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Epistemological Decolonization of World History and Decolonizing the Conception of Modernity: Towards Transmodernity

ENRIQUE DUSSEL[1]

Abstract

This essay explores the epistemological decolonization of World History and the critique of modernity through a transmodern perspective. It challenges the Eurocentric periodization of history, emphasizing the erasure and misrepresentation of non-European civilizations in the global narrative. By examining the ideological constructs underpinning modernity, capitalism, and colonialism, the essay advocates for a pluriversal approach to knowledge and cultural traditions. It also critiques the inadequacies of postmodernism in addressing systemic inequities, proposing transmodernity as a framework for integrating diverse traditions and fostering dialogue among cultures of the Global South. Through this lens, the essay seeks to redefine the future of humanity and knowledge production.

Keywords: Epistemological Decolonization, Transmodernity, Eurocentrism, Global South Dialogues, Coloniality and Modernity

First, I would like to thank the organizers. I felt honored by this invitation, and I gladly accepted it. But I must say that I don't speak English. I speak something like English; it could be called Spanglish.

Invented Vision of History

The subject of this essay is epistemological (epistemic) decolonization. It is a new term and is very important for World History. It is particularly important for history because history is like a framework for all the subjects of humanity and social sciences, be it literature, anthropology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, sociology, economics, politics, and others; all sciences have a historical pre-supposition. It must be noted. I have delivered lectures in Asia, Arab countries, America, Europe, and the U.S. Also, in Africa. In all these places, we find one single vision of World History. It's incredible! In primary schools and universities all over the world, the same diagram of the periodization of world history is used. I find that very strange. The Eurocentric vision of the world has one interpretation of the development of human beings in the last ten millennia, and we all accept this vision. Their special vision is precisely the modern vision of world history, though it is not modern; it is just two hundred years old. And we accept it like a fetish. We believe that it is science. It is purely an ideological interpretation that has nothing to do with science.

I will show how the periodization of World History is an invention. I call it an invention as it is a product of German Romantics like Schiller, Schlegel, and Novalis, which culminates with Hegel (1770—1831). Guha, an Indian historian and founder of the Subaltern Studies, in 1973 began to discover a new vision of world history in India. Four years earlier, in 1969, we in Latin America, without any connection with Indian Subaltern studies, had begun a new interpretation of world history. Note the dates, they are very important. The Philosophy of Liberation, for example, was started in 1969 -1970 by a group of professors in the South of Latin America. All this must be seen in the light of the main incident in 1968 in Paris. However, in Tlatelolco, a place in Mexico, the same year, in 1968, also witnessed a terrible incident of massacre of 400 students. I say that 1968 should be considered an important year that marked the beginning of a true transformation in how we would see and think about the world. In Argentina, in Córdoba, a *cordobazo* took place when students took over the city and forced the end of the dictatorship of Onganía[2]. We are effectively the inheritors of 1968; I can say so about myself. Our proposition (our thought) on World History and liberation is now almost fifty-five years old. They were formed even before Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1976) was published. Thus, we begin in 1969, Guha in 1973, the Postmodern Movement, and François Lyotard in Paris in 1979. All these show that the 1970s were critical years. Samir Amin was an Egyptian who worked in Ghana and began to look at the world system differently in 1966. That marked the beginning of the dependency theory, which still exists today. All this points to the fact that the 1960s was a time of crisis, and at the same time, those years marked the beginning of looking at history with a new vision.

I had begun to discover then that the whole world had the same vision of history. It means that we speak of Antiquity or ancient history, then of the Middle Ages, and after that Modernity. I always ask, "Why don't you do another periodization of World History?" I have said this here in India and Kenya, but no one raised a hand. I asked in Berlin, Frankfurt, Notre Dame, Northwestern University in the US, Harvard, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and Morocco.

And what's more, I was going to Tehran. I was reading an important book on the History of Shiites' Islamic World. The book was about the origin of the Shiites and the Middle Ages of Shiite civilization. In Teheran, I began my lecture before the Arab historians by saying, "You talk of the Middle Ages, but the Islamic world was never in the Middle Ages; there was no feudalism ever in the whole Islamic world." That periodization is for Europe. Feudal society existed only in Europe, and no other country had feudalism. Thus, the Europeans generalized the historical category of feudalism and applied it to all places.

I have thoroughly studied Marx and have five volumes of books on him. I did something in Mexico that no one else has done. Marx wrote the first volume of *The Capital* four times and

changed its draft. I wrote a commentary on his published and unpublished volumes in the archives in the Netherlands and Germany. As you can see, I know Marx very well, and Marx is still valid today.

Nevertheless, he used the same periodization of history as Hegel and was Eurocentric. Therefore, his ideas are valid but not good enough for history writing.

Where does this vision come from? Is it a history of history or a history of historiography? It already existed in 1790, remaining so until 1818. In the Thesis of Walter Benjamin on the concept of Ethics in German Romanticism, it was Novalis who said: we have invented Antiquity. How is it possible that a group of philosophers and historians invented Antiquity? What they invented was the concept of Antiquity. Before this generation came into being, the classic culture was Egypt, not Greece. It was, indeed, an invention that philosophy began in Greece. It was an invention and a myth, and art historians declared that Greek art was the most prestigious art in the old world. But it all started at the time of Egyptian civilization. We see the old Greek statues in Egyptian art. We can see the Egyptian Influence on Greek art. However, they say that the origin of art, philosophy, and aesthetics is in Greece.

The central point of Antiquity is Greece. So, it becomes Roman, then Middle Ages, and then Modernity. However, what is Antiquity? We must read Hegel about this in his *Philosophy of History* (*Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 1837). He says that, as human civilization progresses, the center of history moves from the East to the West. Note it's from East to West. Europe is the goal and the center of World History - *weltgeschichte*. It means that Europe is the end, the culmination of World History… Modernity begins with philosophy, etc., and that's where World History culminates.

This is what I call a pure invention. We must change the curriculum of all the world universities, especially in the Global South. I want to ask, where are we, the Latin Americans in this vision of World History? We are nowhere. When Europe discovered the fourth part of the world, Latin America began to appear. The first part was Europe, the second in the South was Africa, and the third part in the East was Asia. Three parts of the world were like the Trinity of the Christians: sacred and holy. You cannot think of more than the three parts because you think that with the fourth part, the Trinity becomes irrational. Thus, America is under a question mark. Hegel explains that Asia has no history; it is the land of the feudal. Africa had no spirit. And when the spirit appeared closer to Africa, the Africans disregarded it because they were irrational. What did Hegel say about America? He said it was undeveloped -- its rivers did not end their course; the flowers were so exotic that they looked primitive, and animals were not fully developed like the European animals. Everything was objectified: primitive human beings, animals, and plants. It

amounted to total negation of the non-European world. When Heidegger listened to Schelling's lecture on Hegel in Berlin in 1841, he understood that Hegel had, in a way, enacted negation. He spoke with entire doctrines of scientific knowledge.

This pure invention and the discovery of America are linked with this invention. As Hegel had said, human beings discovered America. As if others, non-Europeans, were not humans? Didn't millions of Americans discover America? The first question of philosophy is: Is the fourth part of the world human, or is it not human? This very philosophical question was asked in 1514. We must rethink World History to begin to exist. Even in India, India is a political, military, and economic entity. It had been having a special place at the epistemological level as well. We had been teaching the negation of ourselves in high school, in bachelor's, master's, and doctoral courses. We all along taught that we did not exist.

