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# *Colonial Difference, Geopolitics of Knowledge, and Global Coloniality in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist World-System*

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*Ramón Grosfoguel*

This article attempts to clarify some of the concepts and intellectual projects implied in the emerging critical dialogue between the world-systems approach and the postcolonial critique. It provides an alternative reading of the modern world-system (Wallerstein, 1974), or, as Walter Mignolo has recently proposed, the modern/colonial world-system (Mignolo, 2000). It uses the world-systems approach (Wallerstein, 1979) as a point of departure. The unit of analysis used here is not a society, but a historical system (Wallerstein, 1979; 1991a). The space of historical systems is larger than the boundaries of a nation-state and the time longer than a few decades. Yet, by situating or geopolitically locating knowledge production from the colonial difference of the North-South divide, I attempt to reinterpret important aspects of the capitalist world-system. I am situating my knowledge production not in representation of, but from the subaltern experiences of people in the South. A world-systems approach provides an important conceptual framework to rethink the modern/colonial world. However, an epistemic perspective from the subaltern side of the colonial difference contributes to counter certain limitations of the world-systems approach. The first part of this article discusses coloniality of power and symbolic capital as two crucial concepts that force us to rethink global capitalism. The second part discusses the geopolitics of knowledge and the imaginary of the modern/colonial world-system. The third part is a call for a critical dialogue between two literatures: postcolonial critique and the world-systems approach. Finally, the last section is a brief discussion of the implications of these debates for utopian thinking.

## COLONIALITY OF POWER AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

It might seem anachronistic to talk about colonies and colonialism today. However, a world-systems approach from the perspective of the colonial difference offers a unique opportunity to reinterpret the modern world and to question the assumption that the world has been decolonized. I intend to rethink the modern/colonial world-system from the multiple locations and experiences of people from the South which reveal the limitations of the so-called decolonization of the modern world, both in terms of the global political-economy and the dominant geoculture and imaginary. The North-South divide calls for a rethinking of the postcolonial condition of the so-called independent nation-states in the periphery. Independent republics in the periphery live the crude exploitation of the capitalist world-system. Moreover, migrants from the South in the metropolises experience the effects of racism as a hegemonic imaginary of the modern/colonial world-system. Colonial migrant experience illustrates how racial/colonial ideologies have not been eradicated from metropolitan centers which remain in grave need of a sociocultural decolonization. To think from the colonial difference can highlight global processes that the world-systems approach does not emphasize such as “global symbolic/ideological strategies” (Grosfoguel, 1994) and “global coloniality” (Quijano, 1993).

It is impossible to understand today's global political-economy without taking into account the United States' global geopolitical symbolic/ideological strategies and its colonial/racist social imaginary. The manufacturing of Cold War “symbolic showcases” was crucial to sell the United States' developmentalist policies, as opposed to the Soviet model, to the periphery of the world-economy. The world-systems approach uses the notion of geoculture to address global ideologies. However, this is insufficient to understand showcase strategies in the world-system. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital and Aníbal Quijano's notion of coloniality of power can redress these limitations. Although Bourdieu developed the concept of symbolic capital for national and microsocial analysis, it is a powerful tool when applied to conceptualize symbolic strategies at a global scale related to the manufacturing of showcases. The United States developed global symbolic/ideological strategies during the Cold War to showcase a peripheral region or an ethnic group as opposed to a challenging peripheral country or ethnic

group. It did this in order to gain symbolic capital for its developmentalist model. These strategies are material and constitutive of global political-economic processes. They are expensive because they entail the investment of capital in nonprofitable forms such as credits, aid, and assistance programs. Nevertheless, symbolic profits could translate into economic profits in the long run.

The second concept I would like to discuss is the concept of coloniality developed by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano to account for the entangled and mutually constitutive relations between the international division of labor, the global racial/ethnic hierarchy, and the hegemonic Eurocentric epistemologies in the modern/colonial world-system. Although colonial administrations have been almost entirely eradicated and the majority of the periphery is politically organized into nation-states, non-European people are still living under crude European-Euro-American exploitation and domination. Coloniality at a world-scale, with the United States as the undisputed hegemon over non-European people, characterizes the globalization of the capitalist world-economy today. The old colonial hierarchies of European/non-Europeans remain in place and are entangled with the international division of labor. Herein lies the relevance of the distinction between colonialism and coloniality. Coloniality refers to the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations. Coloniality of power refers to a crucial structuring process in the modern/colonial world-system that articulates peripheral locations in the international division of labor, subaltern group political strategies, and Third World migrants' inscription in the racial/ethnic hierarchy of metropolitan global cities.

