

Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option

Madina V. Tlostanova*

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia

Walter D. Mignolo*

Duke University

I. The issues

In the title of this article we offer two concepts by means of which it is possible to rethink modernity and its darker side — coloniality - on a global scale, not only historically but also synchronously. These concepts also allow us to formulate the epistemic, political and ethical basis of global decolonial options to the existing world order, which we all witness or take part in today. The concept of global coloniality will enable us to go beyond the British/US imperial formations and the forgotten Spanish empire and consider the enormous importance of the surfacing of the Atlantic economy (the west coast of Africa, the west coast of Europe and the east coast of all the Americas), which displaced the weight that the Mediterranean had had for the Western confines of the world until 1500. We wish also to take into account the Russian revolution and the split of the Enlightenment project into two modernities (the liberal and the socialist). Finally, we will turn to consider the collapse of the

* Professor at the Department of History of Philosophy at the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia

* Professor in Literature and Cultural Anthropology and director of the Center for Global Studies and the Humanities, Duke University

Soviet Union, and the subsequent rogue of today's neo-liberalism, which has enabled the emergence of what we describe here as polycentric world order.

Our approach moves away from the canonical scholarly assumptions in the humanities and social sciences, and has implications for other areas of knowledge, in natural sciences as well as in professional schools¹. Instead of studying or analysing the existing postcolonial and neo-colonialist phenomena and processes, be it diaspora, exile, nationalism, bio-politics, etc., and instead of maintaining the divide between the known object and the knowing subject, the decolonial approach allows for a specific epistemic, political and ethical instrument for transforming the world by transforming the way people see it, feel it and act in it. The decolonial option places the *problem* or *problems to be addressed* (and not the object or objects to be studied) in the foreground. By doing so, it leads any investigation through the scholar, intellectual or researcher, *into the world*, rather than keeping him or her *within the discipline*. The *problems* that concern the decolonial option are problems that have been set up by the modern/colonial matrix of power², and so they are addressed through the shift in the geopolitics of knowledge that occurs with de-colonial thinking and knowing.

It is possible to argue, of course, that there were already too many revolutionary projects in modernity. But most of them were based on Western modernity products or their local clones — from the leftist discourses to various kinds of nationalism, including the postcolonial nationalism, ethnocentrism and religious fundamentalism. The decolonial option offers a significantly different approach from what postcolonial studies have been doing so far. We are not trying to automatically transfer any concepts that are true about the British Empire or France and their colonies onto the rest of the world and particularly to those locales that had their own logic of coloniality such as Latin America or Eurasia. Instead of translating

¹ See for example the radical questioning of management among the scholars in the world of business schools in Eduardo Ibarra-Colado (2007) and Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee (2006).

² While the concept of coloniality was coined by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, the expression of 'colonial matrix of power' was coined by Aymara intellectual and professor of sociology, Felix Patzi-Paco (2004).

phenomena of the colonial and postcolonial eras into the language of the Western postmodernism or area studies, we would like to offer a different set of concepts that grew on the basis of a non-western or not-quite-western genealogy of knowledge.

II. The colonial matrix of power

Coloniality (e.g. the imperial/colonial organization of societies) is here the main category, which describes a global phenomenon. This phenomenon has a variety of manifestations but does not lose its main characteristics. For instance, China confronts Western imperial legacies in its own way by appropriating the logic of coloniality. The re-constitution of Russia is living aside the socialist version of coloniality to engage in an alternative version within global capitalism. Decolonizing from this global coloniality becomes the main epistemological horizon of the decolonial option. Decoloniality means here decolonization of knowledge and being by epistemically and affectively de-linking from the imperial/colonial organization of society.

The ‘word’ coloniality has for us³ a specific meaning, theoretical and historical. Conceptually, coloniality is the hidden side of modernity. By writing modernity/coloniality we mean that coloniality is constitutive of modernity, and that there is no modernity without coloniality.