Our Vision of History

Today, our role as intellectuals is to offer a new vision in which we shall have a place in history from the very beginning. This is our task. My first lecture, in my first semester of teaching at the university in 1966, was on Latin America in world history. As we can see, Latin America was out of world history. India has always been present in history, but Latin America did not exist in Hegelian history. Thus, I needed to examine a new history to understand Latin America. A historical and archaeological reconstruction is required to correct the Eurocentric deviation that excludes Latin America from World History. Such a reconstructed and fuller account of civilizations will unmask Hegel's vision of history not merely as a Eurocentric ideological invention but also as an inversion of facts.

At certain places and moments, at least six great urban civilizations arose and intersected at two contact zones. According to Alfred Weber, these cultures do not serve merely as the ancient antecedents of European culture but stand as pillars of World History in their own right.

The Bronze Age had its first stop, which was the Neolithic revolution, that is, a highly Neolithic culture that developed irrigation and established great cities. The oldest cities are found at the banks of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, in the North of Iraq. In Iraq, we have the first old city and many things first. Gunter Frank, who taught and researched in Germany, Netherlands, and Latin American universities, talked about a five-thousand-year-old system because he put Egypt first. Even our culture, our American Culture, is part of this extensive Bronze Age civilization. For example, our week has seven days that come from Mesopotamia. Many elements are thousands of years old, even though we are unaware of them. Interestingly, the law codes have also existed for thousands of years. The famous Codex of Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.E.) laid

down rationally universal ethical principles; for example, they professed that they had governed them in peace and had defended them with wisdom in such a way that the strong did not oppress the weak and do justice to the orphan and widow, and the foreigner.

There existed a sense of ethics and politics. These are critical issues; hence, these ethics and politics are valid even today. In our constitution today, we say that we take the foreigner as a citizen of our country. This means Hammurabi was more developed and enlightened than Roman law, Modern law, Napoleonic law, or better than any constitution. Hammurabi did justice to foreigners, which is a political question; did justice to the poor, which is an economic question; and did justice to a widow, which is a gender question; did justice to the orphan, which is a pedagogical question, which is equally critical. This is what I call the philosophy of liberation today. This one is poor; this one is an orphan; therefore, he is not my son; this one is not my wife; she is a widow; this one is not my co-citizen; he is a foreigner. If I do justice to others, that is a critical philosophy and a philosophy of liberation. Three thousand eight hundred years B.C.E., this was the practice in Babylonia, fifty kilometers from Baghdad. Baghdad was destroyed by the barbarians of the twenty-first century, by Mr. Bush & others. The future generation will certainly speak of them like barbarians. In the U.S.A., I met a Jewish professor. She said she was a Jew from Iraq, and her family had belonged to Baghdad since the first century. She was a descendant of Mishnah. Mishnah was a region that later became Baghdad. Baghdad was founded in 5026. That was the center of World History, and one can talk about many aspects of this region. This was one civilization from the bronze side that expanded to the Mediterranean; the other one was Egypt.

The first dynasty of Egypt, five thousand years ago (3000 BCE), came from the South, from Bantu, Black, and Africa. Africa, said Hegel, did not contribute to World History. Egypt is the mother country of the Mediterranean civilization, and it is Bantu; we know of Tutankhamun. In Tutankhamun's tomb are old shoes that Tutankhamun used in his life. You can see it at the museum in Cairo. The old shoes are there because Tutankhamun will be resurrected. Egyptians believed in resurrection; that was the myth. Yes, it was the myth of Osiris, the God of Thebes. My teacher at the Sorbonne said that myth is a rational narrative with symbols. Resurrection is a myth, but it means that human beings have corporeality, living corporeality, and dying as well, but humans could be resurrected. That means the body is very positive. The first commandment of Osiris demands that the dead person do the resurrection in the *Book of the Dead*, chapter 125. Osiris asks the dead person, who has a principle of subsistence after death but not for the soul. Egyptians underestimate the soul but not the corporeality. The dead person is asked: what did you do to merit the resurrection? And it is said in the *Book of the Dead*: "I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, a ship to the shipwrecked, and offerings and libations

to the gods. ... Divine spirits, free me, protect me, and do not accuse me before the great divinity Osiris! All material things relate to life. That is an ethic whose criterion is to give food to the hungry. That is a particular ethical, political, economic, and many other principles; all are questions about life. The *Book of the Dead* of the Egyptians, written five thousand years ago, is very relevant, for it has Anthropology, Ethics, and a vision of History. Egypt is, indeed, very interesting.

Now we must move to India, not five thousand years ago, but two thousand years, especially to Punjab, before the Aryan invasion and to the East of the bronze side, before *the Rig Veda*, *The Upanishads*, etc. We will take up China, the region of the Yellow River, 2000 B.C.E. There was etching; it is not an alphabet or a language sign; etching is a square of possibilities. In a square of 8mx8m, these are small squares representing sixty-four possibilities. They put sixty-four signs in the square, first three lines, and then three. That is perfection. Three lines also represent wrong or evil, but these lines are divided. In between all these squares, sixty-four signs have philosophical meanings. They gave each sign names, which became the framework for interpreting life until today. In South Korea also, there are lines and squares. I asked them what these lines were, and they said those were the signs of old wisdom. The yin–yang are two principles of God. We have other philosophical thoughts and ideas in the extreme East of the East.

Thirty thousand years B.C.E., the Homo Sapiens crossed over and arrived in America. It happened at the same time when the homo sapiens had destroyed the Neanderthal in Europe. That would mean the homo sapiens arrived in America and Europe at the same time. They go to the South and organize the Mesoamerican high culture: Teotihuacan, fifty kilometers from Mexico City. This city existed from 300 until 900 after the C.E. and had a population of one hundred thousand. As in Egypt, it was a big city with pyramids and had high culture. The Inca Empire spread from Cali, Colombia, to Rio Mauri, in Mendoza, Argentina. The Inca Empire, covering almost 5000 km from North to South, was much bigger than the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was 3500 km. Isn't it fantastic?! There were six prominent cultures, such as the six columns of World History.

America is the extreme East of the extreme East. All our original people came from Asia. Some were like Mongolians, others were like people in Cochin, and there were many islanders. Afterwards, the Polynesian civilization crossed the entire Pacific. There are islands, like Samoan Island, and people from there go to Chile, New Zealand, and Australia. Mauri in New Zealand and the Mapuche in Chile call the leader of their community Toki. The same word is used in Chile, Australia, and New Zealand. I was in a museum in New Zealand, where a stone called Toki was displayed. I asked who used this stone, and I was told that it was the stone used by the Mauri

community leader. In Chile, I asked the Mapuche people what the leader who fought against the Spanish was called, and they said Toki.

Spaniards could not defeat Chilean Indians until 1880. They succeeded only with the use of Mausers and telegraphic communication. The Indians were equipped with the Polynesian strategy. In total, there were two thousand Indians in the army. However, using their approach, in a second, they would disperse. Spaniards were surprised because they saw an army there, and it suddenly dispersed. Spaniards had to face a situation where they could not find the army. The Mauri and Mapuche used a Polynesian strategy that the Spanish could not understand and thus could not win in the South of Chile. The Pacific was the center of American Civilization. Everything was there in the Pacific, and then there were mountains at 2000 meters with high culture and tropical places that needed development. This is our vision.

