

Chapter 10

Reconciliation as a Contested Future: Decolonization as Project or Beyond the Paradigm of War

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The future of social reconciliation in countries such as South Africa, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, and many others, to a great extent depends on addressing the challenges posed by colonial legacies and neo-colonial realities. This is one of the ideas that ties together the different chapters in this anthology. The authors point to a 'truth' which is not only that of specific events or unspeakable acts. The 'truth' in question relates to our very modern experience. It intimates that modernity is complicit with a paradigm of war.¹

Reconciliation faces peculiar challenges if war is found to be not so much an extraordinary affair, but a constitutive feature of modernity. I will argue here that the ethics, if not the very practice of war, is maintained alive in modernity through enduring colonial relations of power. Colonialism, or, better put, coloniarity, may be understood as a naturalization of the ethics of war. Slavery, death, and even torture form part of the structure of power and horizon of meaning sustained by coloniarity. If violence and war persist in modernity through colonial forms of power, then it must be said that reconciliation demands processes of decolonization that introduce a new ethics beyond coloniarity and war. I submit that the future of reconciliation resides in the possibility of profound processes of decolonization.

Similar reflections to the ones that I have indicated took place in the context of understanding the nature and significance of the Second World War, and, more specifically, the Jewish Holocaust. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions respond to different conditions from those that led to the Nuremberg trials, but they all have understood themselves as attempting to deal with questions about justice, prosecutions, amnesties, and reparations after Nuremberg.² That is, they all learnt from the mechanisms for seeking justice after the Second World War. Also relevant are the reflections of intellectuals such as Zygmunt Bauman, Emmanuel Lévinas, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer who saw in the Jewish Holocaust not so much

1 I have developed this view in Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

2 The link between certain post-Second World War events and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are clearly stated by Iain Maclean in the first chapter of this volume.

a departure from the ideals of Western civilization as the very accomplishment of certain tendencies in modernity.³ My reflections here take a similar route, but where they focused quite exclusively on modernity as an intra-European phenomenon, I take the perspective here that modernity is a product of the action and counter-action of Europe and the colonial periphery.⁴ This perspective can hardly be avoided when one includes reference to Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa and Latin America as part of the enquiry. Indeed, as I will show below, modernity's complicity with a paradigm of war cannot be fully understood without reference to colonialism and to the precise definition (through colonial relations) of Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

The exploration of modernity as a paradigm of war and the implications of this reflection for the search for truth and reconciliation leads me here to an exploration of the modern episteme and its links with colonialism, anti-black racism, and anti-indigenous views. The emergence of the modern postreligious episteme involves a move away from social ideas based on religious differences to social and geopolitical relations defined in ontological and, later on, allegedly biological or racial differences. Reconciliation will thus be said to require both decolonization and deracialization, as well as a systematic questioning of the ways in which human bodies are conceived when they are made objects of domination, exploitation, and/or rape. In short, reconciliation requires the overcoming of modernity as a paradigm of war. And such overcoming requires the birth and sustenance of a particular kind of attitude: a decolonial attitude. The first step in these investigations lies in dispelling the idea that the search for truth and reconciliation itself is part and parcel of such a paradigm. And with that I shall begin.

Truth and Reconciliation in the Modern/Colonial World

The impetus of searching for truth in Truth and Reconciliation Commissions occurs in a context where, at least in certain influential academic and social circles, the search for truth has long been discredited. Nietzsche suggested long ago that the unconditional search for truth is an expression of the will to death.⁵ He argued that the search for truth is tied to ascetic views of subjectivity. Nietzsche traces the search

3 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2002); Emmanuel Lévinas, 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism', in *Critical Inquiry* (1990), 17 (Autumn 199), 63–71.

4 In this I follow to some extent 'post-colonial' figures such as Enrique Dussel and Edward Said. See Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. and edited by Eduardo Mendieta (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

5 I base my account here on Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966); Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann

for truth or sincerity and asceticism to Christian morals. The French philosopher Michel Foucault expanded these intriguing reflections later on in the twentieth century. For him, asceticism and martyrdom hide behind a demand for constant self-examination that surpasses the horizons of Christianity and defines modern hermeneutics of the self. The search for truth becomes equivalent to self sacrifice. There is, according to Foucault, 'No truth about the self without a sacrifice of the self'. Consciousness becomes the police of the libido: the task is to turn 'our eyes continuously downwards or inwards in order to decipher, among the movements of the soul, which ones come from the libido'.⁶ The search for truth becomes the motivation of a fight against ourselves.

As much as one should learn from great masters of suspicion like Nietzsche and Foucault, the search for truth in Truth and Reconciliation Commissions obeys different imperatives than those denounced by them: instead of fomenting a will to death (of the self) expressed in terms of ascetic inclinations or martyrdom it seeks to locate the roots of and to oppose a murderous will to death (of the Other). To make this idea more lucid consider the predicament of one of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's most enigmatic characters, Dimitri Raskolnikov. His desire for confession and penance in *Crime and Punishment* cannot be reduced to the notion of self-sacrifice that Nietzsche and Foucault found so pervasive in modernity.⁷ In it we are dealing not with the policing of the self, but with the coming to terms with a lie: that the old lady he killed deserved in one way or another to die. Like Raskolnikov, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions aim to locate and neutralize the force of a murderous lie. They make clear that murderous lies cannot be tolerated. In this context their calls for truth are a cry for life and not a call for the dissolution of the self. Quite the opposite, truth is searched for here so that a new and responsible self/nation can emerge from the ashes of death, murder, and deceit.

With all their limits and problems Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are expressions of the need and desire to speak 'truth to power'. The goal of searching for truth is, in this context, healing nations that have long been besieged by the evils of systematic murder and state sponsored terrorism. But the truth hardly ends in the knowledge of the amount of people murdered, the names of the disappeared, or the methods of killing. There are underlying truths that begin to surface once one tries to understand the meaning and ultimate reference of the demands for truth and reconciliation. If the search for truth in Truth and Reconciliation Comissions is not a subtle expression or continuation of the suicidal moral of modernity, but an attempt to overcome the effects of violence and war by opposing murderous silence and bringing into light murderous lies, then how does it exactly stand in relation to the paradigm of modernity? I submit that when looked at from the point of view of

and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968).

