

The Way We Were.
Or What Decoloniality Today Is All About¹

Abstract: My aim in this essay, in response to *Anglistica AION*'s call for papers, is to outline the meaning and significance of coloniality/decoloniality after Anibal Quijano's seminal work, which today has many followers and is the focus of a new book series published by Duke University Press.²

Keywords: *colonial matrix of power, global coloniality, decoloniality, Westernization, de-Westernization*

1. On the Politics of Decolonial Thinking

To address the general spirit animating this special issue, I will take up some of the reflections made during my intervention at the 13th Rhodes Forum in 2015. The panel that prompted these reflections was titled "The World Beyond Global Disorder".³ Panelists were asked to address the following two questions:

- 1) What are the reasons for or underlying causes of the prevailing chaos in today world disorder? What are the main contributing factors, and what are the major social or political agents contributing to the disorder?
- 2) How can we overcome the present disorder? Are there alternatives to the present chaos? How can we find pathways pointing in the direction of a more just and sustainable world order?

Back then, I argued that that the underlying causes of the prevailing chaos are, on the one hand, the persistence of global coloniality and, on the other, the fact that since approximately the year 2000 we have been witnessing the economic and political reemergence of cultures and civilizations that have historically been undermined by global coloniality. In this essay, I intend to push further on this general answer to the above two questions. Proceeding by way of these questions will allow me to outline the meaning and significance of modernity/coloniality and to anchor my reflections in current issues being debated in the academic as well as the public sphere.

I will then connect these questions with the closing sentence in *AION*'s call for papers: "How can we articulate another thinking entirely, pre-fixed, post-fixed, but certainly not fixed?" The 'we' in this question encompasses, in my understanding, the general community of Western/Southern Europe and, more specifically, Southern Italy, where the journal is published. To this extent, it recalls Antonio Gramsci's legacy around the 'Southern Question' particularly his observation that "la borghesia settentrionale ha soggiogato l'Italia meridionale e le isole e le ha ridotte a colonie di sfruttamento; il

¹ I would like to express my thanks to Luigi Cazzato for email conversations about the topic of my essays and for his generous reading and suggestions to improve the final version.

² Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke U.P., 2018).

³ "Global Coloniality and the World (Dis)order: Decoloniality After Decolonization and Dewesternization After the Cold War", October 2015. Revised versions were published in Fred Dallmayr and Edward Demenchonok, eds., *A World Beyond Global Disorder: The Courage to Hope* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 39-60, and in Bernard Reiter ed., *Constructing the Pluriverse: The Geopolitics of Knowledge* (Durham, NC: Duke U.P., 2018), 90-116.

proletario settentrionale, emancipando se stesso dalla schiavitù capitalistica, emanciperà le masse contadine meridionali asservite alla banca e all'industrialismo parassitario del Settentrione".⁴

It is obvious that I am not in a position to address the leading question of this issue from the geopolitical and body-political (emotions, beliefs, non-rational presuppositions) *locus enunciationis*⁵ that prompted it. What I will do instead – appropriately, I think – is to focus this essay on some of the specific core issues of decolonial thinking as I conceive and practice them, following Quijano's introduction of the seminal concept of 'coloniality' into contemporary political and theoretical debates. To do so, I need to first facilitate an entry to the topic for readers not familiar or less familiar with the vocabulary I am using here – and, above all, with its geopolitical and body-political breath. Briefly stated: a) coloniality, after Quijano, is the darker side of modernity (hence, we write modernity/coloniality); b) coloniality does not equal colonialism; and c) coloniality is a concept, in the specific sense stated in a), which emerged out of the South American Andes.

Prior to Quijano's work, the Peruvian intellectual and activist José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930) had raised questions of racism, land possession, and colonialism, which Quijano reworked under the headings of modernity, coloniality, and decoloniality. Interestingly, Mariátegui and Gramsci (1891-1937) were contemporaries. While the latter was addressing the Southern Question, the former was addressing the Andean Question.⁶ In addition to Mariátegui's legacy, the other major trajectory preceding Quijano's work involves the debates on dependency – generally known as dependency theory – that circulated in 'Latin' South America in the sixties.⁷ I am providing this information in order to demonstrate that concepts (such as coloniality, democracy, capitalism, history, etc.) do not fall from the sky, impregnating universal minds, but rather emerge from the needs of local histories and subjective/emotional configurations. The geo-body politics of sensing, knowing, and believing is of the essence in decolonial thinking. A brief contextualization of the historical coordinates and emotional atmosphere of my 'we' is therefore in order.

Dependency theory debates were common across and beyond South America in the sixties. These debates mainly took place in Spanish and Portuguese, with a few translations available in English. Beyond the 'Latin' circuit, Guyanese scholar, intellectual, and activist Walter Rodney (1942-1980) published his landmark book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* in 1972.⁸ Guyana is a country in South America between Suriname and Venezuela, where the official language is English – it is in 'Anglo' South America, in other words. There were intersections between the discourse of Latin and Anglo America. Rodney quoted Celso Furtado, a key Brazilian scholar and intellectual whose book *Development and Underdevelopment* was published in English in 1964. Rodney also referenced the

⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *La questione meridionale*, ed. by Franco De Felice and Valentino Parlato (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2005), 83. "The Northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the South of Italy and the Islands, and reduced them to exploitable colonies; by emancipating itself from capitalist slavery, the Northern proletariat will emancipate the Southern peasant masses enslaved to the banks and the parasitic industry of the North" (Gramsci, "Some Aspects of the Southern Question", 1926, <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.uoregon.edu/dist/f/6855/files/2014/03/gramsci-southern-question1926-2jf8c5x.pdf>, accessed 2 November 2020).

⁵ The location of the enunciation is a complex of language, actors, body, memories, and the cultural niches prompting the enunciative act. See my essay "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thoughts and Decolonial Freedom", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 26.7-8 (2009), 159-181.