‘Development’ is a companion concept to modernity. ‘Underdevelopment’, however, is not the equivalent, in economic terms, to coloniality in historical and philosophical terms. Underdevelopment is what development proposes to overcome. In contrast, modernity does not propose to overcome coloniality, but rather ‘tradition’, ‘barbarism’, ‘fanatic religious belief’, and the like. Coloniality is indeed

³ By ‘us’ and ‘we’ we refer to both, ourselves, authoring this article and also to the collective project, modernity/coloniality/decoloniality. See an overview of the project in *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), 2007.

the hidden weapon behind the rhetoric of modernity justifying all kinds of actions, including war, in order to eliminate ‘barbarism’ and overcome ‘tradition’. Thus, coloniality is, like the unconscious, the hidden weapon of both the civilizing and developmental mission of modernity.

Historically, coloniality came into being in the 16th century, with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit, the European appropriation of land, the massive exploitation of labor, the slave trade, the extraction of gold and silver, and the plantation economy. It was not at that time a projected global design. Western Christians, after losing Jerusalem, were preoccupied with the geographical expansion of Christianity: the oecumene did not at the time include what would become ‘America’. Coloniality emerged through processes by means of which the Spaniards and the Portuguese created a new social order, the *colonial organization of society* based on racial hierarchy. This hierarchy was founded on the invaders’ control of knowledge. The colonial organization of society consisted in submitting the native population to the management and control of the invading country. In the case of the New World, a massive contingent of enslaved Africans was added.

In the 17th century, Dutch, French and British commercial enterprises took advantage of the Caribbean lands and African slaves to establish a plantation economy that contributed to the enrichment of Western European monarchies and created the conditions for the Industrial Revolution. The Dutch created the East India Company. The British soon initiated their own commercial relations with the Mughal Sultanate. After the Napoleonic wars France started its commercial and colonial contacts with Mahgreb. From the late 18th century onwards, the colonial matrix of power was expanded, transformed and enacted by the emerging European imperial nations of the Western and Atlantic coasts. This story is well known. Less attention has been paid to the commonality, after the three centuries of the ‘discovery’ of America, to the underlying structure that united the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the French, the English and also, with a few important provisions, the Russian empires.

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Eastern Christianity, represented mainly by Russia, had its own *mondialisme* of the Orthodox Christian kind (historically unsuccessful) and also, its own New World. First, Siberia was colonized by the Kazaks, the Russian equivalents of the conquistadors under the supervision of the proto-capitalist merchant families like the Stroganoff from the late 16th century onwards. In the second modernity, Russia colonized the Caucasus and Central Asia (the Russian Orient). In spite of the absence of the classic capitalist model, in the first modernity Russia had its own variant of coloniality with Orthodox Christianity in its center (Moscow as the Third Rome). Russian coloniality, in short, had all the commercial and geo-political reverberations, except for the ingenious ‘discovery’ of Western modernity of the firm link between racism and the shaping of capitalist exploitation of labor in the colonies. These historical phenomena obviously show that coloniality is wider and deeper than just capitalism, and that it cannot be understood exclusively within the economic sphere. Further, they demonstrate that coloniality allows conceptualizing not just the West and its colonies but also the rest of the world, and particularly Eurasia, which was later epistemically colonized by the discourses of modernity. As we will see this deeper nature of coloniality surpassing capitalism in its classical forms would keep coming forward again and again – in the Soviet modernity and in the late 20th century, when capitalism would become polycentric and travel to non-European spaces.

Conceptually, the colonial matrix of power operates in four interconnected spheres of life. In each sphere there are struggles; conflicts over control and domination in which the imposition of a particular lifestyle, moral, economy, structure of authority, etc., implies the overcoming, destruction, marginalization of the existing precolonial order. The four interconnected spheres in which the colonial matrix of power was constituted in the 16th century, and has operated since then, are the following:

- 1) The struggle for the economic control (i.e. the appropriation of land, natural resources and exploitation of labor);
- 2) The struggle for the control of authority (setting up political organizations, different forms of governmental, financial and legal systems, or the installation of military bases, as it happens today);
- 3) The control of the public sphere — among other ways, through the nuclear family (Christian or bourgeois), and the enforcing of normative sexuality and the naturalization of gender roles in relation to the system of authority and principles regulating economic practices. It is based on sexual normativity and dual “natural” gender relations;
- 4) The control of knowledge and subjectivity through education and colonizing the existing knowledges, which is the key and fundamental sphere of control that makes domination possible.