6 Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 180.

7 See Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, trans. Jessie Coulson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

efforts to search for truth and reconciliation, modernity appears not so much as a suicidal episteme, but rather as a warring paradigm, or as a way of thinking and being that promotes war. I also submit that the modern paradigm of war is intrinsically connected with colonialism as well as with the legacies of racism, particularly anti-indigenous and anti-black.

The links between modernity, war, colonialism, and racism come to the fore very clearly in the discussion of efforts to find the truth and to promote reconciliation in several chapters in this volume. In his contribution to this volume, the former Research Director of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Charles Villa-Vicencio, asserts that a proper understanding of the nature of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa requires some sense about its origin and identity, which should be traced, precisely, to colonial times. ‘The conflict’, Villa-Vicencio points out, ‘began with a fragile white Portuguese presence in the Cape in the latter part of the fifteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth.⁸ It persisted through generations of institutionalized racism and culminated in a thirty-year race war’.⁹ To the question about the success of the TRC Villa-Vicencio responds: ‘It would be presumptuous to think that a Commission of the nature and duration of the TRC could reconcile a nation torn apart by 350 years of colonialism and fifty years of apartheid rule.... Its mandate was the promotion of national unity and reconciliation’.⁹

In his chapter on the ‘Maya “Greening Road” and Globalization’, Brett Greider asserts that

For the indigenous Maya of Guatemala, the encounter with ‘Globalization’ began in 1524 with the arrival of the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado. It was a clash of cosmovisiones (sacred world views) that persists today in conflicting social and political movements of contemporary Guatemala ... The Maya kingdoms were subjugated and colonized, and continue today suffering the oppression of nearly five hundred years of colonization.¹⁰

‘The new war on indigenous people in Guatemala’, Greider adds, ‘is an economic war waged by perpetuating poverty, the result of the colonial paradigm of modernity’.¹¹ Military rule in Guatemala continued a pattern of subordination which existed under colonial rule. That same pattern continues now under the auspices of global capital. ‘International banking has slowly replaced the traditional national production with a

⁸ Charles Villa-Vicencio, ‘Living in the Wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Retroactive Report’ (see this volume), 193.

⁹ Charles Villa-Vicencio, ‘Living in the Wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ (see this volume), 194.

¹⁰ Brett Greider, ‘The Maya “Greening Road” and Globalization: The Pan-Mayan Movement as Transmodern Paradigm’ (see this volume), 103.

¹¹ Brett Greider, “The Maya ‘Greening Road’ and Globalization” (see this volume), 105.

globalized elite: the former military elite changing masks for transnational power'.¹² The special weight of war and poverty in indigenous populations is, to be sure, not unique to Guatemala, Central America, or Mexico. Margaret Pfeil reports, for instance, that the conflict in Peru between the government and Shining Path rebel forces ensued in the killing of hundreds, if not thousands, of mostly indigenous people.¹³ Consider that three of every four victims were campesinos whose first language was Quechua. The underlying premise of the conflict, presupposed by both Shining Path forces and the government, was that 'Peru's indigenous peoples were regarded as dangerous aliens in their own lands'.¹⁴

Efforts to search for truth and to promote reconciliation in South Africa and different parts of the Americas cannot but attempt to come to terms in one way or another with modernity and its colonial underside. Anti-black and anti-indigenous racism also comes into view very strongly. This element of racism and its link with colonialism comes more sharply into focus in João Comblin's chapter on 'The Theme of Reconciliation and Theology in Latin America'.¹⁵ Comblin makes very strong points about the particular responsibility of the Church toward Native American Indians and Blacks:

Up until the present, the Native American Indians have not been able to enter the Church with their history and their culture ... In the same way, there does not exist an African Christianity. The slaves and their descendants received a Western Christianity, the one of the masters and slavers ... In the Latin American Church blacks do not occupy any high position at all. All their attempts at liturgical accommodation were vetoed, and all of animism condemned, in the name of Christian dogma.

More pointedly, Comblin asserts:

Now, the exclusion of the Native Americans and the blacks in the Church reinforced or even to a certain point, created their universal *social exclusion* [italics mine]. The regional Latin American Bishops Conference in Puebla, Mexico, insisted upon the responsibility of the Catholic Church in the formation of Latin American culture, which excludes both Native Americans and blacks. For this exclusion the Church bears great responsibility. *We are able to state that the rejection of the 'pagans' by the 'Judeo-Christians' has had a similar and parallel repercussion on the social and political plane.* [italics mine]. Only reconciliation on the ecclesiastical plane will be able to carry reconciliation through the social and political planes. Only a social and political analysis will be able to show if reconciliation constitutes a valid political program for Native Americans and blacks.

12 Brett Greider, 'The Maya "Greening Road" and Globalization' (see this volume), 102.

13 Margaret R. Pfeil, 'Social Sin: Social Reconciliation?' (see this volume), 178, 182.

14 Margaret Pfeil, 'Social Sin: Social Reconciliation?', (see this volume), 182.

15 João Comblin, 'The Theme of Reconciliation and Theology in Latin America' (see this volume), especially page 168.

Comblin states that reconciliation in Latin America requires coming to terms with the ways in which both Church and state have sustained a racial regime of exclusion, poverty, and death that targets indigenous peoples and Black populations. Recognizing the gravity of this somber picture Comblin concludes, ‘Reconciliation in Latin America presumes a total inversion of the whole civilization and cultural processes’.¹⁶