The Second Moment

In my vision, the second moment of interregional cultures begins with the expansion, not of the bronze side but of the Iron side - iron and horses. In Mongolia, in the Gobi Desert, horses were domesticated and became the most peculiar instrument of communication until the trains came in the nineteenth century. Eight thousand years ago, the Mongols began to domesticate horses. A harsh iron instrument was made for them, that was the horseshoe. Horses have one toe, and they need iron for protection. The horses with protection with iron weapons began the invasion from the North to the South. The Mongols invaded China and India during the time of the Rig Veda and *Upanishads*, 2000 years B.C.E. They organized the first enormous empire because of the horse and the iron. Thus, cultures in the second period were dominated by iron and horse civilization and enslaved people.

In 220 B.C.E., the Chinese empire began and lasted until 1911. China had long stability, and when the Mongols arrived, they became Chinese because the big culture absorbed the invaders. The extended stability in China is impressive. The development of China today is not a miracle. Until the end of the eighteenth century, China was already a developed country. They discovered paper in the sixth century C.E. and the printing machine in the eighth century. In the ninth century, the Chinese printed paper money a thousand years before the Europeans did it. Most of the technology of the Industrial Revolution came from China. You can read in John M. Hobson's *Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (2004). China is a very special country but is not immediately the center.

The Greek civilization was a new civilization in which the influence of Egypt, the Phoenicians, and the Mesopotamians was quite visible, especially the influence of the Phoenicians.

The type of cities developed in Greece came from the Phoenicians – Tyron, Byblos, and Sidon. They invented the alphabetic structure, like the organization of the ships. Greek ships in the Mediterranean are Phoenician. All the political organizations in the democracy came from Phoenician cities. For example, Gaza (we every day read in newspapers how Israel destroyed it) is a seven-thousand-year-old city. Greek civilization took a lot from the Phoenicians. And Athens, philosophical Athens, was a colony of Sais. Sais was an Egyptian city at the end of the Nile. Palace Athenea, the goddess of Athens, was the goddess of Sais. That was the capital of all Egypt from 666 until 400 CE. At that time, Athens was a colony. It had relations with the mother culture, which was the Egyptian Sais. Erodes, Plato, and Aristotle all said philosophy came from Egypt. But Germans, in Berlin, with the reform in the University of Berlin, said Philosophy began in Athens. It was pure invention. India played a vital role at that time. The Rig Veda and Upanishads have a dualist vision of human beings: the soul and the body. The Greeks have Dionysus's Mysteries in which the amiable/savage opposites meet; at a basic level, Dionysus represents the dual nature of wine, like Soma. The soul is divine, and the body is more related to plurality, people, and evil. Almost all these cultures have a dualist vision: the Vedas, the Pers, Greek, and Roman, that is, the Indo-European.

The Third Moment

The third moment in world history is the expansion of Semitic civilization. It was not all Jewish. It was mainly a sect of the Jewish people. Christianity is also a Jewish sect that is very open. Jewish people call non-Jews *Goy (plural Goyim)* in Hebrew, which means the other that is not you. They were Messianic people. *Messiah in Hebrew is Messiah — Christos, that is, Christiano* - the Messianic people. It is interesting because the long Egyptian tradition and Mesopotamian thought believed that the other is the origin of order. The other is the creator of order. Rigveda and Upanishads believed that order is holy, manifested in the caste system. If you do not accomplish the exigencies of the order, you are excluded – the untouchable.

In the Caliphate of Cordoba, in Spain, a philosopher, Ibn Rushd (Latinized as Averroes), wrote on many subjects, including philosophy, theology, medicine, astronomy, physics, psychology, Islamic jurisprudence and law, etc. He then went to Fez, in Morocco, and later to Egypt. People from the Caliphate also traveled to Baghdad and China. Each year, hundreds and hundreds of caravans with camels connected Mesopotamia to China. Hundreds of travelers on camels would go to China. At that time, only one European traveler, Marco Polo, arrived from Italy to China. He was considered a champion but compare him to those hundreds going from Baghdad to China.

This state of primitiveness of Europe makes us ask the question, "What does Modernity mean?" "How did this isolated, underdeveloped place which was not the center of knowledge, science, or anything else, become the emblem of Modernity?" It's here that we have a disagreement or dispute. What is the origin and cost of European development and the crisis that all our civilizations suffered? That is the question.

Europe at that time was small, and seven million people lived there. Whereas in China alone, there were one hundred fifty million. In January 1492, the King of Spain expelled the remaining Islamic people from Granada. This way, their presence in Europe came to an end. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire was at the port of Vienna till 1686. Europe remained isolated till they stayed there. By way of the crusade, they went to the center of the market of this big world. At that time, India and China were the most developed countries in the world. They traded in products like textiles, silk, Chinese porcelain and technology. An encyclopedia in ten volumes on Needham's Science and Civilization in China was published in 1300. These volumes describe the technological progress of China. More than six million people were needed to work on worms and silk in the silk industry. The Industrial Revolution took place in China. The Chinese installed the first industry in the eighteenth century.

Stephen Toulmin, a British-American philosopher, said the origin of Modernity lay in the invention of the printing machine in 1486. Toulmin, an influential philosopher, told Gutenberg that he invented the printing machine in Germany. The Chinese had invented the printing machine five hundred years earlier. Toulmin did not know this fact. Jürgen Habermas asked what the origin of Modernity was. He showed the Renaissance, the Reformation, the French Enlightenment, and the English Parliament. Here, you see Germany, France, and England. The South of Europe is completely forgotten. Spain is not mentioned, and Latin America is not there because Spain is not. We were a colony of Spain. Spain, anyway, was out of the World History. The Enlightenment happened in the North of Europe, and the Industrial Revolution also. So, they deny any space to the South of Europe. Therefore, when we speak of the South, we must remember there is also a South in Europe.

The sixteenth century appears nowhere because there is no mention in the history of Europe of what happened from 1492 to 1630. When Descartes wrote his *Discourse on Method* in Amsterdam in 1677, that is considered the beginning of philosophy, meaning thereby after the Greek times. Once again, we see a gap of more than hundred and fifty years between 1492 and 1677. Are those years without philosophy? Why are they without philosophy? Because Spanish people are still in the Middle Ages, and if they are in the Middle Ages, then what is the origin of Modernity? That is again a disputed question. Where could Europe go beyond the wall of the

Ottoman Empire? They could go towards Russia, but Russia had begun the conquest of Siberia and had arrived in Kamchatka at the end of the sixteenth century. Spain discovered the Atlantic. This is my question again. Does the discovery of the Atlantic usher in Modernity? Is it the end of the Mediterranean? It becomes the center of new geopolitics, of the military, economic, and political world.

It is important for me that I am here in India and we begin a dialogue. India has an ancient civilization, as does Latin America. Mexico is also an old big city. We have had agricultural exploitation in the valley of Mexico for more than nine thousand years, showing that it was a prominent civilization. We must discuss whether my hypothesis works; otherwise, we will look for other options.