The colonial matrix of power went through successive and cumulative periods, in which the rhetoric changed according to the needs and the leading forces shaping the spheres of economy, authority, public realm (gender and sexuality) and education (knowledge and subjectivity). Theology and the *mission of conversion* to Christianity managed the first period. That period dominated the scene during the 16th and 17th centuries and was in the hands of the Catholic Christian and Southern European monarchies, although Orthodox Christianity also had its limited success. By the end of the 17th century, a secular and commercial language emerged in England based on the profitable economies of the plantations. The combination of a growing economic discourse and an increasing secularization of life was a step towards the second stage, the *civilizing mission* led by England and France. When the US took over the leadership from England and France, after World War II, the mission was to develop the ‘underdeveloped’ countries and to modernize the traditional ones. This third stage was the *developmental and modernizing mission*. It had a strong competition with

another modernizing and developmental mission called *socialism*.⁴ In the period from 1970 to 2000 neo-liberalism was consolidated in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The neo-liberal agenda translated the previous mission of development and modernization, into the Washington Consensus of granting the market economy priority over social regulation.

Historically, the colonial matrix had followed a serpentine, not a vector trajectory. It unfolded not just in the Western empires, from Spain and Portugal, to Holland, France and Britain, to the U.S., but also — in a transmuted form — in the Russian and, particularly, in the Soviet modernity. Starting from the 16th century and more intensively, from Peter the Great, Russia had been transforming gradually into a subaltern, second-rate empire which adapted the Western model of modernity, civilization, and later, progress, pushing its mondialist Orthodox Christian project more and more into the Jungian collective unconscious. This only intensified Russia's historical failure as it could not possibly compete with the West in secular areas and was doomed to remain within the catching up and resentful discourse. Adapting the rhetoric of modernity one cannot avoid the baggage of coloniality, which certainly went unannounced and was not properly conceptualized by the Russian elites and imperial ideologues then and now. Efforts at revamping the aggressive Russian mondialism took place in the 19th century as well, but only Soviet modernity was able to rebuild itself as a monolith system in which the rhetoric of modernity would change to the deceptively secular socialist one, but the logic of coloniality would remain intact. Thus we can say, that modernity in the 20th century was realized in two forms — the liberal/capitalist modernity and the socialist/statist one.

⁴ Within the socialist modernity there was an internal an external civilizing and modernizing rhetoric as well. The first was intended for the Soviet non-European colonies and was expressed in the reinvention of the old Lenin's myth that had typically Eurocentric origins of the heroic civilizing efforts of the great Russian people in the 'backwards' regions of Central Asia. In the 1960-1980s it was used to divert attention from the worsening living standards by looking for an imagined enemy — the Muslim colonies that the poor Russians presumably had to feed. In the external rendering the same mythology referred to the third-world countries who were the objects of the continuous Western and Soviet rivalry.

Soviet modernity refashioned the rhetoric of modernity in the language of socialism versus capitalism, but it reproduced the logic of coloniality in the control and management of its colonies, particularly the non-European, non-Christian, racialized colonies — in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Soviet modernity was an ultimately unsuccessful attempt at creating an alternative world, where nonetheless we can find the distorted reflections of all the elements of liberal capitalist modernity. Parallel to its rival, the Socialist world had been building its own successive forms of coloniality, which in the end only prove the derivative and mimicking nature of Soviet modernity. Thus, the Soviet division of labor was also partly based on the racial hierarchy. A number of scholars think that there was no idea of race in the USSR. But others demonstrate that in Soviet modernity race was replaced with ‘nation’⁵, and accompanied by a developed racial politics, as the Bolsheviks inherited Eurocentrism, Orientalism and racism, from the Western socialism, albeit in distorted forms. Soviet modernity had its own developmentalism and progressivism, as well as a theatrical form of multiculturalism based on similar double standards to those of its liberal cousins, and a caricature half-way decolonization (fashioned as the rehabilitation of the “enemy nations”) after Stalin’s death. In the realm of coloniality of knowledge and of being, based on the erasing of memory, history, literacies and alphabetic traditions of the colonized, and creating the ‘good zombies’, Soviet modernity proved to be even more effective than its Western companion. It is clear that the Soviet Union was a colossus with feet of clay that could easily collapse because of its own contradictory strategies and the time bomb of its ill-designed federalism. However, it is equally clear that the lack of immunity in the face of the intellectual and cultural colonization by Western modernity, which the USSR inherited from Russia, was systematically used in the Cold War for the gradual disintegration of the Soviet Union from within. The collapse of the Socialist system coincided with the beginning of a new epoch and became itself one of the many