⁶ See my essay "Mariátegui and Gramsci in 'Latin' America: Between Revolution and Decoloniality", in Neelam Srivastava and Baidik Bhattacharya, eds., *The Postcolonial Gramsci* (London: Routledge, 2011), 191-220.

⁷ The quotation marks mean that 'Latin' America is just the part of the continent that is controlled by people of Latin descent, as 'Anglo' America is controlled by the people of Anglo descent. But the population of the continent is not restricted to Latinxs and Anglos. Haiti, for example, was taken up by people of African, not Latin, descent, of course. See Walter D. Mignolo, *La idea di America Latina: Geostoria di una teoria decoloniale*, trans. by E. C. Vian (Milano: Mimesis, 2012).

⁸ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington D.C.: Howard U.P., 1974).

book that popularized Latin American debates in the US: Andre Gunder Frank's *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (1967).⁹

Rodney would no doubt have been aware of a movement in the English Caribbean known as the New World Group, which formed in 1962 in Rodney's hometown of Georgetown, the capital of Guyana.¹⁰ The New World Group's debates were similar to the dependency debates in Latin America. The local histories, however, were different. The British and French histories of the Caribbean are grounded in the Middle Passage, the slave trade and plantation economy, and British and French colonialism. Latin America, by contrast, is rooted in the history of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism in the Andes and Mexico and the history of the plantation economy in continental (Brazil) and insular (Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba) Caribbean. The linguistic and cultural divisions between Latin America and the French, Dutch, and British Caribbean correspond to the linguistic and cultural divisions that exist in Europe between the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) and two of the three countries constituting 'the heart of Europe', in Hegel's metaphor: England and France (Germany being the third). The heart of Europe was located, by Hegel, in the North-West.¹¹ Hegel, and before him Kant, established the Northern image of the South of Europe missing the train of the Enlightenment.¹² Hence, the Southern Question becomes a continental question, as can be seen in the administration of the European Union. While dependency debates in Latin America and the British and French Caribbean (the New World Group) focused on their respective local histories of slave trade and Northern European colonialisms, Rodney's enunciation, grounded in Anglo America and the Caribbean, tackled, instead, the colonial entanglement of Europe with Africa. All of this was happening in Latin America and the Caribbean while struggles for decolonial liberation were forging ahead in South and South East Asia and Africa. The Bandung Conference of 1955 was the signpost of such struggles, which I will come back to later.

For his part, Quijano was certainly aware of the decolonization struggles in Asia and Africa, while in Latin America the debates on dependency were contemporaneous with the first year of the Cuban Revolution (1959). He may also have been aware – though I did not find any specific references to it in his work of the Caribbean New World Group. The point, however, is that two ghosts were traveling the world in the sixties and early seventies: one was the debate, in Latin America, on whether political,

⁹ See James L. Dietz, "Dependency Theory: A Review Article", *Journal of Economic Issues*, 14.3 (1980), 751-758. In counterpoint, see Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "The Consumption of Dependency Theory in the United States", *Latin American Research Review*, 12.3 (1977), 7-24.

¹⁰ Igel Westmaas, "'A Field of Ideas': The New World Group, the Caribbean and Guyana of the 1960s", *Stobroek News*, June 26, 2011, www.stobroeknews.com/2011/06/26/features/%E2%80%98a-field-of-ideas%E2%80%99-the-new-world-group-the-caribbean-and-guyana-of-the-1960s/, accessed 2 November 2020.

¹¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lesson in the Philosophy of History* [1837], trans. by Ruben Alvarado (London: WordBridge Publishing, 2011), 73-90.

¹² Indeed, the 'South of Europe' was already mapped by Immanuel Kant in the section 4 of *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* [1867] (Berkeley: California U.P., 2004), 97-116. Since the eighteenth century the intramural imperial difference was established in the act of degrading the South of Europe. Luigi Cazzato calls this act 'meridionism' (see his *Sguardo inglese e Mediterraneo italiano: alle radici del meridionismo*, Milano: Mimesis, 2017). Meridionism was established at the same time Orientalism was: the making of the second wave of the colonial difference. The first wave was Occidentalism, the degrading of the Americas and the West of Africa, taken as supplier of 'human resources', that is, enslaved human beings. Gramsci's Southern Question has a history that, at his time, became the *national* internal colonial difference: The North of Italy 'enjoys' which was in the continental South of Europe (imperial difference) has the privileges of the North of Europe although being in its South. There were also 'defenders' of the South in the North. One of them was Oswald Spengler who contrasted the Faustian North with the Apollinean South, highlighting the Renaissance's 'fullness of light' the Mediterranean clarity of atmosphere, and the slow pace of life (Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* [1918], trans. by Charles Francis Atkinson, New York: Vintage, 2006, 123). Franco Cassano has taken issue in his *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean* (trans. by Norma Bouchard and Valerio Ferme. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011). For a recent revisiting of the Northern imagination of the South, see also Luigi Cazzato, "Mediterranean: Coloniality, Migration and Decolonial Practices", *Politics. Rivista di Studi Politici*, 1, 2016, 1-17; Roberto Dainotto, "South by Chance: Southern Questions in the Global South", *The Global South*, 11.2 (2017), 39-53.

economic, and epistemic dependency would allow underdeveloped countries to develop; the other was the debate around whether decolonization, in Asia and Africa, would create the conditions for development. At the beginning of the nineties, Quijano reframed development in terms of modernity and underdevelopment in terms of coloniality. The implication was that coloniality, being the darker side of modernity, would not allow underdeveloped countries to develop, because development needed underdevelopment for its very enactment.¹³ This situation was not a contradiction but a systemic build-up. Quijano's coloniality of power analytics made it possible to understand why it was the case, how it worked, and who (actors and institutions) was managing both the promises of development (the rhetoric of modernity) and the perpetuation of underdevelopment (coloniality). Arguing in this way was already a decolonial act.