Spain arrived not to the extreme East of the East but now to the extreme West of the West. America now is not in the Pacific but in another part of the Atlantic. The question is, why was the Atlantic not discovered earlier? I asked this question in a dialogue with Arab thinker Tariq Ramadan. They had reached Morocco and several other islands, and why did Arabs not go to America? He said: "I never thought about it." Islamic thought was so developed then, but they did not think of going to America. Therefore, arriving in America marked the beginning of modernity. It is not the Renaissance, Reformation, or Enlightenment; those were phenomena. However, Spaniards found inhabitants without horses or iron. That's the reason why it was easy to complete the conquest. Indians could not resist the invasion. October 12, 1492, was not a discovery of America; it was the beginning of the invasion of America. It was violence by Europe first and argumentation after.

Bartolomé de las Casas had said that the only way Indians could be educated was by rational arguments. He said it in 1514. It was noted before Machiavelli and Martin Luther. He discovered the dignity of the Indians. He was a thinker and was the first critic of Modernity. He spoke against Modernity at the beginning. Spanish colonies in America expanded from the North in Mexico to the Mauri River in Chile. Until 1630, it covered more than two million square kilometers. They had a new territory to expand to. Fifteen million or more people worked for the Metropolis without a salary. It was apparent to demonstrate that they were not considered to be full humans, and since they were not full humans, there was no need to pay them salaries. Indians were sent to the mines in Potosi in Bolivia. The Spanish discovered enormous quantities of silver from the Potosí silver mines in 1545, which were the richest and cheapest source of silver in the world; these mines produced over 40,000 tons of silver. Over 150,000 tons of silver were shipped from Potosí by the end of the 18th century. From 1500 to 1800, Potosi in Bolivia and Zacatecas in Mexico produced about 80 percent of the world's silver, 30 percent of which eventually ended

up in China, resulting in silver devaluation in the whole world. The Islamic world became poorer, and Money was devalued through the importation of silver.

Now, I move on to show how the development of modernity happened and how it began to be related to the concept of colonialism. It is only possible to understand Modernity with the correlative and constitutive concept of colonialism even today. It is a theoretical question. It is an economic, political, philosophical, literary, theological, and mythical question. It appears at all levels. Strictly, this modernity imposes a discourse on the interpretation of history and our daily lives. We, the colony, took the European interpretation as valid.

European said, "You are not." Parmenides says *being* is/*nonbeing* means being is not. That is evident. So, being is excellent, and non-being is barbarian. Plato said that human beings are inside the wall of the city, and those beyond the wall of the city are non-being barbarians. In Greek philosophy, for Aristotle and for thinkers of modernity, to be European is to be human; not to be European is to be of a second category of human until today.

The problem is equality. It is the central question of decolonization. Now, we are not a colony at a political level, more or less; however, economically, we are still a colony, like India or Mexico and all the countries of the South. Militarily also, we are a colony. The United States produces fifty per cent of all weapons in the world. So is the case in other fields. Epistemologically, we repeat their narrative. It's like a masochist situation. Therefore, we must go beyond them to see the world, not only Europe.

Decolonizing the Conception of Modernity: Towards Transmodernity

Now, let us turn to a new discussion. So far, I have presented the thoughts of a thinker coming from other worlds, like Latin America to India. He is more of a foreigner here than in Europe, even though it is a different culture in the South. Paradoxically, we don't know our thinking; we don't know what Africa thinks, China, West Asia, the Islamic world, or Latin America. We know Europe and North America better (they call it "America") because we all, as many university professors and students and the academic world, are part of the Eurocentric vision. We deny our own cultures, and we don't know what to think of other cultures of the South. We know the culture of the North, which was the colonial power, and that's why it is not easy to establish a dialogue between Latin America and Africa, the Islamic world, India, Southeast Asia, and China. Nevertheless, I will risk speaking on this subject now.

Concept of Modernity

Western thinkers and sociologists have disseminated and explained the concept of modernity. Therefore, it is important for us—thinkers from the South—to understand what it is constitutive of and where to situate it in time and space. I would situate it in four moments.

First, for me and a group of thinkers in Latin America, the concern is knowing the origin and the beginning of the concept of modernity. We may use it but cannot explain its constitutive moments. So, I will delve into this.

Second, I propose a short periodization of historical moments of modernity. Through this periodization, we can begin to understand that modernity's development is different for the commonwealth countries than it was for the French colony in Africa. The same is true for Latin America. It is different everywhere. We need to begin to understand other cultures of the South.

Third, I will take a risk by tackling a more abstract subject: the critique of modern reason and how postmodern thought proposes a Eurocentric solution. Therefore, I cannot accept postmodern thought; for me, it's still modern.

The fourth question concerns the meaning of what our group calls "trans modernity." It isn't easy to discuss this in a short time, and I have written extensively on this topic.

Origin of Modernity

First point: the dispute about the origin of Modernity is not only about its origin but also about its nature. If I think that the origin of Modernity, for example, is in the Italian Renaissance (Habermas and many others have said that modernity began in Italy in 1416. We know the Renaissance does not last exactly one century, but almost two), then I ask why Italy? Why do we think that it began there? Italy has a very special geopolitical place in the history of knowledge, but that was in the fourteenth century, not today. It was in the fourteenth century. We can see on any map how power is spread in space, that is., geopolitics.

Thus, we ask, why Italy? It's important because Europe is in front of the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific is the rear shore. The ocean was the center of primitive American culture that came from the East. American culture was to the East of the East. However, the central point in the fourteenth century was China and India. These were the centers of the world market. Europe was nowhere; it was still in the so-called Middle Ages. Again, we ask why Italy? Because Italy was the port, it was connected with the East Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, and the caravans, silk caravans that would go to China, through Afghanistan, and up to India. This route connects with Mycenae, the old Greek Empire, and would further connect with Cairo, close to the Atlantic. The North of Europe needed to go to the South, that is, Rome, to communicate with the system. Therefore, we

understand the importance of Italy; Venice was a port, and Amalfi and Napoli were ports. That would mean those were the connections with the Middle East and from the Middle East with North of Africa, which was the Ottoman Empire, and with all the other kingdoms.

We said that the Renaissance began in the fourteenth century. Why the need to resurrect Greek civilization? Isn't it interesting? To talk of Ficino, Plato, and the Greeks in 1457? Constantinople in 1453 was in the hands of the Turkish people. There was immigration from Byzantium to Italy; as you can understand, it was geographically very close. Thus, the Byzantine people arrived in Italy. Giotto made figures like in the Byzantine arts, that is, he put a small head on a person, and the body was frail and very spiritual. The Byzantine also influenced Botticelli. That means all painters of the Renaissance were under the influence of Byzantine art. Greeks translated Plato into Latin and, later, into Italian; the Byzantines could read Greek texts because the Greeks were in Italy. Therefore, it's not a pure invention of the Italian. This way, the first immigration of the east part, the Oriental part of the Roman Empire, happened.

There is a book by Rowan Gavin Paton Menzies entitled *1421,* which is when the Chinese Renaissance lit up. There is a connection between China and Italy, and Italy began to discover many things from China. As I mentioned, an encyclopedia of technology was printed on paper in China in 1313. China had developed technology, and its agriculture and industrial levels were very high because China began the Industrial Revolution much before England. Leonardo Da Vinci's designs were taken from the Chinese encyclopedia. It shows that the Renaissance is not so central, and for me, it's not the origin of Modernity. Italy is in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea is looking towards the East and has a connection with the East.

