

**Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar  
Sede Ecuador**



**Área de Relaciones Internacionales**

**Programa de Maestría  
en Estudios Latinoamericanos**

**Mención en Estudios Culturales**

**The Postoccidental Deconstruction  
and Resignification of “Modernity”:  
A Critical Analysis**

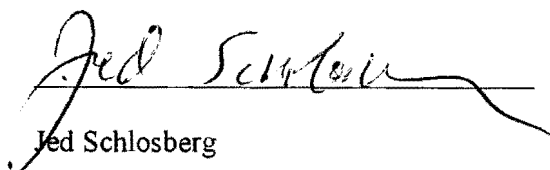
**Jed Schlosberg**

**2003**

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Jed Schlosberg

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A Critical Analysis**

**Jed Schlosberg**

**Tutor: Guillermo Bustos  
Written in Quito, Ecuador**

**2003**

## THESIS ABSTRACT

The thesis which follows, entitled “The Postoccidental Deconstruction and Resignification of ‘Modernity’: A Critical Analysis”, is an exposition and criticism of the critique of occidental modernity found in a group of writings which identify their critique with a “postoccidental” point of view with respect to postcolonial studies. The general problem of the investigation concerns the significance and reach of this critique of modernity in relation to the ongoing debate, in Latin American studies, about the historical relationship between Latin America, as a multicultural/ structurally heterogeneous region, and the industrial societies of Europe and North America.

A brief Preface explains the genealogy of the author’s ideas on this subject. Following this preface, the thesis proceeds to analyze the writings in this corpus through an intertextual, schematic approach which singles out two major elements of the postoccidental critique: “coloniality” and “eurocentrism”. These two main elements are investigated in the Introduction and Chapters One and Two, in terms of how they distinguish postoccidental analysis from other theoretical tendencies with which it has affinities but whose key concepts it reformulates in ways that are key to the unique approach which postoccidental analysis takes to modernity, the nature of the capitalist world system, colonialism, subalternization, center/periphery and development .

Chapter Three attempts a critical analysis of the foregoing postoccidental deconstruction according to the following question: to what extent does it succeed in deconstructing “modernity” as a term which refers to a historically articulated set of discourses whose underlying purpose has been to justify European and North American hegemony and structural asymmetries vis-à-vis the peripheries of the capitalist world system, based on an ethnocentric, racist logic of exploitation and subalternization of non-European peoples? A Conclusion follows Chapter Three.



*“...[E]s indispensable que este cuerpo de saberes [de los pueblos indios] tenga un segundo nivel de aprehensión que le otorga la traducción al sistema occidental de conocimiento y que nuestro sistema occidental de conocimiento pueda traducirse a los términos usuales en las comunidades. Esta traducción mutua, que implica una recreación, es también una manera de expandir ese sentido en común ahora de un universo más vasto.”*

- Ramón Vera Herrera, *“La noche estrellada. (La formación de constelaciones de saber)”*, Chiapas 5, p. 85.

\* \* \*

This thesis is dedicated to my *compadre* Julio Antonio Acosta Patiaj,  
of Salasaca, Ecuador,  
an artisan and an artist, a traveller and a dreamer,  
who has taught me more than any book  
what it means to cross  
the cultural  
divide

\* \* \*

I wish to thank Guillermo Bustos for his patient guidance of this investigation  
throughout its tortuous course.

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## PREFACE

The present investigation grew out of a series of monographs, and professors' responses to them, in two different courses taken by the author during his "fase presencial" at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar during the 2000-2001 academic year.<sup>1</sup> In those monographs, I was trying to sort out my puzzlement over the fact that the extensive discussion of colonial legacies in supposedly "postcolonial" Latin America, from various points of view in Latin American studies, kept bringing up the problem of how we are to understand what "modernity"<sup>2</sup> is in the context of Latin American social evolution, and that "modernity" had come to be associated – in the writings of various authors who identified themselves with the concept of "postoccidentalism" – with both colonialist and neocolonialist "discourses", related to the insertion of Latin America into the "capitalist world system" from its earliest stages.

Having been exposed in another course, on "Sociedad y Política en América Latina,"<sup>3</sup> to the debate over the meaning of "modernization" in the context of Latin American social and political theory, I was at first inclined, (prior to studying the problem of "modernity" as such), to think, rather simplistically, that "modernity" was simply the outcome of a

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<sup>1</sup> The courses were: "Memorias históricas, nacionalismo y nación en países Andinos", taught by Guillermo Bustos; and "Seminario de historia política y cultural", taught by Alberto Florez.