As soon as coloniality becomes a point of reflection, decolonial thinking is enacted, for the simple reason that coloniality is a decolonial concept. Why is it a decolonial concept? When Quijano coined the phrase 'coloniality and modernity/rationality' in his classic article (1992), he was thinking decolonially.¹⁴ That means that, even if he was trained in sociology and self-trained in Marxism, the concept of coloniality came from neither sociology nor Marxism but from what at that moment, the end of the Cold War, Quijano termed 'decolonization'. He conceived that delinking ('extricating oneself' was his expression) from coloniality and engaging in 'epistemic reconstitution' was the decolonial horizon opening up at the end of the Cold War and the insolvencies of nation-state building after decolonization during the Cold War. Consequently, the wording in the title of his foundational article, 'coloniality and modernity/rationality', exposed the fact that there was something missing in the 'constitution' of (Western) modernity/rationality, two concepts that had emerged in Europe in response to European emotional and rational needs. Coloniality was hidden in the celebration of modernity/rationality; it was its darker side, and the side upon which the idea of Western modernity was and could be built. To bring coloniality to light, Quijano thought that an-other way of thinking, an-other mindset, was necessary. In order to take up the task of epistemic reconstitution, such a mindset would have to be decolonial, meaning that it would have to decolonially reconstitute what modernity/coloniality had destituted. This is relevant to any decolonial project of reconstitution. Quijano did not use the word 'aesthesis', only 'epistemic'. But subjectivity was a crucial dimension in the unfolding of the coloniality of power. Therefore, honoring Quijano's careful attention to subjectivity, I expanded epistemic reconstitution to epistemic/aesthetic reconstitution and will proceed with this expanded formulation in mind.¹⁵

2. The Colonial Matrix of Power: The Historical Foundation of Western Civilization

2.1. Coloniality

Let me make more explicit what I mean, after Quijano, by 'coloniality'. Coloniality is shorthand for the 'coloniality of power', and both are stand-ins for the 'colonial matrix power', or the CMP. The use of one term or the other depends on how much detail we want to invoke with the expression when using

¹³ Interestingly enough, similar issues were debated in Italy in the early seventies. See Luciano Ferrari Bravo and Alessandro Serafini, *Stato e sottosviluppo: il caso del Mezzogiorno italiano* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1972). However, this debate was taking place in the formation of the intramural imperial/colonial difference: e.g., the North of Europe devaluing the South (destitution, see below), while the underdevelopment question in South America was debated in the history of the extramural colonial difference. I explored this issue in my article on Mariátegui and Gramsci, see footnote 6.

¹⁴ Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality", in Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, eds., *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 22-32.

¹⁵ See my essay "Reconstitución epistémica/estésica: La aesthesis decolonial una década después", *Calle 14: Revista de Investigación en el campo del arte*, 14.25 (2019), www.revistas.udistrital.edu.co/index.php/c14/article/view/14132, accessed 2 November 2020, translated in *Echo: Rivista interdisciplinare di comunicazione*, 1 (2019), 229-242, with an introduction by Luigi Cazzato, 224-228.

it. Two or three years before the publication of “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” – the launching pad for what would become a communal project, extending far beyond Quijano himself – he was involved, so to speak, in the weaving of the article’s key concepts. In 1989, Quijano published a lengthy essay titled “Paradoxes of Modernity in Latin America”, in which the word ‘coloniality’ does not appear, but whose argument is a map of what was to come.¹⁶ The paradox of modernity turned out to be that modernity cannot be detached from coloniality. Although coloniality was not yet in Quijano’s vocabulary, this essay prepared the terrain for the formula ‘coloniality and modernity/rationality’, which was later on condensed into modernity/coloniality.

Up to this point, the generalized and accepted idea was that colonialism was basically over and so modernity was the open road toward the future: “from now on it is modernity all the way down” was one of the era’s triumphal expressions, next to the celebration of the end of history. In Latin America (which, remember, does not include Guyana and Belize), independences were achieved in the nineteenth century. In South and South East Asia and Africa, independences were achieved in the second half of the twentieth century. These independences were collectively called decolonization.

After Quijano, colonialism and coloniality took on different meanings. Colonialism refers to the historical event of Western European colonialism from 1500 to 2000, approximately, while coloniality refers to the underlying logic of all Western projects of colonialism (Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English, as well as German and Italian; although these last two colonial projects were less expansive than the previous five, the logic of coloniality still undergirded their domestic and foreign policies). During the period 1500-2000, two crucial events took place in addition to the independences in the Americas (which included the US) between 1776 and 1900, *mutatis mutandis*, all of which were initiated, carried out, and achieved by people of European descent. The first distinctive event was the Haitian Revolution in 1804. People of African descent were not supposed to take freedom into their own hands: they were expected to wait to receive their liberty from their European masters, yet they did precisely the opposite. The second event was the Russian Revolution, both its initiation in 1917 and its conclusion in 1989, the same year that Quijano published “Paradoxes of Modernity”.

As I have mentioned, Quijano was trained in sociology but was a Marxist by conviction. Mariátegui was too, and indeed, although dependency theory emerged from liberal thinking in the former colonies,¹⁷ it was Marxism that animated the dependency thinkers of the sixties.¹⁸ More specifically, Mariátegui was a Third World Marxist, in the terminology of the Cold War, although he lived before the Three Worlds conceptual partition. He was also a Marxist in a region where 60% of the population was indigenous. In such a context, only being blinded by theory could prevent one from seeing racism and colonialism and understanding that there was a link between them. Mariátegui, like Gramsci, did not fit in with the Communist Party dogma. They were both party outcasts. Quijano’s argument, too, introduced a radical shift away from historical materialism: without ignoring the economy (not just the capitalist economy but the larger economic sphere, of which capitalism is but one manifestation, albeit the hegemonic one), Quijano focused on the relevance of knowledge and subjectivity. After all, the economy, capitalist or otherwise, is not something that runs on batteries. Economies are run by actors, who at the same time are shaped by the economy they run, as well as by institutions. And they are not run blindly but epistemically (knowledge) and aesthetically (emotions, beliefs, non-rational presuppositions). How, indeed, could knowledge and subjectivity be absent from the shock-finding on the part of the colonizers that an entire continent and the millions of people living on it were not

¹⁶ Aníbal Quijano, “Paradoxes of Modernity in Latin America”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 3.2 (Winter 1989), 147-177.