⁵ For more details see a discussion of racial politics in the USSR in *Slavic Review*, 61(1), Spring 2002 demonstrating the Western Slavists’ blindness to the questions of coloniality of being.

manifestations of the new face of global coloniality. In a way, Soviet modernity had completed its task and was dismantled.

Along with the end of Soviet modernity distopia there is another crucial moment in the enfolding of global modernity/coloniality, which is taking place in front of our own eyes as the reproduction of the colonial matrix of power is being 'diversified', so to speak. Diversification means that the colonial matrix is out of the control of the Western imperial states that created it and made it work for the last five centuries. Diversified or polycentric world order means that, in contrast with the world order that existed thirty years ago, the economic nodes, which are no longer following the instructions and recommendations of the World Bank and the IMF, are already unfolding globally. This also means that the struggle for authority and control is no longer between the European imperial centers (WWI) or the European imperial center and a peripheral one (Japan); or the conflagration between liberal capitalism and socialist economy that polarized the world during the Cold War and opened up the space for the non-aligned countries (basically the Third World).

It is of no consequence in that context if the diversification of capitalism takes sometimes more and sometimes less successful forms in various parts of the world⁶. In any case it is clear that in the polycentric world order the colonial matrix of power is still at work. Only that now it also is at work outside its place of origin: the Atlantic economy from the 16th century on, and the European political theory, philosophy and science, since the 18th century. Regardless of how great were the Western contributions to the world history in the past half a millennia, the West does not have any global authority any more to pressurize the rest of the world into acting like Western Europe and the US. This is clearly seen in the politics of the above

⁶ From China and Russia to South-East Asia, from India to Brazil and the Middle East Brazil most likely will take the leadership in the constitution of UNASUR (Unión Suramericana), which would only resemble the European Union with its dominating *heart of Europe* (to use Hegel's metaphor), 'integrating' the periphery. UNASUR would be like a Central or Eastern European Union engaged in a confrontation with England, France and Germany, as UNASUR is being created basically to avoid the US (as well as other intrusions) in the region.

mentioned locales which have specifically refused to receive orders and recommendations from the IMF, the White House, or the European Union.

While the era of the liberal and secular civilizing mission opened up the doors to its opposite, the socialist civilizing mission, the Washington Consensus and the invasion of Iraq, disguised as a war against terrorism (an example of rhetoric of modernity to justify the control of authority and natural resources), *took the colonial matrix of power out of the Western hands, including its socialist version*. We do not know how the polycentric world order will manifest itself in different locales in the future, but it is clear that the era of the peaceful co-existence between theology and mercantile and free-trade capitalism in the 16th and 17th century Western nations, of the cohabitation of secular liberalism and industrial capitalism after the 18th century; and the complicity between the technological revolution and neo-liberalism at the end of the 20th century — in short, the 500 years of Western imperial domination — is ending.

Yet, the colonial matrix of power is not going away. Coloniality will remain as long as the final horizon of human life is guided by the desire to accumulate capital. The control of authority will continue, disguised by a rhetoric of progress, happiness, development and the end of poverty, and will justify the huge amounts of energy and money spent on the conflicts between the centers ruled by the capitalist economy.

III. The decolonial option

Polycentric world order has made obsolete the modern idea of 'revolution', for two reasons. One is that in polycentric world order, in spite of the competition for control of authority, there is no more room for an idea of revolution that will consist in taking control of the state (like the bourgeoisie did in Europe over the monarchy; the

Bolsheviks over the Russians Czars; like the Creole from European descent (except in Haiti) did in the Americas since the end of the 18th century; or the natives did in Asia and Africa, during the era of decolonization, after WWII). The second reason is that all the revolutions we have mentioned *were revolutions within the same cosmology, within the same rules of the game*. And the word “revolution” itself is meaningful only within the ideology of progress and development, within the realm of sameness.