Peripheral nation-states live today under the regime of global coloniality imposed by the United States through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the Pentagon, and NATO. This phenomenon cannot be understood from a nationalist nor a colonialist perspective that assumes automatic decolonization after the formation of a nation-state or from an approach that privileges the nation-state as the unit of analysis. Peripheral zones remain in a colonial situation even though they are no longer under a colonial administration.

Allow me to further clarify my use of the word colonial here. Colonial does not refer only to classical or internal colonialism, nor is it reduced to the presence of a colonial administration. A colonial

situation of exploitation and domination, formed by centuries of European colonialism, can persist in the present without the existence or the presence of a colonial administration. Quijano distinguishes between colonialism and coloniality. I use the word colonialism to refer to colonial situations enforced by the presence of a colonial administration such as during the period of classical colonialism, and, following Quijano (1991; 1993; 1998), I use coloniality to address colonial situations in the present period in which colonial administrations have almost been eradicated from the capitalist world-system. By colonial situations I mean the cultural, political, and economic oppression of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racial/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations. It is crucial to point out that coloniality in the contemporary world-system stems from the long history of European colonialism. Five hundred years of European expansion and domination formed an international division of labor between Europeans and non-Europeans that is reproduced in the present so-called postcolonial phase of the capitalist world-system (Wallerstein, 1979; 1995). Today the core zones of the capitalist world-economy overlap with predominantly White/European/Euro-American societies such as western Europe, Canada, Australia, and the United States, while peripheral zones overlap with previously colonized non-European people. Japan is the exception that confirms the rule. Japan was never colonized nor dominated by Europeans and, as did Western nations, played an active role in building its own colonial empire. China, although never fully colonized, was peripheralized through the use of colonial entrepôts such as Hong Kong and Macao, and through direct military interventions.

The global racial/ethnic hierarchy of Europeans and non-Europeans is an integral part of the development of the capitalist world-system's international division of labor (Wallerstein, 1983; Quijano, 1993; Mignolo, 1995). The international division of labor produced by European colonialism created a global racial/ethnic hierarchy beginning in the 1500's (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992; Mignolo, 1995). In the current post-independence period, this hierarchy continues to be an integral part of the contemporary global division of labor.

The pernicious influence of coloniality in all of its expressions at different levels (global, national, local) as well as its Eurocentric knowledges have been reflected in the antisystemic movements and

utopian thinking around the world. For example, many Leftist projects in Latin America following the dependentista underestimation of racial/ethnic hierarchies, have reproduced White Creole domination over non-European people within their organizations and when controlling state power. The Latin American "Left" never radically problematized the racial/ethnic hierarchies built during the European colonial expansion that are still present in Latin America's coloniality of power. The conflicts between the Sandinistas and the Mizquitos in Nicaragua emerged as part of the reproduction of the old racial/colonial hierarchies (Vila, 1992). This was not a conflict created by the CIA as Sandinistas would have us believe. The Sandinistas reproduced the historical coloniality of power between the Pacific coast and the Atlantic coast in Nicaragua. The White Creole elites in the Nicaraguan Pacific coast hegemonized the political, cultural, and economic relations that subordinated Blacks and Indians in the Atlantic coast. The differences between the Somocista dictatorship and the Sandinista regime were not that great when it came to social relations with colonial/racial Others. Similarly, Cuban White elites hegemonized the power positions in the postrevolutionary period (Moore, 1988). The number of Blacks and Mulattos in power positions is minimal and does not correspond to the demographic fact that they constitute the numerical majority. The historical continuities of the coloniality of power in Cuba are greater than the discontinuities. No radical project in Latin America can be successful without dismantling these colonial/racial hierarchies. This affects not only the scope of revolutionary processes but also the democratization of the social hierarchies. The underestimation of the problem of coloniality has contributed to the popular disillusionment with Leftist projects in Latin America.