¹⁷ See Joseph L. Love, “Raúl Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange”, *Latin American Research Review*, 15.3 (1980), 45-72.

¹⁸ See Ronald H. Chilcote, “Issues of Theory in Dependency and Marxism”, *Latin American Perspectives*, 8.3 (1981), 3-16.

accounted for in the Bible, a finding that brought about a new type of economy (later identified as capitalist) marked by the combined effect of the appropriation of land, the exploitation of labor, mass slavery, and racism? And what of the profound changes in the subjectivities of indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, and Europeans, whether directly involved in the New World or accessing information via publication or hearsay?

Quijano outlined four domains in which the coloniality of power, in general, operates, as well as the domains associated with the rhetoric of modernity, which I explain. His outline consists of the interactions between three aligned aspects of power – domination/exploitation/conflict – activated in the control of “four basic areas of human existence: sex, labor, collective authority and subjectivity/intersubjectivity, their resources and products”.¹⁹ Based on this foundational outline, I will elaborate on the coloniality of power, shorthand for the colonial matrix (pattern, model, structure) of power, or the CMP, in its constitutive domains, levels, and flows.

Before going into that, though, I would like to provide an expanded version of three aspects of power outlined by Quijano. These three aspects operate simultaneously in distinct dimensions. In other words, the triad domination/exploitation/conflict operates simultaneously with constitution/destitution/reconstitution and with modernity/coloniality/decoloniality, such that:

- 1) constitution (domination)/destitution (exploitation)/restitution (conflict);
- 2) modernity (domination/constitution)/coloniality (exploitation/destitution)/decoloniality (conflict/reconstitution).

In everyday life, in domestic and inter-state relations, these faces of power operate simultaneously, but in the analytic of the CMP, depending on the argument, one of the three faces is always more relevant than the others, yet none of them could be understood in isolation. The three faces are manifested in the flows that interrelate the domains and the levels of the CMP. Let us look at these domains, levels, and flows, then, keeping in mind the three faces of power interrelating them.

2.2. *The Colonial Matrix of Power*

The CMP is a complex structure of management, regulation, and control composed of domains, levels, and flows. Like ‘the unconscious’ in Freud or ‘surplus value’ in Marx, the CMP is a theoretical concept that helps make visible what is invisible to the naked (or, rather, the non-theoretical) eye. Unlike Freud’s unconscious or Marx’s surplus value, though, the CMP is a concept created in the Third World, and in the South American Andes specifically, in the intellectual atmosphere that I have outlined above. It is not a concept created in the atmosphere of Europe or the US academy, for the simple reason that coloniality was not an issue in those contexts – modernity was. The CMP is neither a North Atlantic nor an academic concept. It was born out of theoretical-political struggles in South America, at the intersection between the academic and the public spheres. Driven by local critics of development, the CMP bears the impulse of liberation theology and emerged out of the limits of dependency theory in the seventies. These, as discussed, were also the years of the struggle for decolonization in Asia and Africa.

In order to understand the CMP, it must first be understood that, for us, Quijano’s followers, coloniality is constitutive and not derivative of modernity. For this reason, we write modernity/coloniality. The slash (/) that divides and unites modernity from and with coloniality means that there is no modernity without coloniality. Highlighting ‘global coloniality’ means that global modernity is only half of the story, the visible half. The other half – the hidden half – is global coloniality. Allow me to briefly explain with the help of three figures the simultaneous movement of constitution/destitution and the energies

¹⁹ Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder, globalización y democracia”, *Revista de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León*, 4 (2000), 58-89.

(subjectivities) of dissent that this movement generates. The dissent generates various personal emotions and collective sentiments: fear, anger, destabilization, protest, and submission. The outcomes of the emotions and sentiments generated by modernity/coloniality and, consequently, by domination and exploitation are manifold. Two such outcomes are decolonization during the Cold War and decoloniality and de-Westernization after the Cold War.