There is one sense of the word ‘revolution’ that is seldom mentioned: the colonial revolution, or the revolution of coloniality. This kind of revolution started in the 16th century and does not consist in overruling something previous within the same history, but in erasing in order to build something new: the New World, metaphorically, the modern/colonial world. That revolution took place subsequently in Asia and in Africa, when European powers arrived with the tools of the empire; and unfolds today when the US and transnational corporations arrive with their juggernaut to dismantle the environment in search of natural resources and the colonization of the last remaining subject of colonization: life itself.

How should the potential of the de-colonial option be perceived and how should it be located? One way of answering this question is to frame the issue within the liberal model of society. The other would be to frame it in a de-colonial perspective. Given the space constraint we will explore the first. But we will explore it *from the perspective of the second*.

Within the liberal model of social organization, we can imagine a triangle with ‘The State’ in the top angle and ‘the Economy’ and the ‘Civil Society’ in the two base angles. One of the basic components of the civil society is ‘Education’, which feeds the state and the market. From a decolonial perspective, education could be divided into ‘instruction’ (skill, knowledge for practical purposes) and ‘nurturing’ (knowledge and understanding for personal and collective well-being). The ‘Civil Society’ communicates with ‘the State’ and ‘the Market’ and vice-versa. So we can imagine double arrows connecting the first with the last two. However, the double arrow that

connects ‘the State’ and ‘the Market’ constitutes the domains of ‘the untouchable’ to which members of the civil society have little access. Similar observations will be valid, below, when we refer to the ‘Political Society’ and de-colonial thinking. Instruction and education went hand in hand in both versions of the second phase of modernity; the liberal and the socialist (from the Enlightenment onwards). Instruction and education have as their goal the training of skillful professionals and the nurturing of either liberal or socialist subjects. Neo-liberalism follows suit after the fall of the Soviet Union, while the figure of the ‘expert’ merged both instruction and nurturing.

Around the 1970s a radical transformation of intellectual and scholarly fields took place due to the impact of decolonization struggles in Asia and Africa, the emergence of dictatorial regimes in South America, and the Civil Rights movement in the US. In the “Third World” the concern was with the geopolitics of knowledge and, consequently, with the decolonizing of imperial knowledge. In the US the concern was with the body-politics of knowledge⁷. It was the moment of the creation of women studies, ethnic studies, Chicano/Latino/a studies, African-American Studies; Queer Studies, Asian-American Studies, etc. The post-colonial studies emerged mainly in the US in this particular context. The novelty was that it put the geopolitics of knowledge on the table of an already subversive scenario centered on the body-politics of knowledge. The postcolonial theories and/or postcolonial studies entered the US carrying in their hands the books of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan.

⁷ Hegemonic philosophy and principles of knowledge (epistemology) in the West are basically theological and ego-logical (I think, therefore I am). Michel Foucault captures one aspect of the ego-political implementation: the State enacting knowledge to control bodies. Foucault described it as a “bio-politics”. Theo- and secular ego-politics of knowledge established the rules of the game and expelled all knowledge not playing by the rules out of the game (myth, folklore, subjective and emotional elements in languages that are not Western and in places that are off the virtual rail-road connecting Athens to Rome to Paris to London and New York, going through Frankfurt and Heidelberg. The geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge (which is a radical contestation of the State bio-politics) emerged as forms of dissent and delinking from Western epistemic (and racist) epistemology. For more details, see Mignolo & Tlostanova (2006).

De-colonial thinking and de-colonial option have a different genealogy of thought and emerged in a different historical context: not in the US of the Civil Rights movement but in the Third World burgeoning with histories, sensibilities and still open wounds of global coloniality. While this was happening, the Soviet Union and the US (with the support of Western European countries) were engaged in the Cold War. And while in the US the Civil Rights movement enabled the de-colonial body-politics (e.g., for Chicanos and Chicanas, for Native Americans as well as for African-Americans in the 1970s, when expressions such as ‘decolonization’ and “internal colonialism” were already common currency), the Soviet Union was successful in repressing the internal de-colonial openings in Russia and its colonies, particularly the racialized Muslim colonies, devoid of any agency, where the empire destroyed, bought up or exiled most alternative voices in order to wipe off any traces of heterodoxy with regards to culture, ethnicity, or religion. Later, a partial internal decolonization —Yeltsin’s “take as much sovereignty as you want” (1990)— took place and was quickly strangled, while Russia together with the whole post-Soviet space became a large arena for global coloniality and neocolonialism.

