefly go back to Elias to establish the links between the two periods mentioned above. According to his neo-Marxist model, there is a moment in the evolution of the human species in which the “warrior” and the “man of wisdom” emerged as particular social roles. It is also, according to Elias, when the community became organized and survived on food surplus instead of on production and preservation. If we now make a quantum leap and link the simple version of the model to the danger of nuclear war (Elias’s latest concern)<sup>24</sup> and to cultures of scholarship (the topic I am introducing now), we are forced to face once again the complicity between the civilizing mission articulated in colonial discourse and the civilizing process(es) articulated as an object of study of the human sciences in complicity with the ideology of the civilizing mission: that is, a configuration of knowledge whose power consisted in denying epistemological possibilities to the barbarians. Cultures of scholarship were precisely what people outside Europe either lacked (like the Aztecs and the Incas) or, if they happened to possess them (like China, India, and the Islamic world), they became an object of study (e.g., the rise of “Orientalism”). Over the five hundred years of Western expansion and the creation of colleges and universities in colonized areas since the beginning of the sixteenth century, this belief became so strong as to make people doubt their own wisdom, when that wisdom was not articulated in Western educational institutions and languages. When comparative studies of civilization became a prestigious

discipline within European research institutions, a distinction was made between civilizations that were converted into objects of study and civilizations that had the necessary frame of mind and cultures of scholarship to be the place from where to study other civilizations. Cultures of scholarship after WWII were recast under these legacies, although they adapted to the new needs of the third stage of globalization.

At the inception of what I have called the third stage of globalization (since 1945), decolonization went hand in hand with the cold war and the division of the world into three ranked areas (first, second, and third worlds). Such a geocultural division also implied a division of scientific and scholarly labor. Once countries were located as being (a) technologically advanced and free of ideological constraints, (b) technologically advanced but encumbered by an ideological elite, preventing utilitarian thinking, and (c) traditionally, economically, and technologically underdeveloped, with a traditional mentality obscuring the possibility of utilitarian and scientific thinking, the loci of scientific and scholarly enunciation were also established. Thus the map of scholarly production between 1850 and 1945 traced by Wallerstein: scholarship was located in Europe and the rest of the world was either the scene of interesting human achievements to study and understand, but frozen in time and antimodern, or of cultures where the civilizing mission had precisely the mission to civilize. The first was the province of civilizational studies (e.g., Orientalism), the second the province of anthropology. The dominant colonial cultures of scholarship were in France, England, and Germany. After 1945, the previous landscape was redressed slightly.

Once the new world order was accepted (first, second, and third worlds), the distribution of scientific labor was reorganized accordingly.<sup>25</sup> *Culture* and no longer *civilization* was the term used to locate a huge area of the planet within the premodern, that is, the third world. The third world became a space, geographic as well as epistemological, where “culture” rather than “science” was produced. The second world had, indeed, achieved a level of technological and scientific status comparable with the first. However, the discourse of universal scientific and scholarly knowledge was produced in the first, underlying the “ideological” shortcoming of the second world, which kept them apart from an ideal neutrality of scientific knowledge, tied up with the political ideal of democracy. Thus, the first world also became the locus of disciplinary and scholarly enterprise that made the second world an object of study. In summary, and according to the scientific division of labor, one

group of social scientists was set apart to study the pristine state of underdeveloped countries and their interactions with the Western world (e.g., the North Atlantic). This task was mainly placed in the hands of anthropologists. Other clans (sociologists, political scientists, and economists) also studied the third world in its process of modernization and contributed to setting guidelines to modernize (instead of Christianize or civilize) backward countries, although the main province of this group of social scientists remained in the self-study of the first world and no longer in specific countries. Wallerstein's dictum about the social sciences between 1850 and 1914 can be recast in the new world order after 1945: "basically not only does the scholarship come out of these five countries [to which it is necessary to add the United States, after 1945], but most of the scholarship by most scholars is about their own country."<sup>26</sup> If we change "country" to "first world" and we add the United States to the original picture, we have a map of the correspondence between distribution of scientific labor and areas of study instead of country. In fact, "area of study" is an invention that corresponds to the last stage of globalization and cuts across the study of "civilization" and "culture" before 1945.