I have many arguments to prove that the Renaissance was not the beginning of Modernity. Many people see the origin of Modernity in Luther's reform because we began to read texts without authority or strong structure. Everybody could read because he translated the texts from Hebrew into German. And as there was a printing machine, people could access and read the texts, which was more democratic. However, it is less important. What is important is that Luther and the North of Europe were divided communities. The division between the North and the South was because the South had Catholicism, and the North was Lutheran and later had protestant churches. How was the division of the North of Europe from the South possible? How is it that the Germans never ask this question?

I was in Heidelberg two years ago with sixty Lutheran theologians from Germany, U.S.A., Yale, Harvard, and Brazil. I asked what the reason or the possibility was that the North of Europe divided Christianity from the South. The question was obvious, but nobody thought of it. It was in 1517 that Lutherans presented the Luther thesis in Wittenberg. I asked: was it possible that the

North of Europe would be separated from the South? They found the question strange. I said it was likely because the Baltic Sea was open to a discovery: the discovery of the Atlantic. When the Atlantic was closed, the North of Europe could not go to the central part of the world market. However, the caravans would go to the East if it was not connected through Italy from Rome. Nevertheless, if we were now open to the Atlantic, the Baltic Sea would be connected with a new geopolitical center. That is Modernity.

Now Italy and the Mediterranean Sea were opening to the Atlantic. It is more than the discovery of America because the third expansion of humanity to America was from West to East. Still, the new position of America now would be in the western part of Europe. I hypothesize that the opening of Europe to the Atlantic allowed the Baltic to go to the center, a new center, a new geopolitical and commercial political center of that moment. That was the position of the Atlantic. This was also when the North of Europe could end its relationship with the South. I say the death of the Mediterranean was the birth of the Atlantic. A known historian in France, Fernand Braudel, wrote a thick book, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. However, I would prefer a student, a Braudel disciple named Pierre Chaunu. He wrote on Seville and the Atlantic Ocean. Chaunu was against Braudel, and he said that the Mediterranean was the Middle Ages Sea. Still, the Atlantic was the new center from where the Europeans could go to Africa, arrive in the Arab world, go up to Japan with Portuguese, and with the Spanish to America, from Acapulco, they could arrive to the Philippines. That means it was the first time an empire existed, which was the beginning of modernity.

Europe was small, underdeveloped, peripheral, and ignorant about the power of science, technology, tradition, old philosophers, and many other things of China, India, and the Arab world. This is a good example of philosophy—the Greek philosophy got over when they finished the Greek nation. The Byzantine Empire and the Roman Empire took the philosophy from Greece. Later, the Arabs in Aleppo (which is now destroyed by Americans) took the works of Aristotle and translated them to Arabic in 800 after the C.E. Arabs studied empirical science, mathematics, and astronomy, and Baghdad was the center of wisdom of science and technology in the entire world in the eighth century. From there, in one of the Southern republics of the old Soviet Union, in Uzbekistan, was Avicenna, a great philosopher, Aristotelian. From here, the philosophy goes to Fez, Morocco; from there, it reaches Cordoba, Spain. From Cordoba, it arrives in Paris with great philosophers of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas and Boaventura.

Coloniality and Modernity

We are told that Great Philosophy has this sequence: Middle Ages, Modernity. No. It is like this: Great philosophy: Aleppo, Baghdad, Fez, Córdoba, Paris. It has another movement. This is why, for me, the opening of Europe to the Atlantic is the beginning of Modernity. Why? Because Europe, which was closed so far, could now go anywhere in the world. The best argument was given to me by a very important constitutional lawyer and philosopher of Germany, Karl Schmitt, in one of his books, *Sea and Land*. He said that the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1493 began the law of Europe, not international law like generally people say. Karl Schmitt was more intelligent. Karl Schmitt said the first limitation of European law was manifested in 1826 when the Americans said *America for the Americans*. This law doctrine put a limit to the rights of Europe because it meant your rights are until here, but from here, we Americans have rights, and you have no rights. Karl Schmitt understood this point that having our laws and rights is precisely the beginning of modernity. It is a long debate; I cannot explain it here more because it's too complicated and requires time.

For me, the opening of the Atlantic is the beginning of Modernity. The reason is that at this time, small Europe will have the possibility to grow slowly from 1492 until the end of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, until the end of the eighteenth century, China produced more iron than Europe and America combined. China was a power that produced silk, porcelain, and many other items, with salary, surplus value, and capital. Marx didn't know this. It was not an Asian mode of production; it was a capitalist mode in Yellow River, one century before it started in England.

So, we must begin to look at a different question. After all, Europe took over America, from the North of Mexico to the South of Chile, two big empires, the Maya and Aztec empires, which covered more than one million sq. km, and the Inca empire was spread over 4500 km from the south of Colombia up to Chile. It meant that only the Inca Empire was more than the Roman Empire. Europe now has a new territory. It could work and exploit and transfer wealth to Europe. However, China, India, Africa, and other countries remained in the same territory and did not expand. In America, there are more than twenty-five million people, i.e., Indians under European civilization, who could work, especially in mines. As I explained earlier, they took in twenty thousand tons of silver from one mine in Bolivia. It meant the first world money in silver was stamped in Mexico, and this money from Mexico was accepted in North Africa, China, India, the Arab world, and worldwide. So, for the first time in history, world money was produced in the mines of northern Mexico, the mines of Zacatecas, and other places. However, it led to the devaluation of silver in the world system, and the Arabs became poor without losing any money,

as the value was reduced due to silver production in America. I ask my colleagues in Morocco or Cairo–Can you please clarify why, in the sixteenth century, the luster of Islamic civilization disappeared? We don't see any bigger philosophers; the Taj Mahal was the last significant monument. What happened to this civilization from Morocco, Cairo, Mesopotamia, Mogul sultanate, Indochina up to the Philippines, Mindanao, and all of Arabia? They said it was decadence. But it was so because the challenge for others came from America, from the New World, and Europe began growing by exploiting it slowly.

Therefore, I want to ask a very complex question today. It can be understood here in India. By drawing a scale from fifteen hundred to two thousand, i.e., the last five hundred years, and seeing it from the North to the South, we can perceive what Walter Mignolo called the imperial and colonial differences. In 1492, Modernity began, as well as the colonization of Latin America. It was not so in the Commonwealth long before England started anything. At this time, England was a secondary country. England had three million people at the end of the fifteenth century; it was a small island in Eurasia but secondary in the fourteenth century. This is the reason why it is essential to study history. However, the independence of Latin America, in general terms, took place by 1823. Latin America was a colony for three and a half centuries. Those were the times of Spain. Nevertheless, in the history of Commonwealth states, the English world, and North Europe, Spain doesn't appear, and you don't study anything about Spain. It is because in the Enlightenment, in the eighteenth century, Hegel said the North of Europe is the axis of Europe, that what the South of Europe used to be but is not anymore. That means the Enlightenment—Voltaire, Montesquieu, Hume in England, and Kant in Germany— said the North of Europe had intelligentsia. And Spain? It was counted as being still in the Middle Ages.