Comblin accentuates the role of the Catholic Church not only in promoting, but also, and more fundamentally, in helping to create a structure of social and political power which targets, specially though not uniquely, indigenous peoples and Blacks. Greider adds economics to the social and political dimensions of modern/colonial power. To the social, the political, and the economic structure one must also add the level of the symbolic, which helps define the meaning given to indigeneity and blackness in Latin America. But, are these reflections limited to one region of the world, in this case, Latin America? Comblin suggests that with the exclusion of indigenous and Blacks the Church ‘created their universal social exclusion’. Anti-black racism in South Africa and other parts of colonial Africa, as documented in part by Villa-Vicencio and Michael Battle in this volume, along with the continued existence of anti-indigenous structures in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and other territories around the world, points to the widespread assumption of the inferiority of Black and indigenous peoples. Comblin suggests a link between the form of power that defined social and political relations in Latin America, Africa, and other regions in the globe. He also compares the significance of the Church’s role in those ‘universal social exclusions’ to the ‘rejection of the ‘pagans’ by the ‘Judeo-Christians’. Such rejection, defined much of the way in which power operated in the Middle Ages. Implicit in Comblin’s comments there is thus the idea of a parallel between the way in which the division between the pagan and the Christian functioned in the Middle Ages and the way in which anti-black and anti-indigenous racism works in modernity. He also hints that the behavior of the Church in Latin America may be connected with the production of the modern model of power. Is there any justification for these claims? Is the rejection of Blacks and indigenous peoples in modernity equivalent to the way in which the divide between pagan and Christian worked in the Middle Ages? And, how to understand the link between the role of the Church in Latin America and the modern global model of power? If Comblin is right that reconciliation ‘presumes a total inversion of the whole civilization and cultural processes’, it is important to know more about the ‘truth’ of modern civilization and its culture.

‘1492: A New World View’: A Continuing Dialogue

Reflections on efforts to find truth and to promote reconciliation in Latin America and South Africa point to a triadic model that makes reference to the white European,

16 J. Comblin, ‘The Theme of Reconciliation and Theology in Latin America’ (see this volume), 168.

indigenous populations, and black African and Afro-diasporic people. The Afro-Caribbean theorist, Sylvia Wynter, has reflected on the nature of this model. My account here is based on her reflections, in addition to further research that I have done inspired by her work and by that of the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano.¹⁷ The first idea that must be taken into consideration when thinking about the triadic model that Wynter examines is that ‘white’, ‘black’, and ‘indigenous’ are not categories that existed prior to the contact among the peoples to which the terms refer. That is, what occurs in the encounter between Europeans on the one hand, and black Africans and indigenous peoples in the Americas on the other is not merely an encounter among previously existing peoples, but more fundamentally the creation of new subjectivities. Just as there was no ‘pagan’ without a Christian to define it in the Middle Ages, there was no ‘black’ without a ‘white’ to create it in modernity. There is an important difference, though, between these two binary categories of differentiation: while the Christian may have existed without the existence or prior to the creation of the category ‘pagan’, the ‘white’ did not exist prior to the designation of another as ‘black’. It is by naming the ‘black’ that Europeans became ‘white’. But whiteness and blackness themselves did not come into being as categories that denoted race until after the encounter of the Europeans and native peoples in the Americas. The categories of ‘natives’ and ‘indigenous’, of course, did not exist prior to the conquest and colonization of what acquired the name ‘America’.

What is ‘America?’ According to Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, America is the first space/time model of power with global vocation and the first identity of modernity.¹⁸ According to Quijano, this space/time model of power is the result of the convergence of two historical processes that converged and established its two axes:

One was the codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of ‘race’, a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others. The conquistadors assumed this idea as the constitutive, founding element of the relations of domination that the conquest imposed. On this basis, the population of America, and later the world, was classified within the new model of power. The other process was the constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its

17 See especially Anibal Quijano, ‘Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America’, *Nepantla: Views from South* 1:3 (2000), 533–580; Anibal Quijano, ‘Raza, “etnia, y “nación”: cuestiones abiertas’, in Roland Forques (ed.), *José Carlos Mariátegui y Europa: la otra cara del descubrimiento* (Lima, Peru: Amauta, 1992); Sylvia Wynter, ‘1492: A New World View’, in Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (eds), *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995). See also Sylvia Wynter, ‘Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument’, *The New Centennial Review* 3:3 (2003), 257–327. My research on this topic will appear in Nelson Maldonado-Torres, ‘Imperio, raza y religión’, in Eduardo Mendieta (ed.), *Enciclopedia iberoamericana de las religiones: religión e imperio* (Madrid: Trotta, forthcoming).

18 Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, ‘Americanness as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System’, *International Social Science Journal* 134 (1992), 549–557.

resources and products. This new structure was an articulation of all historically known previous structures of control of labor, slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity, together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market.¹⁹

The two axes in question are then, on the one hand, a new mental category (race), and on the other, a new structure for the control of labour (capital).

'The idea of race, in its modern meaning', Quijano states, 'does not have a known history before the colonization of America'.²⁰ As other scholars who specialize on the examination of the category 'race', Quijano believes that ethnocentrism and prejudice, even discourses based on caste differences, all of which existed well before the sixteenth century of the common era, do not have the same connotation of the modern category 'race'.²¹ Quijano speculates that 'race' may have originated in reference to the phenotypic differences between conquerors and conquered, but he does not identify race with color. For him the association with color came much later, and it was probably initially established in Anglo-America where Blacks were not only the most important exploited group but also the most important colonized race. Indians were not an intrinsic part of the colonized society, which rested on their exclusion, persecution, and marginalization. I will complicate this account with reference to Wynter's work below. Suffice it to say now that for Quijano the important idea is that, however it was originated, race was constructed to refer to the supposed differential biological structures between conquerors and conquered, and more precisely, I would like to add, to the differences between legitimate subjects of the Spanish and Portuguese Christian empires and legitimately enslavable populations in the colonies. Thus the differences between conquerors and conquered were themselves understood through a new (colonial) prism that defined relations between masters and slaves.

Capital, the other axis of the modern global model of power, existed before the sixteenth century, but it functioned as one form of labour control among others and it was not oriented toward a world-market. The 'discovery' of America was crucial for the formation of a capitalist oriented world-market as well as it served as the place where every other known form of labour control was first gradually subordinated to capital. The subordination of different forms of labour to capitalism and the racial ideology of domination were not so much parallel, as entangled structures of power. This happened as the new historical identities came to be identified with different geo-historical places and different social and labour roles. Race domination worked thus in favour of the subordination of different labor forms to capital, which came to be associated with European and, later on, 'white' labour. Indigenous peoples