I use a conceptualization that goes against the grain of commonly held assumptions. The social sciences and the humanities produce knowledge that is predominantly focused and oriented towards the nation-state as the unit of analysis (Wallerstein, 1991a). The dominant assumption is that nation-states are independent units and the main explanation for global inequalities is accounted for by the internal dynamics of each nation-state. While in the past decade, ongoing scholarship on globalization has challenged this assumption, none of this literature has adequately addressed the continued coloniality of formally independent states (Robertson, 1992; Mittleman, 1997; Sassen, 1998). The dominant representations of the

world today assume that colonial situations ceased to exist after the demise of colonial administrations. This mythology about the so-called decolonization of the world obscures the continuities between the colonial past and current global colonial/racial hierarchies and contributes to the invisibility of coloniality today. For the last 50 years, states that had been colonies, following the dominant Eurocentric liberal discourses (Wallerstein, 1991a; 1995), constructed ideologies of national identity, development, and sovereignty that produced an illusion of independence, development, and progress. Yet their economic and political systems were shaped by their subordinate position in a capitalist world-system organized around a hierarchical international division of labor (Wallerstein, 1979; 1984; 1995). The multiple and heterogeneous processes of the world-system, together with the predominance of Eurocentric cultures (Said, 1979; Wallerstein, 1991b; 1995; Lander, 1998; Quijano, 1998; Mignolo, 2000), constitute a global coloniality between Europeans/Euro-Americans and non-Europeans.

Thus, coloniality is entangled with, but is not reducible to, the international division of labor. The colonial axis between Europeans/Euro-Americans and non-Europeans is inscribed not only in relations of exploitation (between capital and labor) and relations of domination (between metropolitan and peripheral states), but in the production of subjectivities and knowledges.

## GEOPOLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE IMAGINARY OF THE MODERN/COLONIAL WORLD

As scholars we must recognize that we always speak from a specific location in the gender, class, racial, and sexual hierarchies of a particular region in the modern/colonial world-system. Our knowledges, as the feminist thinker Donna Haraway contends, are always already situated (1988), but I will add, following Quijano (1993) and Mignolo (2000), that they are situated within the axis of the colonial difference produced by the coloniality of power in the modern/colonial world-system. The Western/masculinist idea that we can produce knowledges that are unpositioned, unlocated, neutral, and universalistic, is one of the most pervasive mythologies in the modern/colonial world. Universal/global designs are always already situated in local histories (Mignolo, 2000). Those in power positions in



the European/Euro-American vs. non-European hierarchy of the modern/colonial world often think in terms of global designs or universalistic knowledges to control and dominate colonized/ racialized/subordinated peoples in the capitalist world-system. The colonial difference formed by centuries of European colonial expansion in the modern/colonial world-system is always constitutive of processes of knowledge production. To speak from the subaltern side of the colonial difference forces us to look at the world from angles and points of view critical of hegemonic perspectives. This requires an effort on our part. "Border thinking" or "border epistemology" are precisely the terms used by Walter D. Mignolo (2000), inspired in the work of Chicana and Chicano scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Norma Alarcón (1983), and José David Saldívar (1998), to refer to this in-between location of subaltern knowledges, critical of both imperial global designs (global coloniality) and anti-colonial nationalist strategies (internal coloniality).

Mignolo's concept of colonial difference is crucial here to overcome the paternalistic and elitist limits of both nationalist and colonialist discourses (Mignolo, 2000). If the modern world is constituted by a colonial difference, if there is no modernity without coloniality and, therefore, we live in a modern/colonial world, then, knowledges are not produced from a universal neutral location and we need to epistemologically account for the geopolitics of our knowledge production. The notion of colonial difference is important to geopolitically locate the forms of thinking and cosmologies produced by subaltern subjects as opposed to hegemonic global designs. The question is: From which location in the colonial divide are knowledges produced? Nationalist and colonialist discourses are thinking from a power position in the colonial divide of the modern/colonial world, while subaltern subjects are thinking from the subordinate side of the colonial difference. Colonialist discourses reproduce the North-South global colonial divide, while nationalist discourses reproduce an internal colonial divide within national formations. The knowledge, critical insights, and political strategies produced from the subaltern side of the colonial difference serve as point of departure to move beyond colonialist and nationalist discourses. Rather than underestimating the subaltern, we should take seriously their cosmologies, thinking processes, and political strategies as a point of departure to our knowledge production.