<sup>2</sup> The reader will note that throughout this investigation, the term "modernity" at times appears with quotation marks and at other times does not. In general, my criterion for choosing between one or the other has been to use quotation marks when I am referring to "modernity" as a concept, a signifier, an imaginary, a discourse, etc., and to not use them when I am referring to an "objective" historical phenomenon whose existence can be more or less assumed independent of, if not *any and all* semiotic context(s), at least any *particular* one. I realize that this exposes me to every manner of criticism as to my having "realist" or "dualist" epistemological assumptions. However ingenuous I may be in assuming that it makes sense to distinguish between "modernity" as a concept, etc. and modernity as something "in the nature of things", I feel I had no other option. To some extent, my thesis is a kind of interrogation as to whether such a distinction ultimately can be maintained. In a certain sense, I see the postoccidental critique of modernity as based on the notion that we can *only* speak about "modernity", i.e., that it cannot be understood as anything other than a construct, and a colonialist construct at that. In a certain sense, my investigation is a questioning of that point of view, while trying to avoid taking an explicitly "realist" or "dualist" approach to the question.

<sup>3</sup> Taught by César Montufar.

“successful” process of “modernization”, however that got defined. I was aware, from the readings in the course just mentioned, that there had been considerable debate in the period following the late 1950s over just what it really meant for a national society, outside of the centers of industrial capitalism, to “modernize” – with views that varied from economically to politically to socially oriented approaches to the “modernization” process. This course also made me aware that dependency theory had challenged the evolutionist, “stagist” modernization paradigm developed in the “centers” of global capitalism, and that with that challenge had come a questioning of the idea of a quasi-teleological model of “progress” from “traditional” to “modern” forms of economy, polity and society. I still had not confronted, the problem of “modernity”, as distinct from “modernization.”

I was starting to have grave doubts about my own understanding of what “modernity” really was. If “modernity” could not be assumed to be the outcome of a quasi-natural evolutionary process that all societies pass through, in one form or another, what could the term really mean? Adding to my questions was my growing understanding, from various classes in history and in cultural studies,<sup>4</sup> that one of the key points of deconstruction for postmodernist and poststructuralist analysis was the “metanarrative” of western “progress”, and that the notion of “modernity” as a set of values, discourses and practices associated with its being an “Enlightenment project” was seen by postmodernist theory as having been superseded by a “postmodern condition”, in which those discourses and practices had ceased to be viewed as the unquestioned basis of social relationships in the very centers of occidental modernist culture.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> With a *mención* in cultural studies, I took several courses from Catherine Walsh which impacted me deeply.

<sup>5</sup> This, in spite of the fact that “modernity” as an “uncompleted project, still had its defenders. See Jürgen Habermas, “La modernidad, un proyecto incompleto”, in Hal Foster, ed., *La posmodernidad*, Barcelona, Editorial Kairos, 1986.

Moreover, courses in Latin American cultural studies and new social movements made me aware that this questioning of the metanarrative of occidentally defined progress was also coming from ethnically non-European subaltern groups in Latin America (and those who theorized from that point of view), accompanied by the idea of a revindication of local histories, imaginaries and cosmovisions, and challenging the dominant notion of an inevitable evolution from “traditional” to “modern” forms of social organization, where “modern” was normatized based on the form of societies in industrialized Europe and North America.

The fact that “modernity” was a major problematic in the social theory of both “first world” and “third world” writers, (the terms “first world” and “third world” themselves increasingly problematized along with the questioning about “modernity”), and had been for some time, became a central point of focus for me in my studies. This focus seemed to confirm the original interest I had in pursuing Latin American studies when I wrote my justificatory essay (which accompanied my application to the Master’s program) on what I saw as the cultural heterogeneity in Latin America, and the fact that there seemed to exist no society-wide consensus in countries such as Ecuador over the future course that social and economic “development” should take, reflecting both class and ethnic divisions.

It thus seemed clear to me that, as a North American who had taken for granted, to a large extent, that “modernity” was the medium in which his own social existence could best be understood,<sup>6</sup> the question of “modernity” presented itself to me as a vehicle for

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<sup>6</sup> I was aware of postmodernist currents, and I had had fairly extensive contact, from childhood on, with various ethnic communities and counter-modernist currents in the United States, including, more recently, contact with traditional native North American culture and practices, which I implicitly understood as a repository of counter-discourses and counter-hegemonic practices relative to “mainstream (North) America”, (though I did not yet possess the vocabulary to articulate that understanding in these terms). But all of these experiences only demonstrated more clearly to me that such imaginaries and practices, despite their

undertaking a reflection on what I was experiencing in my relocating myself from North to South America and on the intense conflict that I perceived in Ecuador over the question of “development” and “modernization”, especially given the neoliberal form in which that debate had come to be framed.

The responses, on the part of Guillermo Bustos, to the first of the series of monographs mentioned at the beginning of this preface, made me question whether I was perhaps viewing “modernity” from the standpoint of my North American (“Anglo-Saxon”) assumptions about what it means for a society to be “modern”. As a result of his urging, I began to read, not only more postoccidental writings, but other points of view about modernity in Latin America.<sup>7</sup> As a result of these investigations, I came away with the sense that I had an “ethnocentrically” North American understanding of modernity, that the term “modernity” could be used to describe a rich variety of different historical approaches to social organization and cultural life, and that Latin American social theorists had, for quite some time, been challenging those North American, *as well as one another’s*, conceptions about what “modernity” means in the Latin American context.