19 Anibal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America', 533–34.

20 Anibal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America', 534.

21 Such scholars include Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

served a role as ‘serfs’ and Blacks came to be seen and treated as the primary source for slavery. This way of defining labor roles equally fortified the idea of race, which came to define the common sense of modern subjects. ‘In this way’, Quijano remarks, ‘both race and the division of labor remained structurally linked and mutually reinforcing, in spite of the fact that neither of them were necessarily dependent on the other in order to exist or change’.²² In short, Quijano’s main argument is that since the sixteenth century globalization has been driven by a form of power that brings together capitalism and race. And, since it was the colonial enterprise which gave a precise meaning to the modern category of race and since it also provided the context that brought capital, race, and the world market together, he refers to this mutually reinforcing modern structure of power as the ‘coloniality of power’. It was this matrix of power (*‘patrón de poder’*) that also shaped the social and labour roles of genders and that motivated an epistemic framework that legitimated the concentration of capital in Western Europe, that is, Eurocentrism.²³

‘Coloniality of power’ does not merely refer to the form of power exercised by modern colonial administrations – and by modern I mean from the late fifteen century on. It is rather a form of power that brings together race and capital. Modern colonialism was the fire in which race and capital came to be so combined. But, once constituted, the ‘coloniality of power’ came to define relations of power, both nationally and geo-politically, well beyond the end of colonial administrations. Indeed, the ‘coloniality of power’ denotes the darker side of modernity itself and its rationalistic emancipatory project. That is why it makes sense for Greider to combine modernity and coloniality in his reference to the ‘colonial paradigm of modernity’. Indeed, what Villa-Vicencio, Greider, and Comblin characterize as the legacy of colonialism in the regions to which they refer is best understood as the effect of the coloniality of power. They are not referring so much to the effects of something that once existed, as to the concrete operation of an actually existing system of power. That is the reason why any attempt at reconciliation needs to come into terms with coloniality. The coloniality of power explains the continued salience of racial problems, systematic poverty, and dependency. And when Comblin states that ‘Reconciliation in Latin America presumes a total inversion of the whole civilization and cultural processes’, he is referring to a concept and ideal of ‘civilization’ that presupposes the coloniality of power. According to Comblin, the Church played a vital role in the design of the modern view of civilization, particularly as it relates to the exclusion of indigenous and Blacks. But how is it that the Church came to play such a crucial role in creating the coloniality of power? In order to get some clarity about this it is necessary to understand the mechanisms at work in the displacement of the dichotomy between pagan and Christian and the creation of a triadic model which created and brought together ‘indigenous’, ‘Blacks’, and Europeans – who only later came to be known as ‘whites’. In short, if the colonial enterprises of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century were the fire under which the coloniality

22 Anibal Quijano, ‘Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America’, 536.

23 Anibal Quijano, ‘Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America’, 533–80.

of power was formed or constituted, ‘indigeneity’ and ‘blackness’ became both the tools and the primal ingredients for such a task. And both ‘indigeneity’ and ‘blackness’ depended for their precise meaning on a fundamental break with the symbolic apparatus of medieval Christianity.

In order to understand the role of Christianity in the emergence of a new, specifically modern model of power, it is necessary to trace the beginnings of the triadic model prior to 1492. As Sylvia Wynter points out, the basis of the triadic model was established about fifty years prior to the ‘discovery’ of the Americas. It began with Portuguese excursions in the coast of West Africa. Following historian Daniel Boorstin, Wynter argues that:

Columbus’s 1492 voyage cannot be detached from the overall sequence of historical events that began with the Portuguese state’s dispatching, during the first half of the fifteenth century, of several expeditions, whose goal was to attempt to find a sea route around the hitherto nonnavigable Cape Bojador on the bulge of West Africa—a cape that had been projected, in the accounts of the earth’s geography given by medieval Christian geographers, as being the nec plus ultra line and boundary marker between the habitable temperate zone of Europe and the inhabitable torrid zones.²⁴

In order to understand the implications of the Portuguese’s voyages in Africa in mid-fifteenth-century Europe, and later on the significance of 1492, it is necessary to comment on the Christian medieval system of symbolic representations. The Christian medieval system of symbolic representations was strongly defined by three kinds of hierarchies: one social, one geographical, and another cosmological. Social hierarchy was defined by a divide between believers in the true religion and believers in false religions and heretics (including also pagans, idolaters and infidels). Then, believers in the true religion, that is Christians, were themselves divided among noble and non-noble, with some of them occupying positions in the clergy. The geographical hierarchy consisted on a division between habitable lands and inhabitable torrid zones. According to the Christian medieval imaginary it was the grace of God which made possible life on earth, and such grace extended to the then known habitable lands. The cosmological hierarchy consisted in the idea that the earth was in the center of the universe. In the Christian imaginary it was the Christian God who revealed true religion, who located the earth in the center of all creation, and who also, by his grace, allowed life to emerge and flourish as well as the heaven to appear in the known world. The centrality of God and the cosmology that such centrality sustained were being gradually undermined by the Renaissance celebration of the human being along with astronomical observations which defied the geocentric view of the universe. The voyages of the Portuguese in Africa began to undermine Christian geography, and with it, also challenged its system of social classifications.

The challenge of finding human populations in the inhabitable lands was first dealt by extending or applying the existing social system of classification. So, the newly

24 Sylvia Wynter, ‘1492: A New World View’, 9.

'discovered' peoples of Africa were referred to as 'idolaters' and 'Moors'. Idolatry, which was a feature of paganism, had already been used to identify and justify the exploration of the Neolithic Berber peoples of the Canary Islands.²⁵ The category of 'Moor' was seemingly justified first because Muslims had already extended over parts of Africa and second, because many Muslim Africans, were, just like the newly 'found' people, black. The association between the Moor and the black African is made evident by the very etymology of the word Moor which can be traced back to the Latin word *maurus* and to the Greek word *mauros* which were used to refer to people of dark skin in the northwest of Africa.²⁶ Once the Muslims dominated those areas, Christians began to refer to them as Moors. Moor, thus, gradually became an ethnic and geopolitical category based on religion and skin color. When the Portuguese arrived at Cape Bojador in Africa and at other supposedly inhabitable areas, it did not matter much if the people whom they encountered practiced Islam or not for them to identify them as Moors. To begin with, as John Tolan points out in his study of Christian representations of Muslims in the Middle Ages, Christians were rather ignorant about Islam in that era.²⁷ Thus, they could not always indicate what qualified as Moor and what did not. Being black in Africa was enough indication to raise the possibility, if not to legitimize the characterization of a group of people as Moor. And once characterized as such their enslavement was legitimized by the then valid terms of the Christian feudal episteme, according to which it was possible to enslave vanquished combatants and declared enemies of the Christian faith.