We live in a world where the dominant imaginary is still colonial. The global hegemonic colonial culture involves an intricate and uneven set of narratives with long histories that are re-enacted in the present through complex mediations. Postcolonial literatures have contributed to the critique of these narratives as they are produced and reproduced in the constitution of one group's superiority over an-Other. The process of "Othering" people has operated through a set of narrative oppositions such as the West and the Rest, civilized and savage, intelligent and stupid, hard-worker and lazy, superior and inferior, masculine and feminine (sexual and racist narratives have been entangled to racist discourses), pure and impure, clean and dirty, etc. There are world-systemic historical/structural processes that constituted these narratives which I can only simplify and schematically designate here, namely, the relationship between European Modernity (e.g., citizenship, nation-building, democracy, civil/social rights), European colonial expansion, colonial modernities, and White/masculinist supremacy.

The capitalist world-system was formed by the Spanish/Portuguese expansion to the Americas in the "long" sixteenth century (Wallerstein, 1974; Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992; Mignolo, 1995; 2000). This first modernity (from 1492 to 1650) built the foundations of the racist/colonial culture and global capitalist system we are living today. Simultaneously with its expansion to the Americas in 1492, the Spanish Empire expelled Arabs and Jews from Spain in the name of blood purity (*pureza de la sangre*). This "internal border" against Arabs and Jews was built at the same time as the "external border" against people from peripheral geographical zones (Mignolo, 2000). The Spanish and Portuguese expansion to the Americas built the racial categories that would be later generalized to the rest of the world (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). Nobody defined themselves as Blacks in Africa, Whites in Europe, or Indians in the Americas before the European expansion to the Americas. These categories were invented as part of the European colonization of the Americas (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). The formation of the international division of labor occurred simultaneously with the formation of a global racial/ethnic hierarchy. As Quijano states, there was no "pre" nor "post" to their joint constitution. The superiority of the Westerners/Europeans over non-Europeans in terms of a racial narrative of superior/inferior peoples was constructed in this period. This is why Mignolo states that Occidentalism (the dominant

discourse of the first modernity) is the socio-historical condition of possibility for the emergence of Orientalism (the dominant discourse of the second modernity) (Mignolo, 2000). Christianity was central to the constitution of the colonial imaginary of the world-system.

During the second modernity (1650–1945), the core of the world-system shifted from Spain and Portugal to Germany, The Netherlands, England, and France. The emergence of northwestern Europe as the core of the capitalist world-system continued, expanded, and deepened the “internal imaginary border” (against Jews, Arabs, and Gypsies) and the “external imaginary border” built during the first modernity (against the Americas and later expanded to include other geographical zones such as Africa, the Middle East, and Asia). The second modernity added a new border between northwestern Europeans and Iberian peoples to the old racial/colonial hierarchies. Hispanic/Latin Southern European cultures were constructed as inferior to the northwestern Europeans. This hierarchical division within Europe would extend to North America and be reenacted in the context of the U.S. imperial expansions of 1848 (Mexican-American War) and 1898 (Spanish-American War). The U.S. colonization of northern Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico formed part of the White Anglo hegemony in the nineteenth-century colonial expansions of the second modernity. Hispanic cultures were subalternized and the notion of whiteness acquired different and new meanings. In the context of the U.S. colonial expansion, White Spaniards were excluded from the notion of whiteness. “Hispanics” were constructed as part of the inferior others excluded from the superior “White,” “European” races. To make matters even more complicated, the United States’ notion of whiteness expanded to include groups that were internal colonial subjects of Europe under northwestern European hegemony (e.g., the Irish, eastern Europeans, Italians, and Jews). At the time, European Orientalist discourses were also being articulated in relation to the colonized populations of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The history of the second modernity is crucial to understand both the present racialization of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Latinos of all colors in the United States and the hegemony of Anglo-White-Americans. The Indian Wars in the late nineteenth century were part of this colonial expansion, although not recognized as such by mainstream historians and social scientists. The hegemonic White/Black divide does not ex-

haust the multiple racisms deployed and developed in the United States' colonial expansion and colonial regimes. Given the social construction of race, "whiteness" is not merely about skin color. There are other markers that racialize people located on the "wrong side" of the colonial difference (e.g., accent, language, demeanor).