De-colonial thinking was also unavailable in Europe, where Marxism, structuralism and post-structuralism occupied all the intellectual debates at the time. De-colonial thinking was going on in Maghreb, in sub-Saharan Africa and in India, but not in France or England. De-colonial thinking entered Europe with the massive immigration from South Asia, Middle East, Maghreb. In the US, today’s massive migration is just joining the de-colonial thinking processes that can be traced back — in their conceptual awareness — to the 1970s, if not before. The field of ‘Education’ changed radically. A diversity of ‘conceptual tools’ became available, no longer controlled by canonical disciplines and transforming the instructional dimension of education mainly in the humanities and the social sciences, but already entering into other fields. But most importantly, it had and continues to have a strong influence on ‘nurturing’, shaping and transforming subjectivities, which are disputed, in other realms, by religious orders and market gurus.

De-colonial thinking and the de-colonial option are akin and conversant with these transforming processes taking place in the sphere of the ‘Civil Society’. And partly they are an attempt to contribute to both; the conceptual formations for instruction and the transforming of subjectivities in nurturing. But the de-colonial option projects itself as an intervention in the sphere of ‘Political Society’ as well. The ‘Political Society’ is a concept introduced by Indian social historian, Partha Chatterjee (2004). He refers to a wide range of collective activities that no longer belong to the sphere of the ‘Civil Society’. They cannot be counted either in the sphere of ‘The State’ or ‘The Market’. The liberal model of society begins to crack. Imagine, then, the distinct spheres of society being formed, as an extension, between the ‘Civil Society’ and ‘The State’ on the one hand and between the ‘Civil Society’ and ‘The Market’ on the other. It is not that the totality of Political Society would endorse or would be ‘represented’ by the decolonial option. Not for sure. Decolonial thinking is already about thinking otherwise and assuming from the start a *de-modern* thinking as well. To de-colonize means at the same time to de-modernize. And de-modernizing means de-linking from modern, Western epistemology, from the perspective of which the questions of ‘representation’ and ‘totality’ are being constantly asked. De-modernize does not mean going back in time, which is the typical misunderstanding made by proponents of modernity’s vector models who refuse “to go back to the dark ages”. We mean something completely different here and to understand what is de-modernization one has to forget the generally accepted juxtaposition of modernity and tradition as its ‘dark other’. To do this would already be a de-colonial step.

Decolonial thinking and the de-colonial option are projects led and created by the social actors Frantz Fanon referred to as “les damnés de la terre” (1967); all those humiliated, devalued, disregarded, disavowed, and dealing with the “colonial wound”⁸. There is a corridor then between the “Civil” and the “Political Society”

⁸ Chicana intellectual and activist, Gloria Anzaldúa, described the borders between Mexico and the US, as “una herida abierta”. We see in this metaphor, an expression of the global “colonial wound” inflicted by geo-racial classifications of regions and people through five

(i.e., the radical social movements in other terminologies). As a corridor between the academy and the Political Society, de-colonial thinking is trans-disciplinary (not inter-disciplinary), in the sense of going beyond the existing disciplines, of rejecting the “disciplinary decadence” (Gordon 2006) and aiming at un-disciplining knowledge (Walsh et. al 2002). Decolonial thinking, in the academy, assumes the same or similar problems articulated in and by the “Political Society.” Knowledge is necessary to act in the political society. But this knowledge is no longer or necessarily produced in the academy. Living experiences generate knowledge to solve problems presented in everyday living. And this knowledge is generated in the process of transformation enacted in the “Political Society.” Hence, decolonial thinking in the academy has a double role: a) to contribute to de-colonize knowledge and being, which means asking who is producing knowledge, why, when and what for; b) to join processes in the “Political Society” that are confronting and addressing similar issues in distinct spheres of society.