In order to understand the way in which black Africans in Cape Bojador and other areas of exploration in the previously assumed non-habitable lands were conceived, one must also consider the plasticity of terms within a system of symbolic representations. Such plasticity was evinced, for instance, when later on in the Americas Hernando Cortés notes what he perceives to be beautiful mezquitas (mosques) in Tenochtitlán when he sees the city for the first time.²⁸ The imperatives for the preservation of any given episteme have priority over the accuracy of description. Referring to the newly found people in Africa, and later on in the Americas, in terms which were already part of the social system of classification in medieval Christian Europe was a way to contain the potentially devastating effects of the empirical disproof of the geographical order for the medieval Christian episteme. What we find here is a severe case of epistemological bad faith, which, in many ways, is required by all epistemes to survive. Here we have a case of masking the

25 See Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229–1492* (London: Macmillan, 1987); Sylvia Wynter, '1492: A New World View', 11.

26 See Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples*, 2nd ed (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 26.

27 See John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

28 See Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Religion, Religions, Religious', in M. C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 270.

new and strange with the familiar to the point of a perverse misrecognition. For such misrecognition is the one which led the Portuguese, under the presupposition that Muslims were at war with Christians and that therefore they could be legitimately enslaved, to massively ship them as slaves out of Africa.

The challenge of identifying the unknown peoples of Africa was met by applying the socio-religious system of classification in medieval Christianity. This application allowed the Portuguese to expand the horizon of slavery to include people regarded as Muslims. Christian slave-trade in Africa was thus first justified in relation to existing laws of war, which applied to adherents of Islam, or 'moors'. Slavery in this context was not racial. It rather depended on a socio-religious system of classification and on classical notions of just war. In order for racial slavery to emerge there needed to be a shift in the socio-religious system of classification to a similar extent as there was one in relation to the cosmological and geographical dimensions of the medieval system of symbolic representations. This shift occurred only after 1492 in the context of the 'discovery' and conquest of the Americas.

As Pierre Chaunu, William Phillips, Carla Phillips, and Paolo Taviani, among others, have made clear, the trips of the Portuguese to Africa had a strong impact on Christopher Columbus, who had himself joined Portuguese explorations of Africa after 1482.²⁹ Columbus was fascinated with the explorations of previously assumed non-habitated lands. He was familiar with the ways in which these peoples were conceived, and what the Portuguese did with them. Thus, it was more or less natural for him to suggest, upon his encounter with indigenous peoples of the Americas, that they could legitimately be enslaved. After noting that they are all naked, Columbus remarks that 'And I thought and still believe that others come from the mainland to take them as captives. They should be good servants ... since I see that they promptly do what one asks of them. And I believe that they will rapidly become Christians, since it seemed to me that they had no religion'.³⁰ It was clear for Columbus that the people whom he found were not 'Moors', so he could not rely on the same system of classification in order to justify slavery. Instead of applying the terms that he knew, Columbus rather identifies the indigenous peoples that he first encounters as *tabula rasa*. He indicates that they had no clothes. Also, different from the Moors or other religious subjects in his known world, the indigenous peoples gave him the impression that they could be easily Christianized since 'it seemed to me that they had no religion' ('me parecio que ninguna secta tenían'). The indigenous people appeared to Columbus as neither pagan nor Moor, not even idolaters ('porque ellos no tienen secta ninguna ni son idólatras').³¹

29 Pierre Chaunu, *La expansión europea: siglos XII al XV*, trans. Ana María Mayenich (Barcelona: Labor, 1972); William D. Phillips and Carla Rahn Phillips, *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Paolo Emilio Taviani, *Columbus: The Great Adventure. His Life, His Times, and His Voyages*, trans. Luciano F. Farina and Marc A. Beckwith (New York: Orion Books, 1991).

30 Cristóbal Colón, *Los cuatro viajes. Testamento*. (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1986), 63. My translation.

31 Cristóbal Colón, *Los cuatro viajes. Testamento*, 110.

A clear understanding of the significance of the idea that indigenous peoples had no religion requires further elaboration.³² As I pointed out before, medieval Christianity relied on a social differentiation between noble and non-noble as well as on one among Christians, heretics, infidels, and pagans. The second conception of social classification is based on the divide between believing the true religion or practicing false religions. All religious subjects, with either true or false religions, were understood as part of the human oecumene. They all shared a ground in the divine. The question was whether such religious beliefs and practices related human beings adequately with the creator. Since at least the fourth century after the Common Era, Christians conceived Christianity as the only religion through which it was possible to have such a relation with the divine. Christianity was the one true religion, while other religions were false. But having ‘no religion’ indicated an ontological and not so much an epistemological problem with the subjects in question. Having ‘no religion’ introduces the suspicion that certain subjects are ontologically different from others. That is, subjects with ‘no religion’ would be fundamentally disconnected from the divine, which raises questions about whether ultimately they had ‘souls’ or not. The famous debates in Valladolid about whether indigenous peoples had ‘souls’ and the notion that rather than mere ‘pagan’ or ‘idolaters’ they were to be considered as ‘natural slaves’, were clearly first intimated by Columbus’s idea that indigenous peoples had ‘no religion’ and that they would make ‘good servants’.³³ The persistence of that idea in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries testifies to a larger shift in the understanding of humanity and social relations, which characterizes a fundamental part of our own very modern experience – just as the divide between Christians, infidels, heretics, and pagans defined life earlier in the Christian medieval world.