The capitalist world-system expanded to cover the whole planet during the second modernity (Wallerstein, 1979). European (understood here not merely in geographic terms, but in the broader cultural and political sense of White European supremacy) and Euro-American processes of nation building, struggles for citizenship rights, and development of parliamentary regimes were inscribed in a global colonial/racist imaginary that established "internal" and "external" borders (Quijano, 1993; Mignolo, 2000). The invisibility of global coloniality in the process of building modern nation-states in nineteenth-century Europe and the Americas shows how powerful and ingrained its colonial/racist culture was and still is. While categories of modernity such as citizenship, democracy, and nation building were acknowledged for the dominant northwestern Europeans, the colonial others were submitted to coerced forms of labor and authoritarian political regimes in the periphery and semiperiphery. The Latin American periphery is no exception. White creole elites continued to dominate the power relations of the newly independent republics of South and Central America in the nineteenth-century. Latin American independence, achieved in struggle against Spain and Portugal, was hegemonized by Euro-American elites. It was not a process of social, political, cultural, or economic decolonization. Blacks, mulattos, Native Americans, and people of color remained in subordinated and disenfranchised positions in the coloniality of power constitutive of the emerging nation-states. Colonialism gave way to coloniality, that is, independence without decolonization.

Racism is a pervasive phenomenon that is constitutive not only of social relations in the United States, but of the imaginary of the capitalist world-system as a whole since the 1500's. Racism dominates the common sense of the modern/colonial world-system despite the changing meanings of racist discourses in the last 500 years. Biological racist discourses have now been replaced by what is called the new racism, or cultural racist discourses. Historically, scientific knowledges have been complicit with the formation of a racist imaginary. Sociobiology or eugenics were knowledges produced in

the name of science to justify or articulate biological racist discourses. A recent manifestation of the complicity between science and racism is the relationship between the recent neo-culture of poverty approaches in the social sciences and the new cultural racism. The new racism contends that the failure of colonial/racialized groups is not due to inferior genes or inferior IQ (although this is still a pervasive and popular perception) but rather to improper cultural habits and/or an inferior culture. This emphasis on culture over genes is what characterized the new cultural racisms dividing the world between groups with a superior culture and groups with an inferior or inadequate culture. This new racism has been legitimized by academic approaches that portray the high poverty rates among people of color both in the core and in the periphery in terms of their traditional, inadequate, underdeveloped, and inferior cultural values.

The postwar processes of nation building in the large majority of the periphery of the world-economy are still informed by these colonial legacies and by the colonial/racial culture built during centuries of European colonial expansion. The Eurocentric colonial culture is an ideology that is not geographically limited to Europe, but rather is the geoculture and imaginary of the modern world-system. Thus, modernity is always already constituted by coloniality. The myth that we live in a decolonized world needs to be challenged. This has crucial political implications in terms of how we conceive social change, struggles against inequality, scientific disciplines, knowledge production, utopian thinking, democracy, and decolonization.

## POSTCOLONIALITY AND WORLD-SYSTEMS: A CALL FOR A DIALOGUE

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

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

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

With very few exceptions, most postcolonial theorists come from fields in the humanities such as literature, rhetoric, and cultural studies. Only a few scholars in the field of postcoloniality come from the social sciences, in particular from anthropology. On the other hand, world-systems scholars are drawn mainly from disciplines in the social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics. Very few of them come from the humanities, with

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

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

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

World-systems analysis intends to be a critique of nineteenth-century social science. But it is an incomplete, unfinished critique. It still has not been able to find a way to surmount the most enduring (and misleading) legacy of nineteenth-century social science—the division of social analysis into three



arenas, three logics, three “levels”—the economic, the political and the socio-cultural. This trinity stands in the middle of the road, in granite, blocking our intellectual advance. Many find it unsatisfying, but in my view no one has yet found the way to dispense with the language and its implications, some of which are correct but most of which are probably not (1991a: 4).