The humanities were not alien to such a distribution of labor, although they did not occupy a central place in it. To take just one example: the study of languages and literatures was cast within the same epistemological frame. The languages of literature were mainly the colonial languages of the modern period with their distinguished legacies, Greek and Latin. Literary studies remained within that tradition. Literature in the modern period was increasingly cast as "national literature," and, of course, written in a national language. Literary studies, in their historico-philological foundation before 1945 as well as in their structuralist and poststructuralist formulations of the 1970s, focused on the literature of the five countries of scholarship mentioned by Wallerstein. I am sure we all noticed that Spain was not among the five countries of modern scholarship. And, of course, Spanish did not count as a language of scholarship. This imperial rift of the modern period put Spain and Spanish in an ambiguous place between "Eastern Civilizations" and "Modern Europe." When it comes to Latin America, the location of Spain between the Arabic world of North Africa and the European world of Western Europe becomes further complicated because of the relations during the modern period between Spanish and Amerindian languages, and by the fact that Andean and Mesoamerican civilizations were not part of civilizational studies in the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Latin America became, then, of particular

interest to understanding the question of languages, literatures, and literary studies in the changing distribution of scientific labor and cultural practices since 1850. The Spanish language, in Latin America, was twice subaltern: it was no longer the Spanish of Spain, while at the same time, Spain and Spanish became marginal to European modernity since the seventeenth century. On the other hand, Amerindian languages, in their complex and rich relations between the oral and the written,<sup>28</sup> were not part of reflections on languages and literatures, but of pre-Columbian studies (a particular version of civilizational studies framed within the history and legacies of Spanish colonialism), of folklore and ethnohistory or, more recently, of colonial cultural studies.<sup>29</sup> In summary: languages and literary studies were maintained within the epistemological framework of cultural practice and scholarship of North Atlantic modernity and the cultural configuration shaped by the idea of civilization and the civilizing mission, together with the process of economic globalization.

I have suggested that the economic conditions created by globalization contributed to the rise of "barbarian theorizing" as border gnoseology, not as an opposition to "civilian" (in the double meaning of both civilization and citizenship) "theorizing" but as a displacement and a new departure. The comparison between Norbert Elias's and Darcy Ribeiro's studies of civilization process could be helpful in this regard. There are three aspects of the comparison I would like to highlight. First, whereas Elias conceives the civilization process as a particular European phenomenon of the past five hundred years, Ribeiro conceives it as a long, diverse, and complex set of processes of the human species. Second, whereas Elias focuses on the civilizing process, which is at the same time the consolidation of (Western) Europe as a world hegemonic power, Ribeiro looks at Europe as a recent outcome of human civilizing processes that were preceded by previous hegemonic power and will also be transformed and dissolved in a future governed by what Ribeiro calls "the thermonuclear revolution and future societies." Third, although both Elias and Ribeiro are still prisoners of the temporal arrangement of human histories implanted in modernity, Ribeiro's concern with colonization and European expansion allows him to open the doors to a spatial conceptualization of civilization processes and of local histories arranged around successive and surviving centers of world hegemony. Fourth, and finally, the fact that Ribeiro's geocultural focus and concerns are the Americas and not Europe (as in the case of Elias's) makes it impossible for

him not to analyze the process of European civilization as a process of subalternization of world cultures: "Nothing in the world," Ribeiro states,

was left out by the forces liberated by the European expansion. In it we detect the foundation of the reorganization of nature, whose flora and fauna were normalized all over the planet. It (European colonial expansion) is the main agency for the disappearance of thousands of ethnic communities, for racial mixtures and for the linguistic and cultural extension of European people. In the process of this expansion, modern technologies as well as forms of social organization and bodies of cultural values relevant in and for Europe, were disseminated and generalized. The outcome of this process is the modern world, unified by commerce and communication, activated by the same technology, inspired by a basic and common system of values.<sup>30</sup>

This, in a nutshell, is Ribeiro's view of what Elias called the "civilizing process."

