

On Pluritopic Hermeneutics, Trans-modern Thinking, and Decolonial Philosophy

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The question of “otherness” is fully a modern/colonial question. We are not saying that the Aztec did not distinguish themselves from the Chichemecas, or the Greeks from the barbarous—those who did not speak Greek, or the Chinese in Beijing from the people who inhabited the outskirts of the rectangle that enclosed the ruling class. But “otherness”, as we sense and think about it today, is a Western construction from the Renaissance on and is constitutive of the Western concept of “modernity.” For “modernity” is nothing but a concept and a narrative that originated in and served imperial Western purposes. The fact that today “modernity” is embraced and appropriated in the United Arab Emirates, in China, or in Indonesia means that “modernity” is being expropriated from its place of origin. It is indeed the “/” (slash) that in our formulation divides and unites the “modern” with the “colonial” in which otherness was constructed by and through enunciations always situated in the house of the modern (of *humanitas*, of civilization, of Western Christianity, of science, etc.).

In the modern/colonial world, Western philosophy from the Renaissance on, distinguished, in different guises and masks, *humanitas* from *anthropos*. This distinction was not made by those classified under the domain of *anthropos*; neither were they consulted. The distinction was a pure, sole, and unilateral decision made by those who considered themselves, and their friends, to be *humanitas*. The other-*anthropos* is, then, inevitably linked to the same-*humanitas*. The magic effect here consists in blurring the epistemic and ontological dimensions and in pretending that *humanitas* and *anthropos* is an ontological distinction that the enoncé only describes, but is not an effect of an epistemic and political classification that the enunciation controls. Thus, a dialogue with colonial others (racially and patriarchally classified) is a moot point: why would *anthropos* be interested in talking with *humanitas* when *anthropos* knows that *humanitas* is not interested in dialogue but in domination?

I. WHAT IS BEHIND ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERNESS?

Let us start by questioning the very formula of encountering the other, which is a catchy metaphor to be found in various scholarly publications throughout the world in the last several decades. Although the entire twentieth century experienced a growing painful interest in otherness and was marked by xenophobia often masked as xenophilia, it is starting from European postmodernism that has led otherness to become the focal point of philosophy per se. In today's trans-cultural environment, the narrative of encounter with the other has become central both in theoretical reflections and in contemporary art.

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The formulation "trans-cultural environments and encounters" also raises many questions. It should be noted that the trans-cultural is not a concept that has one single frame of reference. If it did, it would have had to be

accepted that there is a uni-versal history of the human species, and that the human species organized itself through time in particular cultures defined by memories, languages, rituals, food, knowledge, socioeconomic organization, and the like. But the concept of "culture" entered into the vocabulary of European modern imperial countries—France, England, and Germany—only as late as the eighteenth century. It was in their languages that the uni-versal concept of knowledge (inherited from Christian theology) became global. Consequently, "culture" was already framed in a hierarchical classification. European culture or civilization (depending on whether you prefer German or French legacies) was not just a particular culture among others, but *the* culture. It was so because this concept was an epistemic construct built by agents and institutions that defined culture by the experience of European history. Once created, it legitimized the type of knowledge in which it was embedded. The concept of non-European cultures was a European invention. The difference between European culture and European knowledge that created the concept was organized through the colonial and imperial differential. In this frame, the concept of the trans-cultural as such always presupposes a power difference between cultures and knowledges. This was because it was neither in the Mandarin language and in Chinese society, nor in the Arabic language and in Middle Eastern Muslim societies, that the idea of culture was created and trans-culturally derived.

Otherness and encounters with otherness have acted as a peculiar leitmotif of modernity as such, taking different forms in its different phases—from theology and religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to national, circular, and globalized today—but always retaining the element of othering as objectifying as one of the main cognitive and rhetorical operations of modernity. The other as a darker side, necessary for the balanced existence and for the successful self-reproduction of culture, helps to define the same as the norm when it is used as a negative reference point and gives birth to the strategies of exclusion and resistance and to multiple reinforcing stereotypes.