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

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

Heterarchical thinking is an attempt to conceptualize social structures with a new language that breaks with the liberal paradigm of nineteenth-century social science (Kontopoulos, 1993). The old language of social structures is a language of closed systems, that is, of a single, overarching logic determining a single hierarchy. To define a historical system as a “nested hierarchy,” as Wallerstein proposed in the Gulbenkian Commission report *Open the Social Sciences* (1996), undermines the world-systems approach by continuing to use a metatheoretical model that corresponds to closed systems, precisely the opposite of what the world-systems approach attempts to do. In contrast, heterarchies move us beyond closed hierarchies into a language of complexity, open systems, entanglement of multiple and heterogeneous hierarchies, structural levels, and structuring logics. The notion of logics here is redefined to refer to the heterogeneous entanglement of multiple agents’ strategies. The idea is that there is neither autonomous logics nor a single logic, but multiple, heterogeneous, entangled, and complex processes within a single historical reality. The notion of entanglement is crucial here and approaches Wallerstein’s notion of historical systems understood as “integrated network[s] of economic, political and cultural processes” (1991a: 230). The moment multiple hierarchical relationships are considered to be entangled, according to Kontopoulos, or integrated, according to Wallerstein, no autonomous logics or domains remain. The notion of a single logic runs the risk of reductionism, which is contrary to the idea of complex systems, while the notion of multiple logics runs the risk of dualism. The solution to these ontological questions (the reductionist/autonomist dilemma) in heterarchical thinking is to go beyond the monism/dualism binary opposition and to talk about an emergentist materialism that implies multiple, entangled processes at different structural levels within a single historical material reality (which includes the symbolic/ideological as part of that material reality). Heterarchies keep the use of the notion of logics only for analytical purposes in order to make certain distinctions or to abstract certain processes that once integrated or entangled in a concrete historical process acquire a different structural effect and meaning. Heterarchical thinking provides a language for what Immanuel Wallerstein calls a new way of thinking that can break with the liberal nineteenth-century social sciences and focus on complex historical systems.

The notion of coloniality of power is also helpful in terms of the culture vs. economy dilemma. Quijano's work provides a new way of thinking about this dilemma that overcomes the limits of both post-colonial and world-systems analysis. In Latin America, most dependentista theorists privileged the economic relations in social processes at the expense of cultural and ideological determinations. Culture was perceived by the dependentista school as instrumental to capitalist accumulation processes. In many respects dependentistas and world-systems analysts reproduced some of the economic reductionism of orthodox Marxist approaches. This led to two problems: first, an underestimation of the colonial/racial hierarchies; and, secondly, an analytical impoverishment that could not account for the complexities of global heterarchical political-economic processes.

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

In the capitalist world-system, a peripheral nation-state may experience transformations in its form of incorporation into the capitalist world-economy, a minority of which might even move to a semi-peripheral position. However, to transform the whole system from a nation-state level is completely beyond their range of possibilities (Wallerstein, 1992a; 1992b). Therefore, a global problem cannot

have a national solution. This is not to deny the importance of political interventions at the nation-state level. The point here is not to reify the nation-state and to understand the limits of political interventions at this level for the long-term transformation of a system that operates on a world scale. The nation-state, although still an important institution of historical capitalism, is a limited space for radical political and social transformations. Collective agencies in the periphery need a global scope in order to make an effective political intervention in the capitalist world-system. Social struggles below and above the nation-state are strategic spaces of political intervention that are frequently ignored when the focus of the movements privileges the nation-state. Social movements' local and global connections are crucial for effective political interventions. The dependentistas overlooked this due, in part, to their tendency to privilege the nation-state as the unit of analysis and to the economic emphasis of their approaches. This had terrible political consequences for the Latin American Left and the credibility of the dependentista political project.