Now, what is relevant in this comparison to understand "barbarian theorizing" as border epistemology emerging from the conditions created by the last and perhaps most radical stage of globalization is the possibility (for someone like Ribeiro) of theorizing from the border (border as threshold and liminality, as two sides connected by a bridge, as a geographical and epistemological location); that is, of having both the formation in "civilized theorizing" and the experience of someone who lives and experiences, including the training in "civilized theorizing," in communities that have been precisely subalternized and placed in the margins by the very concept and expansion of European civilization. Thus an *anthropologador*: someone who was trained as an anthropologist and at the same time was part of the "other." The common knowledge that Ribeiro is a "Third World theoretician," as implied by Meggers<sup>31</sup> in her introduction to the first edition of *O Processo Civilizatorio*, was clearly stated by Sonntag in his preface to the German edition: "The sheer fact of being a theory *from/of* the Third World *for* the Third World, the censured one, are those who continue to believe that the belly of the world is someplace in between Vienna, Berlin, Bonn, Moscow, Washington or Rome. The fact that Ribeiro doesn't attribute to the First World a relevant role in the formation of 'future societies' . . . implies clearly a challenge which has to be confronted by critical theory of the developed world (e.g., 'civilian theorizing'), immediately and seriously, if it doesn't want to run the risk of disap-

pearing."<sup>32</sup> The only change I would make to this paragraph is that Ribeiro's theory of the civilizing process is certainly a theory *from/of* the third world, but *not only for the third world*. Sonntag, with plenty of good will, maintains the regional scope of third-world theorizing for the third world, as a kind of "barbarian counterculture" to which still first-world theorizing has to react and accommodate itself. Third-world theorizing is also *for* the first world in the sense that critical theory is subsumed and incorporated in a new geo-cultural and epistemological location.

To close, then, the main thrust of this article was, first, that globalization is creating the conditions for spatializing the civilization process and, by so doing, of denying the denial of coevalness as one of the main epistemological strategies of colonial/imperial expansion and creating the conditions for "barbarian theorizing": theorizing *from/of* the third world (the expression used metaphorically here) for the (first/third) entire planet. The second purpose of this article was to identify some of the instances (social movements and language rights, emergence of new sites of thinking in between disciplines and in between languages, e.g., the self-restitution of barbarism as a theoretical locus, and a progressive force offering valuable correctives to the abuses of post-Enlightenment reason, science, and disciplinarity), in which the denial of the denial of coevalness materializes itself by redressing and implementing long-lasting forces, sensibilities, and rationalities repressed by the one-sided ideology of the civilizing mission/process. The relocation of languages and cultures, finally, is creating the conditions for the emergence of an epistemological potential (e.g., border gnoseology) at the multiple intersections and interstices of the "West and the rest" in Huntington's new world order.<sup>33</sup>

#### Notes

- 1 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (New York, 1974).
- 2 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (1937), Vol. 1, *The History of Manners* (New York, 1978), Vol. 2, *State Formation and Civilization* (New York, 1982).
- 3 Joseph Fontana, *Europa Ante el Espejo* (Barcelona, 1994); Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh, 1957); Edgar Morin, *Penser l'Europe* (Paris, 1987).
- 4 It is worth noting that Sigmund Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* was translated into English as *Civilization and Its Discontents*.
- 5 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996).