No. Spain was the origin of Modernity. But Spain began to face a crisis more or less in 1630, as they began to lose their silver, and colonies of Spain were lost to the Dutch people. The Netherlands took over power by 1686. After that, England took over the Netherlands. This way began the presence of England and France, which lasted till l945. That was the commonwealth period, and you understand that India, for example, was colonized by the occupation of the North of the Ganges at the end of the eighteenth century.

Now you see *the difference*. We need to have a dialogue around this. Latin America was a colony almost three centuries before India became a colony of England and remained until the end of the War. That is India's case. However, Africa was different because the Congress of Berlin was held in 1880 when Africa was colonized. I mean here, in Continental Africa. The Portuguese, English, and Dutch took the Strait of Africa and made a triangle between Europe, Africa, America, and Europe. They sold weapons to Africa, bought enslaved people, and sent them to Brazil, Cuba,

and the South of the U.S.A. The trade happened not only in silver, gold, and tropical commodities but also in enslaved people. However, they never occupied continental Africa because Africa was significantly developed. Africa had iron and horses, and Central Africa provides possible evidence of iron working as early as the 3rd millennium BC. Therefore, they couldn't occupy Africa until after the Industrial Revolution. Here, one can note the difference between the imperialist powers Spain, Netherlands, and England.

The wars between European countries were also world wars. Why World War? India was not in the war, Latin America was not in the war, Africa was not in the war, but they were not counted. The war was between the powers in Europe, the U.S.A. and Japan. Even then, they called it World War. That is Eurocentric. The so-called world war was the passage of power from England to America. The real loser of the war was not Germany. England was the loser because it was an empire that lost most of its colonies after the war. Now, the empire is the U.S.A. That is the imperial difference. However, in the South, we must have other perspectives when speaking. I, a Latin American, and you, the citizens of India, must begin to know the history of our colonialism.

Modernity and Capitalism

Modernity produced many things simultaneously. Modernity is synchronic, simultaneous, with the origin of capitalism. Capitalism existed before the discovery of the Atlantic, but that was not world capitalism; it was local capitalism. In 2015, I wrote *16 Theses on Political Economy*, explaining all these questions: capital existed for many years but not capitalism as a hegemonic system and not as a world system. This world system began with capital accumulation, with the silver and enslaved person trade by the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century. Thus, capitalism is simultaneous with colonialism. There is no Modernity and capitalism without colonialism because they took valuables from the colonies from the beginning. This could have been clearer to Marx; it was unclear to Adam Smith and needed to be more apparent to many economists or political scientists. Liberalism and all human sciences do not relate Modernity with colonialism, which is a different side of the same coin. It's like I see capitalism on one side of the moon, and on the other side of the moon, I don't see colonialism. It is the moment of definition of Modernity and colonialism. Which type of colonialism— economic capitalist? We need a new source of economic science that would show how to transfer the valuables from a colonial economy to the central economy even today. However, that's the importance of Marx. He was a critic and a thinker against the capital, so we value many of his discussions. There is colonialism at the level of the economy, but at the political level, there is a liberal democracy; as for culture, there

is the negation of others' cultures, and in the case of the military, indeed, the military is the last instance of the domination of the South, without that there is no domination. That is the difference between the Industrial Revolution in England, which produced textiles and guns. China produced silk, textiles, porcelain, and many other things but not guns because China then didn't need guns; it didn't have colonies, but England, yes! Guns were the last instance of colonialism.

It is also important to note that there is scientific colonialism, which is a Eurocentric epistemology. This is the burning question for us today. Epistemological decolonization is necessary because economics, science, political science, sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, etc., are all Eurocentric and justify colonialism. We studied all that, and we teach our students the same. We thus follow the mentality of enslaved people, and that is the question: Shouldn't we begin to go the other way?

Europe becomes the center, not as an automatic activity or, say, as a pure invention by Europe. No, on the contrary, with the assimilation, digestion, and incorporation of the formation of other cultures. They almost did not invent anything. They took mathematics from Arab people; our numbers are Arabic, and the numbers come from Hindustan, but the high mathematics of the Arab world came to Europe, and that showed the way. Technology also comes from China and many other things that we believe are European inventions. There are inventions in Europe, but more is needed. Modernity has an alternative in Eurasia. It was Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and then the Arab world; after that, it was China. When I speak of Europe, I mean the Latin-Germanic world. I am not referring to the East, the Oriental Roman Empire. The West Roman Empire - Latin-Germanic only.

Both are now the first world system because the others were empires. However, now we have them first because they occupy oceans, and America has been incorporated, and thus, we have a total vision of the world. In 1519-1520, Magellan from Seville went to America, discovered the Strait of Magellan, went to the Pacific, and, for the first time, made a roundtrip of the whole world. The Chinese had done that before, and the Spanish and Portuguese used Chinese maps. He used maps of China to discover. That cannot be called a discovery. There is one map of 1507 in Germany, in Freiburg. Martin Waldseemüller, in 1507, before Magellan discovered the Strait of Magellan in Argentina/Chile, made a world map and drew in the South of China a peninsula that was South America. Before the discovery of Magellan, how did a German draw the design of the Strait of Magellan? How or from where? Of course, he took it from a Chinese map. Isn't it interesting?

It meant that the totalization and alienation of other countries were very central to Europe, and the constitution of coloniality was an essential determinant of Modernity. A modern is modern

to a more primitive. However, from the beginning, they knew that China was more developed than Europe. (Read Giovanni Arrighi's *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century, 2007)*. You read the Wealth of Nations, the text by Adam Smith, written in 1776, to know what he said of China. You will understand what China meant to an English person at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. He said a rich person in England is poor compared to a rich person in China. China has much more wealth than England.

China had one-hundred-fifty million people then, and England had twelve million people. In the valley of the Yellow River alone, there are more inhabitants than in the whole of England, and that is where the Industrial Revolution began. Read Kenneth Pomeranz, an American historian of economy, in *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (2000). How was it possible that the Industrial Revolution began in China, but later, there was a crisis, and England began to grow? The explanation is that the price of food commodities in China was increasing, and the workers needed to go to work on land. Thus, they lost their work in factories and the industry. However, in England, workers had very cheap food from the colonies of America. In this case, the workers could continue working in the industry, as America paid for the food. As we can see, since England had colonies, it could improve the industrial revolution. Nevertheless, later, they say that they began the industrial revolution. It is clear now that the Industrial Revolution began in China one century ago, but we would not know because all our history is a construction.

You can also consult the book by Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (2006). Europe robbed the history of the people; they studied, implemented whatever they wanted, and later omitted the archive from the computer and said they had invented it. Theirs was a pure imitation. And later, they speak of despotism in the Orient. It is a negative judgment. The *Orientalism* by Edward Said shows how we are colonized through an ideological mechanism, but we believe in their narrative of history even today. Our universities teach the history that says we were always a colony and Europe was superior from the beginning.

Modernity and New Age in History

Modernity is the new age of World History. This period was not just a pure invention by Europe; Europe utilized the development and information of all cultures. Europe played a central role in this period. It combines some aspects of invention, maybe less than what they think, and invents some parts. Secondly, we must philosophically see the new world. German philosopher Heidegger said it's a new comprehension of meaning, that is, a new way of thinking. That is a revolution - it's

a philosophical, ideological, cultural, aesthetic, and literary revolution. It is a new comprehension of meaning.