The twentieth century was particularly fruitful in its various interpretations of such encounters: Martin Buber and Emanuel Lévinas, Jacques Derrida and Mikhail Bakhtin, Paul Ricoeur and Gayatri Spivak, to name just a few.¹ European and wider Western totality is unimaginable without its distorted mirror—the non-European other that is increasingly rendered in modernity as a radically sub-human other. Paul Ricoeur called one of his most famous works *Oneself as Another (Soi-même comme un autre)*, in a way restating a long-existing Western anxiety expressed a century earlier by Arthur Rimbaud's grammatically incorrect "Je est un autre" [I am an other]. Martin Buber in *I and Thou* interpreted existence as encounter, mutuality, exchange, and meeting, and regarded dialogue as a genetic motif for describing the dual modes of being. For him, the I-You dialogue opens up the inherent otherness present in any individual. Bakhtin's dialogic theory developed similarly to Buber's and

stressed the constant interaction of self and other. Later the poststructuralist theories of otherness heavily grounded themselves in reconsidered radical Freudian interpretations of fragmented identities and subjects whose “I” is a site of constant struggle between the impulses of biological unconscious and those of the censoring super-ego. The majority of postmodernist conceptions of otherness dealt with this Freudian understanding of same/other relations, often mediated through Lacan’s interpretations.²

However, *the other* as a problem for the same has not been solved in modernity or in postmodernity, and remained largely an absolute and insuperable radical otherness. This does not promise anything constructive, but just states once again the absolute relativism and epistemic uncertainty as the staples of postmodernist thinking. So what we have at work here in xenophilic postmodernist theorizing is, in fact, a constant repetition of difference, its endless copying, and the two main ways of treating the other that are typical of the rhetoric of modernity and which are retained in postmodernist thought often in self-reflecting forms. One of these approaches consists of the impossibility of understanding the other, and hence our tendency to translate otherness into sameness in order to be able to treat the other ethically, to communicate with it, to understand it, which is linked with the Lévinasian thesis that any contact with otherness ends in violence by means of its appropriation and adjustment to the economy of the same.³ The other approach rejects absolute otherness, yet clings to the modernist progressivist thinking, claiming that the other represents some previous earlier stage in the development of the same and needs to be condescendingly guided on its way to an enlightened position.

Therefore, we see here that modernist and postmodernist understandings of otherness, and notions of communicating with it, were marked by several philosophic, cognitive, and ethnical limitations, which we would like to further trace in this article, while at the same time attempting to present a different genealogy of otherness as a voice and a reason of the other himself/herself. One of the most fundamental weaknesses of modernist and postmodernist theorizing of otherness lies in the fact that its practitioners have criticized modernity from inside, from the position of sameness or internal non-absolute otherness, and what they criticized was the modern and not the Euro-American element in Western modernity. Therefore, their criticism of modernity remained superfluous or/and was ultimately aimed at redeeming the project of modernity, saving it from itself, and cosmetically redesigning it. More importantly, arguing against an essentialist understanding of identity, postmodernism thus erased the possible agency of an other based on any group affinity, and by doing so it negated the other once again, depriving it of any reason or agency as such.

Defending the authentic relations between people, Lévinas offered his well-known concept of responsibility for the other, born beyond the

spheres of freedom and Western egology, marked by the asymmetry of inter-subjective relations.⁴ But the Lévinasian understanding of otherness, as well as of Sartrean reciprocity⁵ within which both same and other can act as objects for each other at different moments, and of Derridean reflections on the monolingualism and monologism of the other in fact, are all based on the same othering and objectifying.⁶ It is the monology of these positions, their monotopic hermeneutics growing out of Western reason, that becomes obvious in all these interpretations, and not the monology of the other itself as a construct or as reality. The Western deconstruction of modernity from within is minimally and predictably external in relation to the Lévinasian totality of European thought, but this thought itself remains the only reference point.