- 6 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York, 1983).
- 7 Immanuel Wallerstein, "Open de Social Sciences," *ITEMS* 50, no. 1 (1996): 3.
- 8 Walter D. Mignolo, "On the Colonization of Amerindian Languages and Memories: Renaissance Theories of Writing and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 2 (1992): 301–330.
- 9 Ernst-Robert Curtius, *L'idée de civilisation dans la conscience française*, trans. from German by Henri Jourdan (Paris, 1929); W. Mignolo, "Nebrija in the New World: The Question of the Letter, the Colonization of Amerindian Languages, and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition," *L'Homme* 122–124 (1992): 187–209; Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York, 1995), 29–54.
- 10 R. Stavenhagen and D. Iturralde, eds. *Entre la ley y la costumbre. El derecho consuetudinario indígena en America Latina*. (Mexico, 1990). Stefano Varese, ed., *Pueblos indios, soberanía y globalismo* (Quito, 1996).
- 11 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson (Boston, 1991), 37–65; Bruce Mannheim, *The Language of the Inka since the European Invasion* (Austin, 1991), 1–112.
- 12 Shirley Brice Heath, *Telling Tongues: Language Policy in Mexico, Colony to Nation* (London, 1972).
- 13 M. Jansen and T. Leymour, eds., *The Indian of Mexico in Pre-Columbian and Modern Times: An International Colloquium* (Leiden, 1981); Donna Lee Van Cott, *Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America: Inter-American Dialogue* (New York, 1994).
- 14 Heath, *Telling Tongues*.
- 15 Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York, 1994), 5.
- 16 Intellectuals of indigenous descent have been active, mainly in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Guatemala, both as scholars and political leaders. Victor Hugo-Cárdenas, the current vice president of Bolivia, is a case in point. Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory: Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes* (New York, 1990), studied the life and deeds of several intellectuals of indigenous descent. Historian Roberto Choque is one distinguished figure currently in Bolivia, together with Humberto Mamani, Esteban Ticona, and others (see the collection *Educación Indígena: Ciudadanía o colonización?* [La Paz, 1992], with prologue by Victor Hugo-Cárdenas.) In the Islamic world, a similar concern is being explored by scholars and intellectuals of Islamic/Muslim descent. See Tomas Gerholm, "Two Muslim Intellectuals in the Postmodern West: Akbar Ahmed and Ziauddin Sardar," in *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity* (New York, 1990), 194–212.
- 17 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, UK, 1990).
- 18 G. W. Gong, *The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society* (Oxford, 1984); Roland Robertson, "'Civilization' and Civilizing Process: Elias, Global-

- ization and Analytic Synthesis," in *Cultural Theory and Cultural Change*, ed. M. Featherstone (London, 1992), 211–228.
- 19 Jose Pedro Barran, *Historia de la Sensibilidad en Uruguay*, Vol. 2, *El disciplinamiento, 1860–1920* (Montevideo, 1990).
- 20 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 21 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera* (San Francisco, 1987).
- 22 I do not have time to elaborate on this topic. To avoid the possible surprise of the reader, I can say that what I am working toward is in the articulation of what we can call "postcolonial reason" (a way of critical thinking from the histories of various colonialisms, rather than from the history of modernity, as in the case of the Frankfurt School). Postcolonial thinkers, instead of being Jews, like the members of the Frankfurt School, are people who have experienced colonial legacies. Furthermore, I am not trying to find a niche for postcolonial critical thinking within a discipline, as does Craig Calhoun (*Critical Social Theory: Culture, History and the Challenge of Difference* [Oxford, 1995]), who brilliantly attempts to find in sociology a niche for transdisciplinary critical thinking (e.g., feminism) within the tradition of the Frankfurt School. On the contrary, I am trying to reveal the complicities among imperial languages, colonial expansion, and disciplinary foundations in the social sciences and the humanities. In other words, I am trying to state that postcolonial critical thinking is, to intellectuals who have experienced colonial legacies, what critical theory (à la Frankfurt) is to those who have experienced the limits of modern reason and the racial persecution of the Jews.
- 23 Frederick Engels and Karl Marx, *On Colonialism* (Moscow, 1959).
- 24 Norbert Elias, "The Retreat of Sociologists into the Present," *Theory, Culture and Society* 4, nos. 2–3 (1987): 23–30.
- 25 Carl E. Pletsch, "The Three Worlds, or the Division of Social Scientific Labor, circa 1950–1975," *Comparative Study of Society and History* 23, no. 4 (1981): 565–590.
- 26 Wallerstein, "Open de Social Sciences," 3.
- 27 Michael D. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code* (New York, 1992).
- 28 Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo, eds., *Writing without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes* (Durham, NC, 1994).
- 29 Walter D. Mignolo, "The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Colonization and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition," *Renaissance Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (winter 1992): 808–828.
- 30 Darcy Ribeiro, *Las Américas y la civilización: Proceso de formación y causas del desarrollo desigual de los pueblos americanos* (Caracas, 1992), 57.
- 31 Betty J. Meggers, "Prologo a Edição Norte-Americana," reprinted in Ribeiro's *O Processo Civilizatorio: Etapas da Evolução Socio-Cultural* (Petropolis, 1991).
- 32 Heinz Rudolf Sonntag, "Epilogo a Edição Alema," reprinted in Ribeiro's *O Processo Civilizatorio*, 216.
- 33 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 183–206.