It is also a new experience of subjectivity, not because Europe invented individuality. Goody insisted that this experience was not found in other civilizations, but I say to Goody: that's not true. If you go to Egypt five thousand years ago, at their mythical level, Osiris, the god that resurrected death, asked that person what his name was, and he said Death. Death said its name in singular, which amounts to individuality. Thus, that is not an invention of modernity; it existed five thousand years ago in Egypt. In the Indian tradition, this type of experience was not exactly there. However, the question is, what happens when subjectivity loses the community and the fetishization of individuality begins?

Descartes is considered the first philosopher of Modernity. I read a paper at Cologne (Köln) University in Germany against this posturing that Descartes was the first philosopher of Modernity. I say he is the first philosopher of the second moment of modernity. In the sixteenth century, Spanish people began the modern philosophy nevertheless as some of them tried to prove that Indians were not human beings (it is crucial because if Indians, the primitive inhabitants of America, are not fully human, they do not require a salary, and you can exploit them without compensation, and they die in the mine without salary). So, the anthropological definition of the nonhuman allows the exploitation of Indians in the production of silver, which leads to the primitive accumulation of capital. However, it is more serious because it becomes a racial question, and this inferior race, this nonhuman, is essential for the economy of Modernity. They rob/steal valuables from old colonies because when they took the silver, they did not give credit to the Indians. They did not say I would pay interest; they took all the silver to Spain and didn't pay any interest. Why? Because the Indians were not counted as human, there is a philosophy that proves that other cultures are nonhumans and can be exploited. This was in the sixteenth century.

René Descartes is the philosopher of the second moment of Modernity. He studied in a Jesuit school, where he said *cogito ergo sum*. That is a pure Jesuit principle. For me, the ontology of individuality without community allows self-love and competition with others. As no community exists, each fights against the other; like Hobbes said in *The Leviathan*, they fight until death. For Modernity, that is the nature of humans. However, it seems impossible because if each species fights against the other in a species, that would be quite perverse. Hobbs said *Homo homini lupus*, human beings are like wolves, but the wolf never eats another wolf. They love each other. Human beings are the only species that fight against a member of the same species. That is a new human being in Modernity.

In the second place, what does this abstract subjectivity that constitutes nature as race signify? In India, it is said that nature is the origin of life and that we must respect nature. It is the same in Mexico, Latin America, Africa, and all other cultures. But Modernity secularizes nature. Why? They arrived in America. It was an empty and untouched territory. It was plain nature, where they could sell and buy the land. Indians in Latin America say—land is my mother. In effect, it is so; it is not a metaphor; it's a scientific truth. Where does life come from? It comes from the earth. Homo Sapiens come from the evolution of the planet. We are a product, sons and daughters of the world that is science, not metaphor, not myth. But modernity secularizes and makes nature a means of exploitation and profit. When we destroy nature, it is like we committed suicide. Modernity has begun to eliminate conditions of life, science, and technology. The secularization of nature brings destruction to all cultures of the South. African cultures are destroyed. The Indian culture, Hinduism, and Jainism are all destroyed. We remain without traditions and history before an empty mathematical quantitative rationality. It's a big problem. Its ethos is self-love, but self-love is competitive; that's why I destroy you in the competition for the market. This principle is against the community against each other. It is a new type of rationality; it is abstract, mathematical, and universal. It is a mathematical objectivity with precision, but it does not study the adverse effects of this type of reason on today's capitalist society. The ultimate criterion of rationality is a growth rate of profit, but this rationality does not have a criterion of life; it only has quantity requirements. This criterion, therefore, causes the death of humanity. And that is the problem. We lose the idea of life as a criterion of ethics, as well as of politics, because the neoliberal capitalist does not think about the life of people; it only thinks about the growth rate of profit. It is dangerous because this principle kills life and people of all humanity. We are heading towards the perishing of the species.

There is another aspect of Modernity that we need to criticize. It promotes a type of subjectivity and a type of comprehension of reality that represents totality. However, this totality has some systems or internal systems. Totality is a culture. Nevertheless, totality has different systems: economic, political, racial, gender, cultural systems, etc. Each system is very concrete and needs to be studied as a particular epistemological development, i.e., economic and social systems or economic science. In economic science, we study capitalism and neoliberal capitalism. The partial system does not see the adverse effects of its system. This is why we must begin to reconstruct science from the South, i.e., from the perspective of the colonial world and not from the imperial North. That's where the validity of Marx lies. Marx's criteria are human life. They say human beings are living, are alive, and have necessities. I have necessities; I need satisfaction of my needs, and the satisfactions are commodities. But when I produce commodities, I objectivize

my life, and when somebody takes the product of my labor, they are drawing the benefit at an economic level. Some friends who deserted this community said that Marx was in the nineteenth century, he had many Eurocentric aspects, and he is not that valid today. I say yes; he is Eurocentric; he didn't examine the world market and did not make a particular study of colonialism.

Nevertheless, he criticized capital, and with the same methodology, we can criticize metropolitan capitalism. The fact is that surplus value is taken out from the colony and transferred to the empire. In Latin America, we call this Dependency Theory. I have many books on this topic because the Dependency Theory explains globalization today.

People say capital is globalized. Not true. Financial capital, yes. Mercantile capitalism is globalized. You can sell *Coca-Cola* in all places. But wage labor constitutes capital because it is the producer— No. They should not need to have a passport to go around the world. Why can't a worker from India go to England to work? They are given a very low average salary in the colonies. They invest capital in the periphery, create products in the colonial South, and afterwards export to the North and thus don't pay high European salaries. This difference between the low salary in India and the high salary in the U.S. or Europe is surplus value. Instead, it is robbery, like silver before. Our economic science does not speak about it. They speak of markets of competition but not of transfer of value from one nation to another. This is colonialism and Neo-colonialism after 1945 under the hegemony of the U.S. These countries are facing a new type of colonialism that is not the old colonialism of France, Germany, or Dutch; it's the neoliberal type of colonialism that the U.S. exported to the periphery and continued the systems of colonialism. That means each of these systems of Modernity spreads in the South at all levels–economically exploits the South, politically suppresses it, and militarily oppresses it—that is part of politics.

The U.S. produces fifty percent of the world's weapons. It's the most profitable product in the U.S. Why so much weapons production? If you read my book *Philosophy of Liberation*, which I wrote in 1975, the first chapter is entitled "Geopolitics and Philosophy.'" Geopolitics is a discipline taught in military schools—*I am speaking of a political space that includes all real spaces within the parameters of an economic system in which the power is the exact site in tandem with the military control.* (Cites from the book) The military controls the frontiers of the market. Suppose you cannot protect your market with weapons. In that case, you cannot do business because there is another army in another market, that is, the military puts the frontier of the market and creates the possibility to exercise power. It's the last instance of power as domination, not as obedience. So, there are many things that we must see with an actual vision—there is an economic capitalist system and a liberal

political system, and there is a state system. I had spoken of an industrial revolution that began in China but not England. It is necessary to rethink this question also.