In contemporary Western understanding, the other is no longer eliminated in any violent form. It is overcome by stereotyping, orientalism, and progressivism, by continuing objectification, and, most commonly, by commodification. The culture of immanence (according to Lévinas) strives to overcome the otherness of a different individual, a different society, or a different epistemology, while the spiritual is suppressed by the rational and the pragmatic. As a result, the other once again is being taken for the same; it becomes internal for our consciousness, while its ability to question us is ignored, and the Cartesian *ego cogito* turns into *ego consumo*.

Modernity managed to build its entire self-understanding on the rule of contraries where the other—be it a barbarian or a woman, nature or a homosexual—has been incorporated into a complex hierarchy, erected in order to represent the same positively, and also to provide a rationale for ensuring the stability of such divisions.

It is clear that the very idea of encountering and dealing with the “other” presupposes “a same” who enjoys epistemic and discursive privileges and who claims to identify himself/ herself as the same in contrast with the other. Thus, the idea of the other assumes a monotopic frame of knowledge—epistemologically, discursively, and visually—that is, the invention of the other was and is always an imperial construct of the same by the colonial difference locating the other. This colonial difference is built into the fundamental asymmetry that was and continues to be sharpened in modernity—between the sameness that has the right to define and categorize the other, to treat it ethically or violently, always using itself as the universal norm, on the one hand, and the muted otherness that does not have the right to define or criticize the same, but is forced to see itself in a deprecating way due to its deficiency within the realm of sameness, on the other hand. If we shift the geography of this imperial reason⁷ and look at the world from the perspective of the colonial other, the imperial same emerges in his or her naked privilege and dominant position. This shift requires us to move from monotopic imperial to pluritopic decolonial hermeneutics. Thus, philosophical thinking that can be

called other-than-modern, from its very inception, is decolonial, and has to be philosophically decolonial in its trajectory.

II. MONOTOPIC-DIATOPIC-PLURITOPIC HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is generally described as the art of interpretation. It deals with meaning, and characterized the humanities. Hermeneutics has been usually distinguished from epistemology, which is the art of explanation and marks the sciences, both natural and human. There are, however, human sciences, such as history, anthropology, and partly sociology, that prefer interpretation to explanation. In the humanities, hermeneutics has been coupled with the interpretation of tradition. In the example of Hans-Georg Gadamer,⁸ hermeneutics and the interpretation of Western traditions become one and the same. But since “the West” starting from the European Renaissance goes hand in hand with colonialism and Western expansion, Western knowledge has managed, controlled, and subsumed non-Western traditions, and, by so doing, taken away from them their own ways of making sense of the past for their own purposes. It was precisely in that cognitive operation (epistemological we can say, using epistemology in a broader sense to refer to the principles of knowledge making, whether interpretation or explanation) that the idea of *humanitas* was conceived and the self defined in the interpretation of *anthropos*. *Humanitas* and *anthropos* are two Western concepts, as Nishitani Osamu has convincingly argued in “Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of ‘Human Beings’.”⁹

Let us elaborate some more on pluritopic hermeneutics. It starts and departs from the earlier proposed concept of diatopic hermeneutics offered by Raimundo Panikkar. He defines it as the art of understanding by means of crossing spaces or traditions (dia-topoi), which do not have common models of understanding and understandability.¹⁰ Under diatopic hermeneutics, we do not assume that the other has the same self-understanding as we do. Panikkar rethinks the mechanics of monotopic Western hermeneutics, according to which we can know something only if we acquire a certain degree of pre-understanding (Gadamer’s “horizon”) and anticipation of meaning. But in intercultural and inter-philosophical contexts, such an anticipation, as a basis for a hermeneutic circle, is not possible. Hence, the necessity of diatopic hermeneutics, which helps us understand something that does not belong to our horizon.