The characterization of indigenous peoples as subjects with no religion gave them the dubious advantage that they could now easily be Christianized, while at the same time relegated to a sub-human status – a status beyond the medieval Christian classificatory scheme. Thus, this idea of Columbus came to serve a twofold role: it justified heavy and constant Christianization, while at the same time it legitimized slavery on a new basis. Now slavery was not going to be seen as the outcome of war with infidels, pagans, or idolaters, but as the natural condition of subjects whose very humanity was put in question. We find here the beginnings of a shift from forms of slavery justified by existing laws of war to a new mode of geo-political relations where geography and ideas about the constitution of subjectivity merge in order to justify oppressive relations beyond the limits of the feudal Christian episteme. The disproof of the core geographical ideas of the feudal episteme did not lead to a radical abandonment of a geographical divide. Rather, the feudal geographical

32 I have elaborated further the ideas below in Nelson Maldonado-Torres, ‘Imperio, raza y religión’, 2005.

33 See the classic study of these debates by Lewis Hanke, *All Mankind Is One: A Study of the Disputation Between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974). It should be noted that the Pope did side with de Las Casas on the humanity of the Indians.

hierarchy gave way to a new geo-political hierarchy according to which the subjects in the previously believed uninhabited lands lack, at an ontological level (and not merely epistemological), a fundamental relation with God. Since these subjects live in lands where, according to the geographical ideas of the Christian episteme, God did not extend his grace and there were neither heavens nor life, the existence of human subjects in those territories indicated that they may not have any ‘soul’. That is, the disproof of core geographical ideas of the Christian episteme motivated, not a complete abandonment, but rather a translation or reconfiguration into a new post-feudal episteme. In short, as Wynter has indicated, the collapse of the divide between habitated and non-habitated lands begins to give way to a fundamental differentiation between people who are entirely human and people who lack (at the ontological level) degrees of humanity. It is perhaps here that we find the birth of the master/slave relation in modernity. It may also be here where feudal geography gives way to the racial geo-politics that will be so central to Eurocentrism and otherary continental visions of knowledge.

In his first voyage to the Americas, Columbus commits a double transgression of the medieval Christian episteme: he challenges dominant ideas about the geography of the known world while he simultaneously (re)introduces a new term in the medieval system of religio-social classification.³⁴ Columbus’s characterization of the indigenous people as having no religion fulfilled a twofold role: on the one hand it made clear that, contrary to peoples who held false religions, they could be easily Christianized, and, on the other, that they could just as easily or as naturally be conceived as subjects who could be enslaved. The shift initiated by Columbus and continued through the first decades of the conquest of the Americas will be of utmost significance. As Wynter indicates, just like geographical ideas about the division of the earth in terms of habitable and non-habitable zones defined the ‘conventional wisdom’ of the feudal-Christian episteme, the idea of certain groups of people being constitutively inferior from others or less human than others gradually came to be part of the ‘conventional wisdom’ of post-feudal modern subjects. It continued to persist even after Christians concluded that indigenous peoples did in fact have a soul. This persistence was made possible by the introduction of a third population group in the Americas, black slaves.

The decimation of indigenous populations in the Americas not too long after the ‘discovery’ led to the introduction of enslaved labour force from Africa. But black Africans did not only provide slave labour. They came to occupy a crucial role in the new system of material relations and symbolic representations that began to emerge in the Americas. ‘In this role’, explains Wynter, ‘they would not only serve to free the indigenous peoples from the outright slavery to which many had been reduced in the immediate decades after 1492 ... one that had been initiated by Columbus himself ... As the liminal category whose mode of *excluded difference*, based on the

³⁴ As I point out elsewhere there is at least a precedent of discourse centered on the idea of some people having ‘no religion’. See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, ‘Imperio, raza y religión’, 2005.

hereditary slave status of its members as the only *legitimately enslavable* population group, they would also generate the principle of similarity or of conspecificity that would come to bond, if on the terms of sharply unequal relations, the incoming Spanish settlers with the indigenous peoples. From the mid-sixteenth century on, this principle would come to bond the latter as members of a category whose status was that of *hereditarily free subjects of the Spanish state*.³⁵ From this ideal Wynter concludes that

This third population group, therefore, would come to embody the new symbolic construct of *Race* or of innately determined difference that would enable the Spanish state to legitimate its sovereignty over the *lands of the Americas* in the **postreligious** legal terms of Western Europe's now-expanding state system. It would do so by instituting by means of the physical referent of the group's enslaved lives and labor the empirical basis, of, in Cerio's terms, the 'moral and philosophical foundations' on which the Spaniards 'accepted' the indigenous peoples 'into their societies, however rudely'.³⁶

The introduction of the black African in the Americas represents the third term that forms the triadic social-existential model in the Americas. In face of the decimation of indigenous peoples and increasing attempts to incorporate them within the socio-religious model based on epistemic differences among subjects with different religions, black Africans not only provided labour but also served to confirm and deepen the standards of sub-humanity opened up by the new postreligious episteme. That is, black Africans become the ultimate anchor of the new episteme. They alone represented the legitimately enslavable subjects in the Spanish territories. Such slavery was hereditary and phenotypically determined by color. Blackness thus became the non-religious, purely phenotypical and thus biological, determinant that indicated inferiority and enslaved nature. In this context, black Africans ceased to be Moors or mere 'idolaters' and became *negros* and *negrillas* (black male and black females). *It was as if in the Middle Passage black Africans were born again into a new system of symbolic representations where the colour of the skin, rather than religion (true or false, existent or not), became in itself the mark of sub-humanity.* This transformation was possible, however, only after the existing laws of slavery had been contested and an alternate system based on ontologically constitutive difference between subjects was introduced in relation to 'indigenous' peoples. Once the premises of the feudal Christian system of symbolic representations were contested and new ideas to legitimate slavery were introduced, the conditions were created for a radical change in the perception toward Africans. The Middle Passage provided the condition for a transformation of their identity from Moors to pure Blacks, that is, from a system based on religious differences to a postreligious modern system which would legitimize slavery and systematic forms of oppression with reference to racial and geo-political considerations. The transformation of the Moor into Black also

35 Sylvia Wynter, '1492: A New World View', 11.

36 Sylvia Wynter, '1492: A New World View', 11.

meant a deepening of the racist logic and a shift from ontological difference between subjects to purely biological ones.

The emergence of a postreligious system of human differentiation, social classification, and geo-political relations did not mean that other systems ceased to exist. What it meant was that the other existing epistemes were gradually subordinated and highly influenced by the emerging one. Just like capitalism does not do away with other forms of labor control, modern racism does not necessarily eliminate other forms of considering human differences either. But that does not mean that they remain untouched either, or that they can escape, by sheer force of will, the terms imposed by the reigning episteme. The question is to describe in every case how racism intersects with other forms of conceiving human difference, either by affecting them directly or by allowing them to exist. One crucial issue is to determine how anti-blackness and anti-indigeneity continue to exist notwithstanding the formal recognition of the humanity of ex-slave Afro-descent and indigenous peoples. It is also important to consider why about eighty percent of the planet's poor people live in racialized geo-political areas, and why poor people in richer countries tend to be also people of colour. How is reconciliation possible in such a world?