The last moment of Modernity is its passage to America; it is the Americanization of Modernity. This is the moment that we are living in today. We must think of the US as the new phase of Modernity. I will now talk of Postmodernism because we, in Latin America, do not speak of Postmodernism but Transmodernism.

Postmodern/Transmodern

Why postmodern? Postmodernism began in 1979 with a book by François Lyotard, a French philosopher, entitled *The Postmodern Condition*. It's a critique of Europe from the European point of view. It may be considered the last moment of self-criticism of Eurocentric vision; however, as such, it is also Eurocentric. He criticizes the idea of reason, the universality of reason, and says we can all speak under the grand narrative. However, we criticize the reason that opened the door to a new type of rationality. (It is a vast subject I cannot fully explain today). Modern reason is indeed unique. It means a reason that is based on the division of identity and difference. When we talk of totality, in that case, the identity is divided into D1 and D2, but the foundational moment is the identity. It's impossible to have a dialogue between people who each have a universal identity because how can I speak with the other identity? There is incommunicability between worlds; that is the position of the communitarian concept in the U.S.

We can speak of another type of exercise of reason that is very traditional but necessary: analogical reason. The analogical reason can be represented in this manner: the concept of right or law in the Arab world or the law in the traditional thought of India or Bantu civilization. All are concepts of law; they are not different concerning one identity. However, there is a common relation at a level for all three, but not identical. Therefore, they have similarity/similitude (in Latin) in the logic of the Arabs or the Latin philosophy. This means that there is a concept of law in the Arab world, and Arab law has some similarities with the law in the Indus civilization or modern civilization. As such, there is no difference.

Nevertheless, the analogical distinctions and, in this case, when we speak — one culture speaks with another, we can never think that the other has an identical concept. We would call it a similar one. In this manner, the similarity gives me more flexibility, and I can develop a more precise combination of the other with time, which means one culture of the South can have a dialogue with the other culture of the South. They will not arrive at a homogeneity but a similarity, the idea of transmodernity. Transmodernity is not alter-modernity, another modernity, or the destruction of modernity. There is a dialectic between the traditional cultures of India, Bantu

Africa, China, Latin America, and Modernity. There is a dialogue. Imagine a cone of light at night, which is like modernity. Thus, in the first period, Latin America was incorporated/ absorbed in the project of Modernity and took many rich aspects of Modernity. Afterwards, it absorbed Africa—slavery and many other elements. Later, the Islamic world, then India as a colony of England, Southeast Asia. That means all these parts of our culture were being subsumed in modernity and being absorbed.

However, we had many experiences that Modernity couldn't absorb. Those experiences remained in the exteriority of Modernity. Here, exteriority is a philosophical category; it is new and different. The exteriority that modernity did not dominate is our language, culture, economic experiences, other types of political structures, and many other things—knowledge systems of our people, the physician, the medicine, etc. The issue before us is first to be conscious of the value of our traditions. Latin America is like a cone, and we have great old traditions. India has a long history and traditions. Then comes Modernity with its other traditions, and it absorbs ours.

However, to have a new project of humanity is not a question of absorbing modernity. No, we must develop a new type of world that we call a pluricentric or a pluriversal world and not universal. Pluriversal can coexist in similitude. Nevertheless, similitude is not an identity; it is flexible, polysemic, and has many meanings. How do we arrive at this new type of humanity if there is only one country, England, and one language, English, and one classical author, Shakespeare, imposed on humanity? It will lead us to lose all our traditions. Thus, we all become Anglo–Saxon. Is that the idea of Modernity? No! The future world will be complex and never the same; there will always be more inter-complementarity. How?

First, we must be conscious of our traditions. This is different from the fundamentalists, who say our tradition, yes! and modernity, no! That is an essentialist, stagnant tradition. We know traditions are always in process. Today, our Indian tradition differs from what it was three years ago. We change, but it's ours. First, the tradition is not stagnant but historical and progressive. Second, we must self-value this tradition. We wrote recently, in Latin America, a book, 1100 pages, in two columns, small print, entitled *Philosophical Thought in Latin America, Caribbean and Latinos in the United States*. It is the first history of thought of philosophy in Latin America. We didn't have it until now. We must know and value our traditions and do a second self-evaluation. Third, we must dialogue with modernity; we cannot say anything is valuable. No! We can choose the best of Modernity and absorb it. However, we cannot allow it to be imposed on us. Therefore, we must select and absorb it. Consequently, we should have a dialogue. And fourth, develop our possibilities.

Latin America is doing it well, but we can have a South-South dialogue to learn from each other, which is a new experience- the South-South inter-dialogue. The fifth moment is that we develop our possibilities with these conditions—Latin America, Africa, the Islamic world, critical European and American development, but equally. India and China are all moving towards a pluriversal world. That is called the New Age. New, like modernity, was a new age in middle-aged Europe. Thus, we go to the new and change the world with this new. We must reconstruct the community to make the system more human and stop destroying nature and humanity, and so on, many changes. It is the New Age. If we don't do that, we can keep looking at humanity, which is now heading to self-destruction in one or two centuries. We see all these smog questions, but it will finish us all if we do not act. We should start using the sun's energy very quickly. Still, there is no will to do that because it's against the rationality of capital, that is, the growing rate of profit and not the growing happiness of life of people. There are different ethical and political, economic, cultural, societal, gender, and race criteria. We need to do all this together to build a new type of civilization that is not postmodern. Instead, we will call it Transmodern.

I could not explain everything I had thought, but you can later read all that on my web page and criticize what I said. I have no claim to truth, but I have claims to discuss, and together, we bring out a new type of thought. That is the epistemological decolonization of Modernity.

[1] On 5 November 2023, Dr. Enrique Dussel passed away. Enrique Dussel was the primary figure in the Philosophy of Liberation. This philosophical movement emerged from the historical, political, and social context of Latin America, which formed a vital part of the Global South.
When news of his sad demise reached us, the present edition was still under preparation. We are privileged to include in this volume probably one of his last lectures delivered in a foreign land.
Prof. Enrique Dussel was invited by the organizers of the International Conference on India/Latin America: Emerging Epistemological Options & A Transcultural Dialogues (A Sur/South Conference), organized by the Department of Germanic & Romance Studies (GRS), University of Delhi and India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi during 10, 11, and 12 November 2016. On 10 November 2016, he delivered the inaugural address of the Conference on *Epistemological Decolonization of World History.* On 11 November 2016 he addressed the students and teachers at the University of Delhi and spoke on *Decolonizing the Conception of Modernity: Towards Transmodernity*. We recorded his lectures and, with his permission, present the edited transcript here. The lectures were given extensively and lasted more than one hour each. The written version here has a sense of orality. We have decided not to interfere much with his linguistic expression. Since the topic and the theme of both the lectures are related and Dr. Dussel presented the second lecture as a continuation, we have included them here in the same sequence.

Notes

1. It may be mentioned that on May 29, 1969, in Cordoba, Argentina Workers Union decided to go on a general strike The strike faced a massive police repression that led to a civil uprising where students and civilians participated and also suffered police brutality. This episode in history is known as *Cordobazo.*
2. As mentioned in the footnote on page one, these are two lectures delivered in Delhi and we are presenting a transcribed version of it in this edition. Therefore, we regret that no bibliographical note is included here.