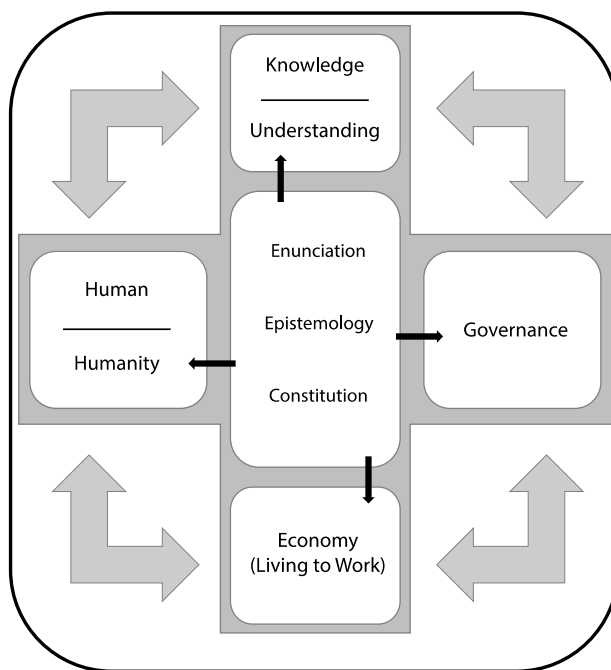


Fig. 1

Let us start with the four domains shown in Figure 1. These four domains are at the level of the ‘content’ of the conversations within the CMP: what is enunciated and where debates unfold. As we will see below, there is another level, the level of the enunciation, where the ‘terms’ of the conversations within the domains are regulated. The relationships between these levels are indicated by the arrows moving from the center, the enunciation, to the domains, the enunciated. The four domains shown here are Knowledge/Understanding, Governance, Economy, and Human/Humanity. These four domains, a reformulation of Quijano’s ‘fundamental areas of existence’, are identified through the analytic of the rhetoric of modernity. In other words, the domains do not exist outside the rhetoric of modernity (discourses, narratives, images) that frames the four basic ‘modern’ areas of human experience. Each domain is not a unified area but a variety of narratives, discourses, images, institutions, actors, and the public sphere. For example, the domain of Knowledge/Understanding comprises the areas of theology, the natural and human sciences, the arts, philosophy, aesthetics, the professional schools (law, engineering, medicine), and so on. The domain of Governance comprises all the institutions and actors regulating the state, which in the CMP encompasses the monarchic states of the Renaissance, and their extension to the colonies, and the nation-states formed from the nineteenth century onward, which also

expanded into the colonial spheres. Economy covers, as of 1500, mercantilism, industrial capitalism, financial capitalism, and cognitive capitalism, while Human/Humanity consists of the characterization of actors ruling and ruled by the CMP. What I have just briefly described are the ‘constitutive’ domains of the CMP: these domains regulate the spheres of domination legitimized by the rhetoric of modernity. The constitution of the domain of Knowledge/Understanding, for example, is concurrent with the destitution of those languages and modes of knowing and understanding deemed unfit for the idea of modernity. The same logic of coloniality (dstitution) takes places in the constitution of the other three domains.

The constitution of the CMP is the underlying structure of Western Civilization, and Western Civilization is the outcome of historical narratives that established that the European Renaissance should be dated between 1300 and 1600. The last hundred years within this period correspond to the invention and colonization of America since 1500. As the dates indicate, the idea of Western Civilization originated in Europe itself at the same time that Europe was constituted as a geopolitical entity through its expansion to the rest of the planet. The period 1500-2000 is the period of the Westernization of the world.²⁰

The domains of the CMP – the level of the enunciated – are established by the visible rhetoric of modernity in all its forms: discourses, narratives, scientific theories, philosophical arguments, artistic events, political debates, economic analysis, etc. But how is the level of the enunciation set up? Basically, by three components: actors, institutions, and languages. The basic foundational institutions of the CMP were the Church, universities, banks, museums, states (theological-monarchic and secular nation-states), and, more recently, the IMF, the World Bank, and the UN, as well as many others in between. The actors founding and running such institutions are actors who, by different means, occupy a social and professional position that legitimizes and authorizes them to found and run institutions. Institutional governance is filtered by knowledge regulations and by belonging to a relevant social class. Languages are concomitant with actors and institutions. Actors born and trained in Bolivia, China, or North Africa, for instance, are not suited to run Western institutions, unless perhaps exceptionally. For this reason, languages are the fundamental component of the CMP’s enunciation, which permeates all the four domains. Today, the control of meaning (languages) and the control of money (the dollar) are parallel processes, and both are being contested. The languages of the enunciation are the six modern vernacular languages derived from Greek and Latin: Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese (predominant during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European expansion) and French, English, and German (predominant since the Enlightenment). The language constitution of the CMP works simultaneously to destitute all other languages from the domains and, even more so, from the level of the enunciation. The official language of the UN is English, as is that of the Security Council, although two of its members, Russia and China, do not belong to the Greco-Roman language genealogy.

What holds the domains together and connects the enunciation (the control and regulations) with the enunciated (the regulated)? And why is it important to ask this question? The CMP is held together by *flows* that emanate outward from the enunciation (the terms of the conversation, the rhetoric of modernity), interconnecting all the domains and connecting the domains with actors and institutions, in the major languages of the European idea of modernity. These flows are indicated by all the arrows that connect the domains with one another and the level of the enunciation with all the domains. Inevitably, the matter of subjectivity and subject formation emerges. The CMP is involved in the creation of particular persons/subjects and institutions, but the CMP also takes on a life of its own, shaping and contorting the subjectivity (the reasoning and emotioning) of the person managing it. Because of

²⁰ See Serge Latouche, *L’occidentalization du monde: Essays sur la signification, la portée et les limites de l’uniformisation planétaire* (Paris: La découverte, 1989). For Latouche, however, Westernization starts by the middle of the seventeenth century – that is, one and a half centuries after the foundation of the CMP and the idea of Western Civilization.

coloniality, controlling the terms of the enunciation (that is, controlling knowledge) is necessary for controlling the domains, and controlling the domains means managing the people whose lives are shaped by them. The rhetoric of modernity hides this connection. That is why it took such a long time to discern coloniality beneath the shiny veneer of modernity and why the role of the expert has become so important nowadays: experts are experts in one domain, or a set of aspects in that domain, but ignore its connections with the other domains and with the enunciation. Decolonially speaking, and in the analytic of the CMP, no single domain could be properly understood without looking at its connection with the other domains and with the enunciation. The Economy domain depends on Governance, is configured by racial and sexual relations, is framed by Knowledge/Understanding, and is regulated by the enunciation.