Diatopic hermeneutics begins with the realization of pain arising from alienation and radical difference. It becomes an answer to the challenge of an interpretation traversing the cultural and religious boundaries in case the hermeneutic circle has not been created yet. It refuses to colonize the other by its set of preexisting categories and values. In contrast to postmodernists, Panikkar does not think that it is impossible to understand the other. Such

an understanding for him is inevitable and necessary. Hence, his method of im-parative (not com-parative) philosophy (from Latin *imparare*, to learn in the atmosphere of plurality), which is a way of dialogic and experiential (not interpretative as in Western hermeneutics) learning from the other, thus enriching our thinking by the other’s intuitions and revelations.¹¹ What is important here is that Panikkar still clings to the subject/object and the same/other division, although he takes a huge step in the direction of questioning this rule of modernity.

Last but not least, where is the epistemic location of the understanding subject who operates in a monotopically based hermeneutics (à la Gadamer)? The understanding subject of monotopic hermeneutics is not, and cannot be, *the other*, but is always the same. It is precisely the privilege of controlling knowledge and meaning that allows monotopic hermeneutics to secure the voice of *humanitas* and to define itself by inventing its exteriority, i.e., the other. While dia-topically (and pluritopically) based hermeneutics disobeys the totalitarianism of monotopic hermeneutics, the *other* speaks, reasons, argues, invents, and creates while looking into the eyes of *humanitas*. The difference between *humanitas* with its monotopic hermeneutics, on the one hand, and *anthropos* with its embracing and enacting diatopic and pluritopic hermeneutics, on the other hand, is that *anthropos* has the potential of thinking from his or her own body and experience, subsuming the imperial reason that makes an *other*, an *anthropos* out of him or her. In a way, the epistemic revolt of the *anthropos*, denouncing the non-human of the *humanitas*, enlarges and expands the ideals of the European Renaissance and the Enlightenment beyond their own horizons. The European Renaissance and Enlightenment men and postmodern neoliberal ideologues thought that they had the right to civilize and make the planet after their likeness. But all of a sudden, *anthropos* (the other) decided to take their destiny in their own hands. We are witnessing these reversals unfolding in two directions: de-westernization and the shift toward the Eastern Hemisphere (as compellingly argued by Kishore Mahbubani),¹² and decoloniality and the shift from Marxism and Liberation Theology toward the global agencies of what Frantz Fanon called *les damnés de la terre*:¹³ all those marked by the colonial wound,¹⁴ by being questioned in their/our humanity for their/our religion, skin color, sexual preference, gender, geo-political location, and language. In a nutshell, the *other*, the *anthropos*, is now on the march to decolonize *humanitas* and to build a world in which everyone participates instead of being participated, as *the other* was.

We have already mentioned the crucial meaning of colonial and imperial differentials for conceptualizing “encounters with otherness.” This problematic is closely linked with the genealogy of Western comparative studies from the Renaissance on, where the comparison has been always marked by the imperial epistemic and cultural dominance and framed

within the false analogy paradigm: the European “apples” were continually compared with the non-European “oranges” and other such strange fruit, only to prove their deviation when opposed to “apples.” However, in the colonial space, the strangeness of the other constantly erodes the realm of the same, does not leave it impenetrable, and eventually finds its way to the metropolis, as Anne McClintock has persuasively argued in *Imperial Leather*.¹⁵ Thus, what we have in colonies or semi-colonies in modernity can be called a colonial semiosis,¹⁶ which is based on the interactive production of culture and knowledge by members of different traditions.

What is important here is that in this case, the act of understanding someone else’s philosophy, cosmology, ethics, culture, and language presupposes a self-conscious comparison, involving not only the two or more terms that are being compared but also questioning the very act of comparison itself, its mechanisms, its ideologies, and the relativity of its points of view. Instead of Gadamer’s monotopic hermeneutic, in which the point of enunciation is always inside the same Western tradition and its linear myth of modernity is invented by the very monotopic understanding and imposed onto the multicultural spaces, in the case of pluritopic hermeneutics, we localize the understanding subject in the colonial periphery, which automatically disturbs the easy and clear rendering of “tradition,” or point of reference. Indeed, pluritopic hermeneutics questions the position and the homogeneity of the understanding subject. It moves in the direction of interactive knowledge and understanding, reflecting the very process of constructing the space that is being *known*. The pluritopic approach does not accentuate relativism or cultural diversity. It stresses instead the social, political, and ontological dimensions of any theorizing and any understanding, questioning the Western locus on enunciation masked as universal and out-of-concrete-space. It strives to (re)construct, more specifically, the difference in the loci of enunciation and the politics of knowing beyond cultural relativism. We should not also forget the ethical dimension of pluritopic hermeneutics, which stresses the constant realization that other truths also exist and have the right to exist, but their visibility is reduced by the continuing power asymmetry, which is based on the coloniality of knowledge, power, being, and gender.