Thus, the decolonial option comes into being as a consequence of the emergence and transformation of the colonial matrix of power. Decolonization means here precisely, the decolonization of the colonial matrix. And the decolonial option is an option among many already existing ones, struggling against the oppressions and abuses, against the ignorance of the rulers of the state and corporation managers and for the knowledge and wisdom of all those human beings, around the planet, that do not, cannot play the game, historically established by the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality. The de-colonial option starts by de-linking from that dream, or rather, a nightmare, and from the sanctified belief that there is only one game in town.

hundred years of Western theological and egological politics of knowledge: racism is a politics of humiliation, of wounding people by making them feel inferior, both as human beings (ontological colonial difference) and as rational beings (epistemic colonial difference). Geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge emerge from the colonial wound, and not from Aristotle, Saint Thomas Aquinas and Descartes. See Anzaldúa (1999).

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The decolonization of the world in the mid 20th century was at first built into the existing system of the two modernities. What we encounter in postcolonial countries — after the second wave of decolonization — is mostly neocolonialism. The collapse of the Soviet system, even if incomplete as Russia even today retains several of its colonies and clings to the symbolic tokens of its former imperial grandeur, was the next act in this global show of imposing the new form of coloniality onto the world. In today's conditions of the tectonic change from one power system, with the US as its center, to a new polycentric one, it is crucial that the colonized or better, the *damnés*, the nodes of border thinking in the world — establish dialogues and create networks globally. What is crucial here is not to try to find a better place in the existing global coloniality, but to destroy this coloniality and create an *other* world. It is an unavoidable process because coloniality carries in it the seeds of decolonial agency.

IV. Coda

We have presented in this article the decolonial option as an act of de-linking from the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality. Grossly, we traced the origins, the formation and functioning of the colonial matrix of power historically and conceptually – from the colonization of the New World to today's globalization and diversification of capitalism, including the two versions of Western modernity/coloniality that dominated the 20th century – liberalism and socialism. We argued that today's global coloniality has slipped from the Western imperial hands.

As the control of the economy (and therefore the control of labor and natural resources) is disputed by several countries in 'North' and 'South', the spheres of the control of authority (political and military) become contested and decentred as well. Instead of liberalism versus socialism, the rivalry over the control of authority in a polycentric world order has multiple orientations and leads to the re-inscription in the

political arena of the conceptions of society and of life that have been pushed aside, disavowed or marginalized by imperial expansion of Christianity and liberalism (South America, India, North and Sub-Saharan Africa) and by Orthodox Christianity and socialism (Central Asia, Caucasus). The dispute for the control of knowledge is also at work: the geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge are the emerging sites disputing the Western imperial hegemony of theo- and ego-politics of knowledge (Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006).

Today, the colonial matrix of power is dominated more than ever in the past five hundred years by the sphere of the economy. Once, Christianity wanted to control the souls; now, the economic spirit of capitalism controls bodies and souls. The rhetorical promise is not “Paradise after death”, but “Happiness after Development”. There is nowhere to go from here if we remain within the logic of coloniality⁹. And more and more people realize that it is high time that we refuse the rhetoric of modernity and, subsequently, the logic of coloniality, and attempt to shift the bio-geography and geo-geography of reason from its established Western place to the locales marked by the colonial difference. Here the most instrumental concepts would be that of Political Society, bursting the harmony of the liberal model apart, and the new subject of the decolonial agency – the *damnés*. Modernity/coloniality inadvertently generates critical dimensions from within and in its colonial side it nourishes the seeds of decolonial consciousness. Consequently, the very concept of the colonial matrix of power is the first basic critical step in de-colonial thinking.

⁹ At the time of writing this article, the FAO Summit on food global crisis just ended. During the Summit, it was reported that Monsanto, DuPont and Syngenta, the largest companies controlling transgenic seeds and fertilizers, declared huge profit. The UN, IMF and WB concur that the crisis is man-made and can be fixed. It is not a paradox: actors who come to the rescue, the saviors, ingrain it in the rhetoric of modernity. The logic of coloniality will be rearticulated: Africa will be the target for food production. Cheap labor is not mentioned. And the fact that creating conditions for cheap labor also creates consumers for food, a commodity that no one can avoid. We have arrived at the limit: the mercantilization of life in the combined effort of the food industry and bio-technology for the enhancement and marketing of health (Rose 2007).

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