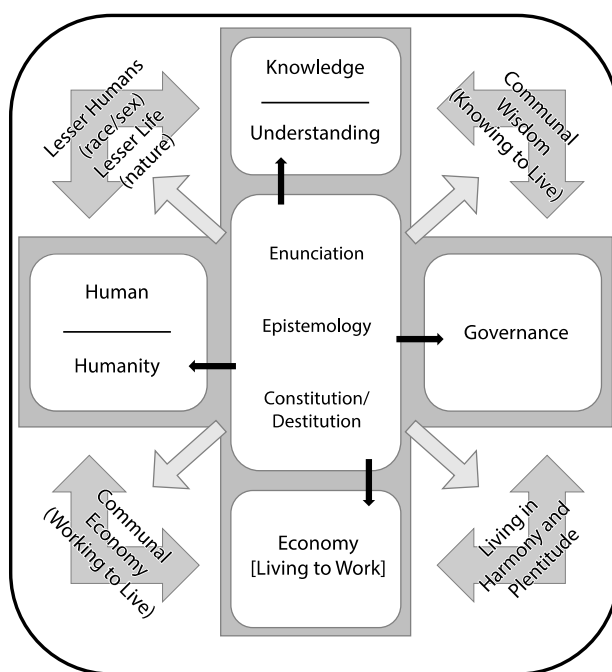


Fig. 2

Figure 1 will be better understood if we look at it in tandem with Figure 2, which shows the simultaneous movement of constitution/destitution. Starting from the upper right corner, we can explore the destitution of communal wisdom, knowing to live, and knowledge in non-European languages and institutions, as well as the relevance of orality. By this I mean that while orality is destituted in the imaginary of the CMP, it is erased neither from the people speaking destituted languages (Urdu, Russian, Arabic, Aymara, etc.) nor from the praxis of living of the people speaking destituting languages (e.g., modern European imperial languages). Experientially, orality is destituted but cannot be killed, even when a destituted language is expressed in aural and visual expressions, be it in a non-Latin alphabet (i.e., the Arabic alphabet) or in Mandarin characters. And this is to say nothing of the categorization of ‘minor’ languages like Swahili, Wolof, Aymara, or Burmese, which alone has around 30 million native

speakers. Destitution operates at both levels of the CMP, the enunciated and the enunciation. What is destituted is so by a devaluation of the content of a given culture or civilization, together with a devaluation of its apparatus of enunciation: its knowledge, modes of knowing, and, in general, praxis of living. The fact that scholarship is internationally mainly transacted in English is a case in point. If you do science in Arabic or Mandarin, your work is limited to the respective region, yet much of the scientific community operates in those two languages. Scholars and scientists whose native language and medium of education was Mandarin or Arabic, for example, have to write in English in order to enter the global debate. No scholar or scientist who was born and educated in Germany, France, or England has to write in Mandarin or Arabic to participate in global scholarly or scientific conversations.

The lower right corner shows the destitution of living in harmony and plenitude, which today is being revived through concepts such as ‘Ubuntu’ a Bantu term that gained currency in Africa; ‘Mino Bimaadiziwin’ for First Nations; and ‘Anishnabeg’ or ‘Sumak Kawsay’, a Kichwa (note: not Kechwa) term used in Latin America. Although not indicated in that corner, for simplification purposes, the destitution of cultural praxes of living took many forms. In this simplified version, we shall consider three types of destitution. The destitution of the cultural praxis of living of the Ottoman Sultanate, for example, was substituted by the Republic of Turkey – no settlers had to be expelled. Meanwhile, the British destituted the governance of the Mughal Sultanate and transformed the British East India Company into the British Raj (meaning British Rule). Finally, in the sixteenth century, the Aztecs, Incas, and Mayas saw their governance dismantled and totally replaced by Spanish Viceroyalties. What survived was the praxis of living, cosmological and cultural, of the people, which in Nahuatl was referred as ‘Macehualtin’ and in the Mayan area as ‘Memba Unicoob’. Distinct types of destitution generate distinct types of responses and, in particular, distinct types of epistemic and aesthetic reconstitutions, as we will see in Figure 3.

But before taking the next step, let us complete our quick tour of the two CMP corners of destitution. The lower left corner indicates the destitution of communal economies – not to be confused with the ‘common’ which belongs to the sphere of the constituted, as the ‘common’ remains within the same enunciative logic, with the content changed to fit within the frame of Western Civilization. The key factor in this destitution has been, since 1500, the relative and increasing conversion of living to work (‘living labor’ in Marx) to working to live: forced slavery and waged work. In the upper left corner, we encounter the sphere of destitution that infiltrates all the other spheres. It is here that the control of the enunciated Human/Humanity matches the control of the enunciation, where the criteria for the Human are established and managed in order to destitute ‘lesser’ humans based on their racial and sexual differentiation from the ‘normality’ of Christian and white heteronormativity.

Figure 3 sketches the movement of restitution. Restituting something that has been destituted would be meaningless if the restitution operated in the same epistemic and aesthetic frame in which the destitution was implemented in the first place. Instead, restitution means that the subjectivity, and therefore the sensing and emotioning, of the actors effecting the restitution know how to question the knowledge and subjectivities of the actors who implemented the destitution. Restitution therefore requires epistemic (knowledge) and aesthetic (sensing, believing, emotioning) reconstitution. I foresee at this moment that the next few decades, and perhaps the entire twenty-first century, will be dominated by three trajectories interwoven with three radical mutations of the CMP. These mutations, discussed below, justify a common saying nowadays: “We cannot understand the present with the categories and frame of mind with which we understood the past”. Simply put: “We, on the planet, are living and experiencing a change of epoch and no longer an epoch of changes”.²¹ The analytic of the CMP will

²¹ I owe this expression to Brazilian intellectual and activist José de Souza Silva. See www.icci.nativeweb.org/boletin/25/souza.html, accessed 2 November 2020.

help us find a way toward understanding, and understanding lies at the helm of epistemic and aesthetic reconstitution.