III. TRANS-MODERNITY VERSUS ALTER-MODERNITY

In the beginning of the 1990s, the Argentinean philosopher, Enrique Dussel, proposed the concept of trans-modernity.¹⁷ Trans-modernity opened up a spatial dimension in history and in the history of ideas. It occupied a space next to the postmodern. The trans-modern, in other words, brought to the foreground the historical and intellectual presence of the outside of Europe, of some of its colonies in South America and the Caribbean. However, it had the potential of pointing toward multiple trans-modern histories, memories, and

knowledges that being non-European (that is, not based on Greek thought codified by the European Renaissance) had to deal, sooner or later, with the imperial expansion of Europe in the name of modernity and, more recently, postmodernity. To avoid being subsumed under the universal pretences of the modern and the postmodern, the concept of trans-modernity needed to be backed up as a concept of knowledge geo-politically conceived rather than uni-versally absorbed in a uni-linear time—the time of Europe.

Trans-modernity is the space of the borderlands, the space where exteriority becomes visible. Why does it happen so? Because the subjects who live in exteriority realize that they have been constructed as an exteriority—as the “other.” When the other looks into the eyes of the same, realizing that he or she as the other was an invention of the same, and that the same justified himself or herself in creating an exterior to modernity (a space that modernity would conquer or destroy), and when the subject realized that he or she has been made an other by the same that dominates and imposes upon him or her what to do, in the name of modernity, then trans-modernity emerges as another space of thinking and acting, no longer modern, controlled by the same, but trans-modern—the other appropriating, absorbing, and de-linking the emancipating promises of modernity and transforming them into the liberating projects of trans-modernity.

Trans-modernity is the epistemic and ontological dwelling of “the other,” taking charge in the decolonial marching. Trans-modernity makes visible the geo- and bio-graphy of knowledge; it shows that postmodernity and alter-modernity in the sense of multiple modernities are regional concepts serving the interests and subjectivities of regional people in particular spaces and, mainly, the internal and imperial history of Europe. The basic question, not asked very often, is the following: who is the same that encounters the other? The question is relevant because it is never the other who encounters the same. If that situation obtained, then the other would become the same who sees the same as the other. The problem with “the other” is that by the very fact of being postulated and enunciated, it insures the fixity of the enunciation of “the same.” “The same,” in other words, is he/she/it (human agents and institutions) who/that are in control of the enunciation. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a radical shift in the geography of knowledge and of reason is taking place: “the other(s)” is/are taking hold and controlling the enunciation and displacing the “Eurocentered same” that created them as the “Other(s) of Europe.” Decolonial philosophy emerges from this radical shift (from the epistemic regulation of the same to the epistemic disobedience of the other); geo- and body-politics of knowledge disobey imperial theo- and ego politics, opening up the space for decolonial thinking and decolonial option(s). Decolonial thinking and doing, its very practice, is itself ingrained in the process of shifting the geography of reason and decolonial orientations of actions. It provides arguments that relegate

to the past imperial distinctions between the same and the other. While imperial reason (that is, Eurocentrism in Europe as well as in Eastern Europe, its former direct and indirect colonies where local agents promote and enact Eurocentric values—for example, Saakashvili and his supporters in Georgia, or Uribe and his supporters in Colombia) is still in its place and will remain for a while, epistemic pluri-versality and decolonial philosophy are already marching toward a trans-modern (and decolonial) rather than an alter-modern (and newly imperial) future. If this were not the case, the argument we are advancing here could not have been imagined.