For most dependentistas and world-systems analysts, the economy was the privileged sphere of social analysis. Categories such as gender and race were frequently ignored and when used they were reduced (instrumentalized) to either class or economic interests. Quijano is one of the few exceptions to this critique (1993). Coloniality of power is a concept that attempts to integrate as part of a heterogeneous structural process the multiple relations in which cultural, political, and economic processes are entangled in capitalism as a historical system. Quijano uses the notion of structural heterogeneity which is close to the notion of heterarchy discussed above. Similar to world-systems analysis, the notion of coloniality conceptualizes the process of colonization of the Americas and the constitution of a capitalist world-economy as part of the same entangled process. However, differing from a world-systems approach, Quijano's structural heterogeneity implies the construction of a global racial/ethnic hierarchy that was simultaneous, coeval in time and space, to the constitution of an international division of labor with core-periphery relationships at a world scale. Since the initial formation of the capitalist world-system, the ceaseless accumulation of capital was entangled with racist, homophobic, and sexist global ideologies. The European colonial expansion was led by European heterosexual males. Everywhere they went, they exported their

cultural prejudices and formed heterarchical structures of sexual, gender, class, and racial inequality. Thus, in historical capitalism, understood as a heterarchical system or as a heterogeneous structure, the process of peripheral incorporation to the ceaseless accumulation of capital was constituted by, and entangled with, homophobic, sexist, and racist hierarchies and discourses. As opposed to world-systems analysis, what Quijano emphasizes with his notion of coloniality of power is that there is no overarching capitalist accumulation logic that can instrumentalize ethnic/racial divisions and that precedes the formation of a global colonial, Eurocentric culture. The instrumentalist approach of most world-systems analysis is reductive and is still caught in the old language of nineteenth-century social science. For Quijano, racism is constitutive and entangled with the international division of labor and capitalist accumulation at a world scale. Structural heterogeneity implies that multiple forms of labor coexist within a single historical process. Contrary to orthodox Marxist approaches, there is no linear succession of modes of production (slavery, feudalism, capitalism, etc.). From a Latin American peripheral perspective, these forms of labor were all articulated simultaneously in time and entangled in space between free forms of labor assigned to the core or European origin populations and coerced forms of labor assigned to the periphery or non-European populations. Capitalist accumulation at a world scale operates by simultaneously using diverse forms of labor divided, organized, and assigned according to the racist Eurocentric rationality of the coloniality of power. Moreover, for Quijano there is no linear teleology between the different forms of capitalist accumulation (primitive, absolute, and relative, in this order according to Marxist Eurocentric analysis). For Quijano, the multiple forms of accumulation also coexist simultaneously, are coeval in time. As a long-term trend, the violent (called primitive accumulation in Eurocentric Marxism) and absolute forms of accumulation are predominant in the non-European periphery while the relative forms of accumulation predominate in the free labor zones of the European core.

The second problem with the dependentista underestimation of cultural and ideological dynamics is that it impoverished their own political-economy approach. Ideological/symbolic strategies as well as Eurocentric forms of knowledge are constitutive of the political-economy of the capitalist world-system. Global symbolic/ideological strategies are an important structuring process of the core-periphery

relationships in the capitalist world-system. For instance, core states develop ideological/symbolic strategies by fostering occidentalist (Mignolo, 1995) forms of knowledge that privileged the West over the rest. This is clearly seen in developmentalist discourses which became a so-called scientific form of knowledge in the last 50 years. This knowledge privileged the West as the model of development. Developmentalist discourse offers a colonial recipe on how to become like the West.

Although the dependentistas struggled against these universalist/Occidentalst forms of knowledge, they perceived this knowledge as a superstructure or an epiphenomenon of some economic infrastructure. Dependentistas never perceived this knowledge as constitutive of Latin America's political-economy. Constructing peripheral zones such as Africa and Latin America as regions with a problem or with a backward stage of development concealed European and Euro-American responsibility in the exploitation of these continents. The construction of pathological regions in the periphery as opposed to the so-called normal development patterns of the West justified an even more intense political and economic intervention from imperial powers. By treating the Other as underdeveloped and backward, metropolitan exploitation and domination were justified in the name of the civilizing mission.