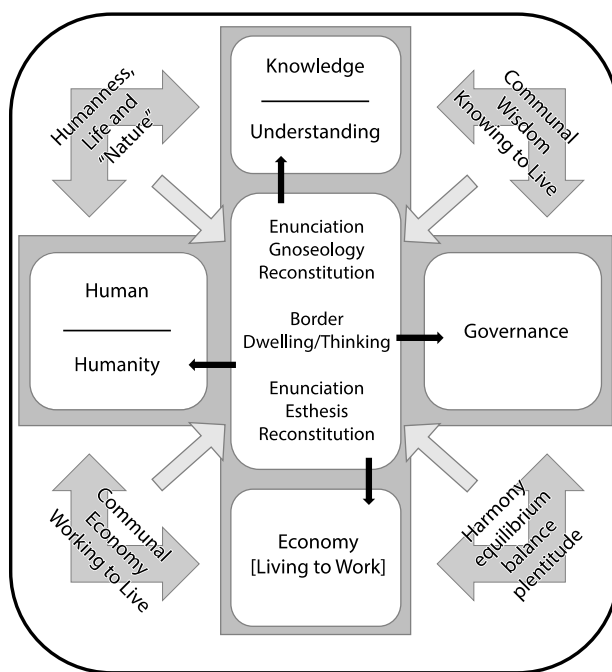


Fig. 3

In Figure 3, the arrows change directions. In Figure 2, they indicated the creation of *exteriority by destitution*. Exteriority means that there is no existing (ontic) outside to be simply named or represented. Western epistemology schooled us to believe that what is represented is what it is, and not just what is represented by someone, for some reason, in some place, at a given time, etc. Exteriority is created by the enunciation. In that sense, it is not ontic but onto-logical – literally a discourse that creates images of reality. Therefore, the outside invented by destitution is the exteriority (‘the other’ in common parlance), whose function is to secure *interiority* in the managerial regulations and control of the enunciation. Accordingly, interiority, too, is not an ontic inside but the inside created in the constitution of the CMP. Interiority is also onto-logical. As a consequence, the inversion of the arrows’ directionality indicates the movement of epistemic and aesthetic reconstitution. ‘Inversion’ here does not mean dichotomous opposition, which is the logic of modernity/coloniality. It is instead the logic of conflictive co-existence. This means that the movement of epistemic (knowledge) and aesthetic (sensing, believing, emotioning) reconstitutions will not eliminate, in one week or a year, the movements of constitution/destitution – particularly not at this very moment, when the control, regulation, and management of the CMP is under dispute and the West (i.e., the North Atlantic) is losing the privilege of being its sole manager. Unilateralism is already mutating into multilateralism and universality into pluriversality. These mutations are not linear ‘transitions’ but complex heterogenous-structural movements among and between de-Westernization (the dispute over the management and control of the

CMP, involving mainly China, Russia, and Iran at present), re-Westernization (the efforts of the US since 2008 to maintain the privileges it obtained during 500 years of Westernization), and decoloniality (the movement of delinking from the CMP and of epistemic disobedience, leading to epistemic and aesthetic reconstitutions). These three trajectories emerged, *mutatis mutandis*, at the close of the long period of Westernization that started with Christian global designs and closed with the failure of neo-liberal global designs.

Let me elaborate on this point. Figure 3 only shows the second trajectory, from universality to pluriversality. This is the decolonial trajectory of epistemic and aesthetic reconstitution. The decolonial trajectory is at once analytical of CMP and enacting, in the same movement, decolonial praxical thinking. The latter is praxical because it is not just thinking; it involves both thinking and praxically working, within the very act of thinking and building narratives and arguments, toward the restitution of communal wisdom and economy for living in harmony with the living earth and balance and plenitude among all. Equally, decolonial praxical thinking works toward the restitution of the humanness and life energy that were destituted by the onto-logical invention of Human/Humanity and Nature. The destitution rendered humanness merely ‘human resources’, next to ‘natural resources’, with all the attendant consequences that today we on the planet are experiencing: a global disorder situation that cannot be improved by the constituting/destituting subjectivity, mentality, and imaginary of the actors and institutions that created the CMP and that are working hard, for whatever reason, to maintain the modern narratives of progress, growth, and development, blind to all that coloniality engenders. The modern/colonial narrative of the ‘Anthropocene’ is the latest in the rhetoric of modernity’s concealment of the logic of coloniality.

You may think that the goals of decolonial praxical thinking are romantic or unattainable. If so, you may perhaps be thinking that decoloniality aims at replacing the inter-state system now governed by the dispute over the control and management of the CMP between de-Westernization and re-Westernization, a dispute with large implications for the financial, military, mainstream mass media, and corporate spheres regulated by the IMF and the World Bank. You may even imagine that it will participate in ASEAN and have a say in Security Council meetings at the UN. Imagining that decoloniality would intervene at this level would be deceiving yourself. Now, you could react to this statement by asking: What, then, is decoloniality good for? And the answer is that decoloniality works toward epistemic and aesthetic reconstitution in the sphere of the emerging global political society, acknowledging that the inter-state disputes currently underway have as one of their major consequences the relegation of the nation – that is, the people – to a position of secondary relevance. Why is such an immaterial project pertinent? Because, on the one hand, and as I have mentioned already, the problems associated with the foundation, mutation, management, control, and dispute of the CMP cannot be properly addressed by maintaining the same frame of mind that created these problems. And, on the other hand, since this frame of mind is embedded in the enunciation, epistemic and aesthetic reconstitutions cannot be advanced without decolonial delinking and epistemic disobedience.

Another feature to be noted in Figure 3 relates to the simultaneity between the movement of reconstitution and that of constitution/destitution. The point is that while the former operates via a territorial epistemology to preserve the CMP’s interiority, the movements of reconstitution imply, of necessity, border epistemology. The force and potential of border epistemology (border thinking) consist in the possibility and capability of living and thinking in a way that is grounded in the languages, memories, and praxis of living that have been destituted – of having learned the gist of territorial epistemology without inhabiting it. Border thinking involves awareness of, on the one hand, the emotional (aesthesis) and rational (epistemic) impact that colonial wounds inflict on a person and, on the other hand, how the CMP works – through the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality – to legitimize colonial differences and retain the emotional and rational ‘truth’ of territorial epistemology. What is at work here is a double-inflicted wound (emotional and rational, aesthetic and

epistemic) that assumes many different forms of colonial difference (racism, sexism, religious differences; underdeveloped, traditional, uncivilized). Furthermore, the double-inflicted wound operates at two levels simultaneously: geopolitically and body-politically. You are destituted twice: once because of your skin color, your gender and sexual preferences, your religion, your nationality, your language; and again, because you belong to an underdeveloped country, to the Third World, to the South, or to the East.