There exists a concept of alter-modernity that has become popular lately and needs to be examined vis-à-vis the position that we are defending here. Alter-modernity has become an umbrella term that covers often opposite positions, and is based on the notion of unification. What we mean by this is, for example, the fundamentally different “alternative modernities”¹⁸ and alternatives to modernity itself. In the first case, there is no critical rethinking of modernity as such; it is not questioned but simply imbued with certain local features. However, the alternative modernities model leaves intact the cult of progress, the dichotomy of modernity versus tradition, the vector evolutionary understanding of history, and Eurocentrism. This model has existed for a long time and has been used, to varying degrees of success, by various countries in modernity, as a rule the countries that occupied a secondary position in the hierarchy of modernity and that could not win in its deadly competition. Examples would include some Muslim countries striving to incorporate Western modernity, but at the same time attempting to restrict it to the technology and science areas, while leaving spiritual values intact (which proved to be difficult). They also include the secondary empires of modernity such as Russia, which also has attempted to build an alter-modernity in which the mythology of modernity—completely alien for Russia and not reflected upon by the architects of modernization—has been accompanied by the superfluous entourage of typically Russian elements, which seems to provide the necessary difference from Western modernity and hence to bring solace: we have our own kind of modernity, our own brand of democracy, etc.¹⁹

The second position—alternative to modernity—is more radical and promising. It is based on the rejection of modernity in both its lighter and darker aspects, in both its attractive and disgusting premises. In other words, it is an epistemic de-linking from modernity, a decolonial epistemic shift leading to pluri-versality. While alter-modernity proposes an “alternative modernity” rather than an “alternative to modernity,” decolonial thinking paves the road for decolonial options and “trans-modern” (as Dussel conceptualized it) futures. Trans-modern futures are built on epistemic and aesthetic (aesthesia, sensing) disobedience: the disobedience of the other toward imperial designs of the same, disobedience that transforms

and converts the epistemic imperial same into an equal other. This is, in a nutshell, the process of decolonizing epistemology and aesthetics that we are witnessing at the beginning of the twenty-first century.²⁰

There is a global march of decoloniality today moving toward a trans-modern, and not a postmodern or alter-modern, world. Postmodern and alter-modern (in the first sense) are mostly regional, and mainly European, visions of their own history that have been projected globally without noticing the imperialism of European history, and while seeing it as the history of the world. The foundation of this belief lies in the Bible and in its secular version, Hegel’s philosophy of history. Such a vision has not been built on the works of Ibn Khaldun and/or Guamán Poma de Ayala. Alter-modern is a concept that in Europe itself marks the end of the postmodern. While postmodernity presents itself as superseding modernity in the linear time of European history, alter-modernity presents itself as superseding postmodernity by extending its paws to space, to the globe. However, it remains within the confines of monotopic hermeneutics: it is the European observer who, from the hill, looks down on the valley (the rest of the planet). Trans-modernity is used to unveil the imperial pretense of modernity, postmodernity, and alter-modernity. Once again, we are de-linking from monotopic hermeneutics and moving toward dia-topic and pluritopic hermeneutics, essential to understanding “trans-modernity” as both an epistemic and hermeneutic shift when “the other” takes the field and denounces the otherness of “the same” (i.e., *humanitas*), and by so doing, decolonizes the imperial and colonial differences upon which the very idea of the other (the colonial and the imperial other, like China, Russia or Islamic history) was built and sustained.