The ascribed superiority of European knowledge in many areas of life was an important aspect of the colonality of power in the modern/colonial world-system. Subaltern knowledges were excluded, omitted, silenced, and/or ignored. This is not a call for a fundamentalist nor an essentialist rescue mission for authenticity. The point here is to put the colonial difference at the center of the process of knowledge production (Mignolo, 2000). Subaltern knowledges are those knowledges at the intersection of the traditional and the modern. They are hybrid, transcultural forms of knowledge, not merely in the traditional sense of syncretism or *mestizaje*, but in Aimé Césaire's sense of the "miraculous weapons" (1983) or what I have called "subversive complicity" (Grosfoguel, 1996) against the system. These are forms of resistance that resignify and transform dominant forms of knowledge from the point of view of the non-Eurocentric rationality of subaltern subjectivities thinking from border epistemologies. They constitute what Walter Mignolo calls a critic of modernity from the geopolitical experiences and memories of colonality. According to Mignolo, this is a new space that deserves



further explorations both as a new critical dimension to modernity/coloniality and, at the same time, as a space from where new utopias can be devised (2000). This has important implications for knowledge production. Are we going to produce a new knowledge that repeats or reproduces the universalistic, Eurocentric, god's eye view? To say that the unit of analysis is the world-system, not the nation-state, is not equivalent to a neutral god's-eye view of the world. I believe that world-systems analysis from the subaltern side of the colonial difference takes the side of the periphery, the workers, women, racialized/colonial subjects, homosexuals/lesbians, and antisystemic movements in the process of knowledge production. This means that although world-systems analysis takes the world as a unit of analysis, it is taking a particular perspective of the world. Still, world-systems analysis has not found a way to incorporate subaltern knowledges in processes of knowledge production. Without this there can be no decolonization of knowledge and no utopistics beyond Eurocentrism. The complicity of the social sciences with the coloniality of power in knowledge production and imperial global designs makes a call for new institutional and noninstitutional locations from which the subaltern can speak and be heard.

## UTOPIAN THINKING

The outlined discussion has important implications for utopian thinking. So far, utopian thinking coming from the West is in serious crisis. The West has produced an utopian thinking that has not transcended the abstract universals that characterize Eurocentric thinking as part of global designs. The Left crisis in the present is partly due to the inability to imagine alternative worlds. The West is at a dead end when it comes to producing new alternatives. From socialist utopias to the market utopias of neoliberal thinking, the West keeps producing oppressive global designs. It is from the subaltern side of the colonial difference that new perspectives are emerging. The Zapatistas's struggle in Chiapas, Mexico as well as struggles in other parts of the periphery, are producing new border thinking resignifying the Western utopias from the cosmologies of non-Western subaltern groups. For example, the slogan of *un mundo donde muchos mundos co-existan* ("a world where many worlds co-exist"), leads to an utopian project of what Mignolo called, following

Caribbean thinker Edouard Glissant, “diversality” as a response to the Occidental universalism (2000). Diversality, which is not equivalent to pluralism, implies a critique to the global designs that attempt to impose a single, monologic utopian solution to the world at large beyond time and space. Diversality is a universal (antiuniversalistic) project open to the diverse responses and alternative cosmologies from the subaltern side of the colonial difference. Moreover, the Zapatista slogan of *mandar obedeciendo* (to rule by following), resignifies the notion of democracy from the cosmologies of indigenous people in Mexico. This is border thinking at its best, beyond nationalism and colonialism, beyond Western and non-Western fundamentalism.

One crucial implication of the notion of coloniality of power is that the first decolonization was incomplete. It was limited to the juridical-political independence from the European imperial states. This led to the formation of colonial independences. As a result, the world needs a second decolonization, different and more radical than the first one. A future decolonization should address hierarchies of entangled racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, and economic relations that the first decolonization left untouched. This second decolonization would necessarily imply the demise of the existing modern/colonial capitalist world-system. If Immanuel Wallerstein’s assessment is correct, that is, that we are living a bifurcation, a moment of transformational TimeSpace, towards a new historical system that could be better or worse than the capitalist world-system depending on the imagining of new alternatives and the effectivity of the agencies involved, then: We need to listen to the subaltern speak from non-Eurocentric, non-metropolitan locations. The essays in this collection represent an effort to think on alternative worlds beyond Eurocentrism and to make a contribution to these debates.

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