But there is one more layer to be considered here, not indicated in Figure 3: the setting up of imperial differences. Briefly stated, colonial differences were bestowed on people and regions affected by settler colonialism, while imperial differences are bestowed on states that did not experience settler colonialism, that refuse to comply with the rules of Westernization – China, Russia, Turkey (a former Sultanate), Iran (the former Persian Safavid Sultanate) – and that therefore are labeled authoritarian, non-democratic, religious fundamentalist, and the like. Nevertheless, the nationals of states degraded by imperial differences are still subjected to colonial differences, as can be seen when the question of passports is at stake.

I mentioned above that Figure 3 only outlines the decolonial, and not the de-Western, horizon at which the power differential in inter-state relations can be contemplated. It would take more space than it is allowed to insert and comment on a fourth figure. Therefore, I will merely highlight here the main features of de-Westernization's disruption and disputation of the control and management of the CMP. First of all, it is obvious to everyone that the economic mode of accumulation and inequality known as capitalism is a global phenomenon. In that sense, it is hegemonic. If the capitalist economy is hegemonic, this means that the West (the North Atlantic, the EU, and the US) has lost the civilizational hegemony that it maintained for about 250 years (1750-2000), which was preceded by 250 years (1500-1750) of the formation and consolidation of the CMP.

Secondly and subsequently, the already conflictive multipolar world order in which we all live – permanent war in the Middle East, trade wars with China, tensions created by sanctions, the failure of globalism and the rise of national fundamentalisms, the increasing number of suicides and drug addicts in developed countries, despair and turmoil in underdeveloped countries, and so on – implies that while the capitalist economy may be hegemonic, the political and military world order is not. Multipolarity arises from inter-state political disobedience toward the regulations instantiated by the CMP and the unipolarity established by the Westernization of the world in all the four domains: Knowledge, Governance, Economy, and Humanity. Racism works across colonial and imperial differences; it is not a privileged feature of the former but an equally vital factor of the latter. It so happens, then, that the disobedient states driving de-Westernization are neither emotionally nor rationally Western Christian, nor are they aligned to secular whiteness.

Thirdly and finally, epistemic disobedience aimed at overcoming the regulation of imperial differences leads to delinking from Western regulations but not from the CMP itself. This is crucial: de-Westernization *does not question* the CMP; it simply *disputes* its control and management. This approach requires a distinctive type of epistemic and aesthetic reconstitution. Its most remarkable quality is this: the recovery and affirmation of a civilizational praxis of living that during the constitution/destitution of the CMP those destituted by imperial differences were told to despise and reject in favor of the triumphal march of modernity and universal history. The recovery and affirmation of civilizational dignity is a trademark of the de-Westernizing epistemic and aesthetic reconstitution, both in the sphere of the state and, to a lesser degree, in the sphere of civil society. There are today many instances of cultural de-Westernization, particularly in curatorial and museum practices, which I do not have space to go into in detail here but which I have explored elsewhere.²² You may think that this

²² On these points see my essays "Re-emerging, Decentering and Delinking: Shifting the Geographies of Knowing, Sensing and Believing", *Ibraaz: Contemporary Visual Culture in North Africa and the Middle East* (May 2013), www.ibraaz.org/essays/59/,

approach is not right, that it does not solve the problems of global warming, corruption, the making of terrorism and hybrid wars, or you may think that it is a much-needed disruption of Western hegemony. Whatever you and I may think about de-Westernization, however, we would have to agree that, like it or not, it is irreversible and, moreover, that it brings with it epistemic and aesthetic reconstitution through the *state* apparatus primarily.

Decoloniality, in my argument, and following Quijano, cannot be a state-led project. It has to be a project led by the emerging global political society. And this project is already underway, although not always invoking decoloniality, which it does not have to do. We need only look at the organizations, research, and activities unveiling the fictions of sexual and racial regulations; the artistic endeavors all over the world addressing through art the injustices legitimized by the imaginary of Western modernity; the organizations, activities, and discourses under the label of ‘communitarian feminism’ in Central and South America; the 25-year experience of the Zapatistas’ theoretical revolution and its historical, political, and ethical consequences; the decolonial politics of scholarship advanced by indigenous scholars and activists in the Americas and Aotearoa (New Zealand) in Africa and amid the African diaspora; the growing claims to decolonize the university and the curriculum in South Africa as well as elsewhere; the countless protests to stop extractivism and transgenic poisoning and protect the earth’s territorialities from devastating and blind industrialization; etc. Wherever we look in the world, people are standing up, delinking from what they/we are expected to think and do, and taking their/our destiny into their/our own hands.

3. Summary

I hope I have been able to merge the two main questions framing this paper: the call for an explanation of the current world disorder and *Anglistica AION*’s invitation to articulate an-other way of thinking that is pre-fixed, post-fixed, and at the same time not fixed. I said at the beginning of my argument that I am not qualified to address *Anglistica AION*’s query from the same emotional and epistemic position from which it has been formulated. What I succinctly did instead, I hope clearly enough, was to provide an overview of decolonial thinking as it is practiced by many followers of Aníbal Quijano’s seminal work, myself among them. I do not have much to say about decoloniality in general beyond this framework, and not much to say either about post- or pre-fixes. I invite the reader to make up their own mind on these points, and I am persuaded that they will do so.

accessed 2 November 2020, and “Enacting the Archives, Decentering the Muses: The Museum of Islamic Art in Doha and the Asian Civilization Museum in Singapore”, *Ibraaz* (November 2013), www.ibraaz.org/essays/77, accessed 2 November 2020.