The illusion that “alter-modernity” in its first understanding runs parallel to “alter-mondisme” as an alternative to “liberal globalization” is just that—an illusion. Alter-modernity, intentionally or not, is an attempt to re-center in Europe what the World Social Forum is trying to do: the “center” is in Porto Alegre, Mumbai, Nairobi, Caracas, Belen and not just and only in Berlin, Paris, London or New York. Decolonial thinking confronts “alter-modernity,” promoting and enacting “barbarian theorizing.” To appropriate and remake William Shakespeare’s metaphor, it is Caliban who is taking away the reason of Prospero and incorporating it in his own body, in his own sensibility, and in his own reasoning.²¹ So Prospero becomes the limited “other” who only feels and knows the reason of the Master, while Caliban knows and feels the reason of the enslaved, and as such knows the reason of the Master. Thus, Caliban inhabits the border, dwells in the border, while Prospero dwells in a territory, and from that territory he only sees the frontiers and the “other” on the “other side.” Dwelling in the frontiers, Caliban inhabits double consciousness: the other that all of a sudden becomes the same. At the moment when Caliban shifts the geography of reason, Prospero appears to him as a strange and incomprehensible other: who is this person who

believes and assumes that it is natural for a human being to control, exploit, and dominate another human being? Where did Prospero learn that this is the case? By asking such questions, Caliban is already engaged in border thinking, and border thinking is the method of decolonial thinking and the road toward trans-modern and decolonial futures.

IV. CODA: THINKING DECOLONIALY, DECOLONIAL PHILOSOPHY

Thinking decolonially cannot be performed from the perspective of the same. This article, therefore, has been written *by the other*. In other words, *we are the other*. We, Madina and Walter, do not and cannot inhabit, for example, the skin of Habermas or Gadamer, or the house of being (which was Europe for Agnes Heller). We, Madina and Walter, inhabit the skin of Fanon or Anzaldúa, not because we are black or brown (actually we are quite white), but because the colonial wound runs deeper than the color of our skin. If you are black in Russia because you are Caucasian, or if you are not quite white in the United States because you are Hispanic, you begin to understand that the question of “the other” cannot be solved by the goodwill of “the same.” Thinking decolonially means to decolonize Western control of philosophy as the “correct” way of thinking. In other words, it is necessary to decolonize philosophy to liberate thinking; that is what decolonial thinking means and what decolonial philosophy may look like.

Sir Lloyd Best (1934–2007), the Afro-Caribbean thinker, was not looking at becoming “the same,” but called for “independent thought and Caribbean freedom.” Independent thought can hardly be achieved by applying or paraphrasing Habermas in the Caribbean. Best knew it. However, since knowledge is controlled by the same (i.e., coloniality of knowledge) and by the same token, the coloniality of being is controlled by imperial knowledge, who would pay attention to Best but the Caribbean people themselves? The reason Habermas has more readers is not necessarily because he has “more important things to say.” It is because Habermas speaks on the side of *humanitas* while Best speaks on the side of *anthropos*, according to the dominant perspective imposed by *humanitas*. In his foundational argument on independent thought and Caribbean freedom, Best said:

It is being proposed here, that being who we are, what we are and where, the kind of action to which we must be committed is determinate [. . .] To acknowledge this is to set ourselves three tasks: The first is to fashion theory on which may be based the clear intellectual leadership for which the nation calls and which it has never had. The second is to conduct the inquiry on which theory can be soundly based. This is what may be called, in the jargon of my original trade, the creation of intellectual capital goods.

Thirdly, we are to establish media by which these goods may be transmitted to the rest of us who are otherwise [. . .] We may wish to create a media of direct democratic expression suitable to the native Caribbean imagination (*Independent Thought*, 29).²²

Muslim-Iranian intellectuals have, of course, different local histories than those of Black Caribbean intellectuals, but there is a deep connection in their decolonial struggle. Here is what an Iranian intellectual, Amr G. E. Sabet, has to say. In introducing his argument, Sabet makes clear that in the investigation he presents he is not making any claims either in favor of any “Islamization of knowledge” or for its secularization. His argument aims, he stresses, at *the integration* of knowledge, “whether secular or religious, through a measure of *intersubjectivity*.”²³ Furthermore, and this is crucial for our argument, Sabet notes that beyond looking for an integration of Islamic thought and social theory,

[. . .] this study seeks to link the former (i.e., Islamic thought) with *decolonization* in order to underscore Islam’s liberating commitment not only toward Muslims but [also] toward humanity at large. The decolonization process that had taken place during the post-World War II era remains, unfortunately, an unfinished, and even a regressing, project.²⁴