Reconciliation: A Contested Future

The explorations in this volume of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa and Latin America suggest that reconciliation is not possible without incessant processes of decolonization. They all make clear that undergirding the lack of 'conciliation' in South African and Latin American societies there is colonialism, or more precisely, coloniality. Colonialism changed the historical course of societies, created new identities, and new challenges for all those involved in its path. The coloniality of power has likewise affected the lived possibilities of subjects around the world. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions often take as their more direct goal the healing and restoration of nations. But what we have learnt is that oftentimes these nations themselves are premised on colonial premises that reproduce anti-black and anti-indigenous racism, along other forms of evils, many of which can be traced to modernity as a warring paradigm. Thus, true reconciliation can hardly be achieved by nationalization alone. Decolonization, not nationalization, imposes itself as the ultimate horizon for reconciliation.

The challenges for reconciliation not only lie in the need to think about peace and conciliation beyond the horizons of assumed ideas about the nation and the nation-state. This difficulty itself is indicative of a more profound problem: that of seeking the 'truth'. As Wynter explains, the problem that the search for 'truth' confronts at any given moment is that the dominant episteme establishes the parameters of what is going to be considered as 'true'. The common sense of people and their ability to judge tend to work in favor of the dominant episteme. They serve the episteme's preservation, and the preservation, to be sure, of those who obtain power by virtue of it. But the episteme also tends to define the goals of all subjects and their self-

definition, without which they would lack a sense of who they are. Here the root of a particularly modern form of bad faith.³⁷ Before truth can be found and reconciliation achieved there need to be changes at both the personal and institutional levels that defy and put in question the existing dominant episteme, as well as nurture the idea that a different form of understanding world, self, and others is possible.

I submit that nothing short of a fundamental change of attitude in the subject of knowledge could begin to undo or to question the perverse expressions of the episteme. I refer to this attitude as a *decolonial attitude*. Although individual expressions of this attitude are most important and relevant, the challenge that humanity confronts demands the promotion of a shift in thought as massive and influential as Columbus and the subsequent conquerors and missionaries did in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Wynter calls for a new way of conceiving the human community. Alternative decolonial conceptions of the humanity of the human were articulated in the 1960s, and before that, one can argue, in the process of decolonization of different territories after the end of the Second World War. What we find there arguably is the beginnings of a decolonial turn that opposes directly the racial and colonial turn of the sixteenth century and its many reincarnations from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries in Europe and elsewhere. The chapters in this volume all suggest in one way or another that the work of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and related mechanisms for promoting reconciliation could be seen as part of this struggle against racist, sexist, and colonial hegemony.

Demands for truth and reconciliation after wars, social conflicts, and military regimes contribute to efforts to promote decolonization by reminding everyone of the continued existence of a paradigm of social relations inspired by the naturalization of the ethics of war, in which certain subjects are marked for death, and human bodies, particularly, but not only, women's bodies, appear as marked for rape ... and death.³⁸ Demands for truth and reconciliation also promote decolonization by maintaining alive the interests for a renewed conception of humanity, one which would no longer reproduce racist and sexist attitudes. In Margaret Guider's words, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions 'contribute to redemocratization through processes of truth-telling that open the way to confession and remorse, restitution and forgiveness, healing and reconciliation, deterrence and an unwavering commitment to "never

37 For an analysis of this form of bad faith see Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995).

38 Much has been written about the connections of militarism and sexual violence. In his contribution to this volume, David Tombs explores the limits of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in dealing with the truth about sexual violence. See David Tombs, 'Unspeakable Violence: The UN Truth Commissions in El Salvador and Guatemala', (this volume), chapter 3. I explore the connections between war, coloniality, and sexual violence in Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José David Saldivar (eds), 'On the Coloniality of Being', in *Coloniality, Transmodernity, and Border Thinking* (forthcoming), and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*.

again".³⁹ Such commitment to truth-telling and to 'never again' along with the hope that 'another world is possible' are two of the most fundamental aspects of what I have referred to as the decolonial attitude.⁴⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have served, in various degrees, as sites for the promotion of such an attitude. Other sites for the promotion of that attitude include the Catholic Church, provided that it takes seriously the efforts to undo the system of symbolic representations that it helped to generate and with which it has remained in complicity for more than five centuries, as Comblin suggests. Other churches and organizations, including state institutions such as the university, have much to do in order to promote decolonization as a project and help to break or at least defy the perverse effects of global coloniality – that is, global capital working side by side with global racism.

At the beginning of this chapter I indicated that reconciliation demands processes of decolonization that introduce a new ethics beyond coloniality and war. I regard the 'decolonial attitude' as the basic existential, epistemological, and political posture that sustains and promotes this ethics. The decolonial attitude is itself an expression of an ethical subjectivity that defines and positions itself in a way that promotes decolonization and re-imagines human relationships. In addition to decolonial 'truth-telling' and hope, the decolonial attitude also involves an ethics of decolonial memory and a decolonial economy of giving. They are all parts of the technologies and set of ideas that form part of philosophies of liberation and the methodology of the oppressed.⁴¹

There can be no reconciliation without an effort to remember what has been actively produced as 'forgotten' or 'invisible' by narratives of the nation-state, modernity, and liberal democracy.⁴² The 'forgotten' here not only makes reference to relevant events in history when modernity has shown its evil side, or when the oppressed have rebelled successfully against it. As Barnor Hesse remarks, and as I have suggested here, 'What remains forgotten ... is the colonial, foundational relation of slavery to the modern constitution of racialized governmentalities'. Hesse refers with this to the:

39 Margaret Eletta Guider, 'Reinventing Life and Hope: Coming to Terms with Truth and Reconciliation – Brazilian Style' (see this volume), 123–27.

40 'Another world is possible' is the distinctive motto of the World Social Forum. See <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>.