Decoloniality (to distinguish it from decolonization during the Cold War) refers to a set of projects based on *identities* that are open to humanity at large, in the same way that Christian theology and secular liberalism were, although they did not recognize themselves as *identity*. They recognized themselves as *universality*. For that reason, Sabet argues, “In addition to political, as well as economic, independence[,] there is *the essential need for the independence of thought, of the mental, the psychological, and the spiritual*; for the exorcising of souls and liberating of minds.”²⁵

In conclusion, we would like to stress that global decoloniality is marching forward and it is shifting the geo- and bio-graphy of knowledge and understanding:²⁶ in front of the imperial universality of the same, there emerges the convivial pluri-versality of the other (that is, *us*, connecting through the inter-subjective commonality of the colonial wound). Thinking decolonially means to decolonize Western philosophy management of correct ways of thinking: philosophy remains the thinking of the *same* that invented the *other* to define itself as the *same* (i.e., *humanitas*). To decolonize philosophy means to liberate thinking and to de-link from the philosophical imperialism in the hands of *the same*, reproducing, constantly, *the other*. Decoloniality and pluritopic hermeneutics join forces in moving away from deadly Western imperial distinctions between same and other.

NOTES

¹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); Emmanuel Lévinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987) (also includes *The Old and the New* and *Diachrony and Representation*); Emmanuel Lévinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995 [1991]); Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another (Soi-même comme un autre)*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1990]); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

² Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006).

³ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité*. [1961] (Paris: Gallimard Livre de Poches, 1990). It is important to remember that Lévinas's *other* was not a universal *other* facing the modern universal subject as *the same*, but it was historically and subjectively grounded. Lévinas was thinking as *a Jew* about the Jews as internal *others* in Europe. Lévinas (after the Holocaust) was confronting Heidegger's *ontology* and its political implications. His dialogical face-to-face displaces the enunciation from the *same* (the ontology of being, in Heidegger) to the *other* (the dialogical in Lévinas). Dialogical face-to-face disavows ontology and asserts the *other* as "otherwise than being."

⁴ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité*. [1961] (Paris: Gallimard Livre de Poches, 1990).

⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

⁶) See for instance Jacques Derrida, *Le monolinguisme de l' autre*. Paris: Galilée, 1996

⁷ Lewis R. Gordon, "Próspero's Words, Caliban's Reason," in *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 107–32.

⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

⁹ Nishitani Osamu, "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of 'Human Beings,'" in *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference*, ed. Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 259–74.

¹⁰ Raimundo Panikkar, "Cross-Cultural Studies: The Need for a New Science of Interpretation," *Monchanin* 8:3–5 (1975): 12–15.

¹¹ Raimundo Panikkar, "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?," in *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, ed. Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 116–36.

¹² Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008).

¹³ Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre*. Paris: Maspéro, 1961

¹⁴ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

¹⁵ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹⁶ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 11.

¹⁷ Enrique Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)," in *The Postmodern Debate in Latin America*, ed. John Beverley, José Oviedo, and Michael Aronna (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 65–76.

¹⁸ Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (ed.). *Alternative Modernities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2nd ed., 2001).

¹⁹ Madina Tlostanova, *A Janus-Faced Empire: Notes on the Russian Empire in Modernity, Written from the Border* (Moscow: Blok, 2003).

²⁰ The next step would be to decolonize the state and the economy, a process that is already being discussed in Bolivia, in the government of Evo Morales, and which was initiated by the Zapatistas in 1994.

²¹ Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

²² Lloyd Best, "Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom," *New World Quarterly*, 3:4 (1967), 13-34; Lloyd Best, "Independence and Responsibility," in *The Critical Tradition of Caribbean Political Economy: The Legacy of George Beckford*, ed. Kari Levitt and Michael Witter (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers in association with the George Beckford Foundation, 1996).

²³ Amr G. E. Sabet, *Islam and the Political: Theory, Governance and International Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁶ Walter D. Mignolo and Madina V. Tlostanova, "Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9:2 (2006), 205–21;

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