41 For an elaboration of philosophies of liberation and the methodology of the oppressed see Enrique Dussel, *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta; México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Iztapalapa, and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1998); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1991); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

42 For a systematic formulation of a sociological view that focuses on the investigation of what is produced as invisible see Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'A Critique of Lazy Reason: Against the Waste of Experience' in Immanuel Wallerstein (ed.), *The Modern World-System in the Longue Durée*, forthcoming.

political formations of 'race' and racism ... which inscribed the written and unwritten constitutions of social relations of governance and dominant forms of cultural representation in Western societies. This continues in the post-slavery and postcolonial eras to animate the administration of the state, the conduct of civil subjects, and their regulation of the conduct of 'others'.⁴³

Hesse alludes here to what I have elaborated in this chapter under the rubrics of the coloniality of power – at least to one of its axes, the idea of race, and its links with the political. He rightly focuses on the relevance of slavery for the formation of the colonial matrix of power. His own ethics of postcolonial memory are designed to respond to the challenges of remembering the relationship of modern racism to slavery, particularly in his case, to Atlantic slavery. Now, this ethics of decolonial/postcolonial memory, Hesse continues:

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is not concerned with the (colonial) past through an obsession with the past, but through an engagement with the (liberal-democratic) present. In the West to remember in a postcolonial idiom is to encounter or confront the (liberal-democratic) contemporaneity in terms of what has constituted its (imperial) history. It is triggered by an awareness of the discontinuities of decolonization and global justice and continuities of racism and global inequality.⁴⁴

The ethics of decolonial memory, which Hesse elaborates under the rubrics of postcolonial memory, involve a *questioning of liberal democracy* and its attempts to erase the traces of the past in the present and thus questions of justice and radical transformation that follow from them. The idea that derives from here is that efforts to promote reconciliation need to approach critically liberal democracy, instead of taking it as its sole inspiration or expressed end. This message is very important for leaders who participate in efforts to promote reconciliation sponsored by states. As Hesse puts it, 'The *oughtness* of Atlantic slavery's memory and the justness of its excavation reside in refusing to efface through forgetfulness the historical complicity and contemporary failures of Western liberal democracies'.⁴⁵ What this 'ought' demands is 'a critical excavation and inventory of the marginalized, discounted, *unrealized objects of decolonization* and the political consequences of their social legacies'.⁴⁶ Beyond the liberal project of the Enlightenment, Hesse hints here at a distinct project of decolonization, which remained unfinished in the twentieth century.⁴⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commissions obtain their most radical meaning when understood in the context of this unfinished project.

43 Barnor Hesse, 'Forgotten like a Bad Dream: Atlantic Slavery and the Ethics of Postcolonial Memory', in David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson (eds), *Relocating Postcolonialism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 164–65.

44 Barnor Hesse, 'Forgotten like a Bad Dream', 165.

45 Barnor Hesse, 'Forgotten like a Bad Dream', 165.

46 Barnor Hesse, 'Forgotten like a Bad Dream', 165. Italics mine.

47 Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, and Ramón Grosfoguel and others have also articulated ideas around this project. See Enrique Dussel, *El encubrimiento del Indio: 1492*.

'Truth-telling', hope, and the ethics of memory need to be complemented with a decolonial economy of the gift. While formal attempts at reconciliation often provide the occasion for cathartic processes and for the telling and listening of stories, nevertheless, as Pal Ahluwalia indicates, it is important to move beyond them. A decolonial/postcolonial economy of giving 'seeks to break down the cycle of revenge'. In South Africa and Latin America, as well as the places that Ahluwalia studies (Australia, Palestine, and Rwanda), this cycle is begun by colonialism. And so Ahluwalia states: 'It is colonialism that breaks down conciliation and necessitates reconciliation. And it is here that postcolonialism is instructive, recognizing that it is possible to imagine both a reconciled present and future. It is in this act of reimagining that the gift occupies a key role'.⁴⁸ The gift invites thought in an economy based on responsibility and generosity. It also calls for renewed ideas on leadership and intellectual life, as well as on innovative ideas about citizenship.⁴⁹ A decolonial/postcolonial economy of giving aids in the breaking down of 'categories and identities' that have been ascribed or constructed in order to maintain power structures'.⁵⁰ In this sense, an economy of giving appears to be crucial to dismantle not only identities constructed by colonialism, but more fundamentally, central aspects that keep alive

Hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad, 2nd edn. (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Cambio XXI, 1992); Ramón Grosfoguel, 'Subaltern Epistemologies, Decolonial Imaginaries and the Redefinition of Global Capitalism', *Review* 28 (forthcoming 2005); Ramón Grosfoguel and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'Latinas and the 'Euro-American' Menace: The Decolonization of the US Empire in the 21st Century' in Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José David Saldívar (eds), *Latinas in the World-System* (Chicago: Paradigm Press, forthcoming); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'Intervenciones filosóficas al proyecto inacabado de la descolonización', in Juan Manuel Contreras Colín and Mario Rojas (eds), *Filosofía y liberación, Homenaje a Enrique Dussel* (México, D.F.: Universidad de la Ciudad de México, forthcoming); Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). For a feminist account of decolonization as project see Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

48 Pal Ahluwalia, 'Towards (Re)Conciliation: The Postcolonial Economy of Giving', in Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson (eds), *Relocating Postcolonialism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 197–98. Frantz Fanon has noted with acuity the way in which colonialism interrupts the history of the colonized and disrupts the metaphysical coordinates of their culture and conception of the world. I have argued elsewhere that his response to such devastating effects involves a radical decolonial ethics of the gift. See Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1988); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'The Cry of the Self as a Call from the Other: The Paradoxical Loving Subjectivity of Frantz Fanon', *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture* 36:1 (2001), 246–60.

49 See Ahluwalia, 'Towards (Re)Conciliation', 198–201.

50 Ahluwalia, 'Towards (Re)Conciliation', 201.

the coloniality of power.⁵¹ Any attempt to promote reconciliation today must come into terms with the perverse expressions of coloniality in the modern world.

51 For an elaboration of an ethics of the gift in response to coloniality and the modern paradigm of war see Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*. See also Nelson Maldonado-Torres, ‘The Cry of the Self as a Call from the Other: The Paradoxical Loving Subjectivity of Frantz Fanon’, *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture* 36:1 (2001) 46–60. Available on-line at: <http://www.listeningjournal.org/articles.htm>.

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