I thus conceived the idea, initially, of trying to bring the variety of points of view on modernity by Latin American writers, with which I had come into contact, into a kind of dialogue with one another. However, in trying to put this idea into a plan for a thesis, it

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authenticity and power, were being overtaken by “modernism” or “modernity”, or postmodernity, for that matter, and were not, ultimately, viable utopias.

<sup>7</sup> The wide variety of these different points of view revealed to me the marked polisemia of the use of the term “modernity” in the Latin American context, and had the effect of problematizing my understanding of modernity in general. I read Bolívar Echeverría, *La modernidad de lo barroco*, México, Ediciones Era, 1998 and *Las ilusiones de la modernidad*, segunda edición, Quito, Editorial Tramasocial, 2001; François Xavier-Guerra, *Modernidad y independencias*, México, Editorial Mapfre, 1992, Julio Ramos, *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina: Literatura y política en el siglo XIX*, México, Fondo de Cultural Económica, 1989.

became obvious that it lacked a clear problematic focus. It was then that I realized that I could best address my own cultural orientation to the question of “modernity”, and at the same time explore my growing understanding of the complexity of this issue in the Latin American context, by investigating, in a critical way, the specific point of view articulated in the postoccidental critique of modernity. In this analytic framework I found: (1) the most direct challenge to my own ingenuous understanding of “modernity”, from a North American perspective; and, (2) the most problematic treatment of “modernity” relative to other Latin Americanist modernist points of view as well. Protagonizing this theory would give me my focus.

In what follows, I have tried, on the one hand, to elucidate what I see as certain key elements in the postoccidental understanding of “modernity” and, on the other, to critically question aspects of that understanding. Because this thesis is a critical investigation of what I understand as the core of the postoccidental deconstruction and resignification of “modernity”, I have not been able to do anything like justice to the intellectual richness and moral depth of its analyses of the colonial legacy. Indeed, my criticisms at times may seem to be guilty of precisely some of the eurocentrism which postoccidental theory is so good at uncovering. All I can say in my own defense is that I have tried to be true to my own “locus of enunciation” as someone formed in the occidental intellectual tradition, who is nevertheless willing to confront a different way of understanding the impact of that tradition on non-Western peoples, from the point of view of a group of Latin American intellectuals who have obviously reflected very deeply, from both sides of the cultural divide between “the West and the rest”, a divide which perhaps, as Fernando Coronil suggests, is itself a creation of eurocentric discourse. I hope what I have produced is more of a bridging, than a widening, of that divide.



## INTRODUCTION: POSTOCCIDENTALISM AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF MODERNITY IN LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL THOUGHT

### I.1. Perspective and methodology

In the course of investigating my central question, I had to confront on a deeper level than I had previously, not simply my ingenuous understanding of what “modernity” was, but the “locus of enunciation” – a key poststructuralist notion employed by postoccidental theory – from which I was conducting my investigation. While I have not become convinced that one’s theoretical and methodological perspective can be inferred from one’s “locus of enunciation”, (or vice-versa), I have accepted the fact that the former cannot be entirely separated from the latter.

In stating what are my theoretical and methodological (and, I suppose, ideological) assumptions, therefore, I need to make clear that I have retained a good deal of my own bias in favor of what I suppose could be called “occidental modernism” in how I have approached my criticism of postoccidental theory. What this has meant in practice is that, while I have opened myself up to the deconstructionist perspective that I am criticizing – in order to consider the possibility that social science, as it has been established for the last 150 years as a systematic exploration of the implications of “modernity”, has a eurocentric bias which lends itself to colonialist-ethnocentric discourses, or at the very least to the reinforcement of an imaginary of ethnocentric European triumphalism already present at the outset of social science as an intellectual project – I have not become convinced that the entire intellectual trajectory of “western” thought since the 16<sup>th</sup> century can be best understood as a gloss on colonialism or that social science is, by virtue of its historical origins or locus of enunciation, inescapably “occidental” and “eurocentric.”

Thus, my methodological and theoretical approach is itself a kind of deconstructionism, an attempt to deconstruct the resignification of “modernity” which I see in postoccidental critique. That approach has taken the form of an analysis of specific texts with an eye toward: (1) isolating what I consider to be the key elements in the postoccidental critique of “modernity”, so as to present those elements in a more schematic and intertextual form; (2) determining the overall coherence of this critique; (3) critically assessing the validity of that deconstruction and resignification from the standpoint of: (a) its use and resignification of key terms; (b) whether and how that resignification is able to provide a clearer understanding of what “modernity” is than the significations it intends to alter or replace; (c) whether this resignification is compatible with certain generally accepted historical “facts” in more conventional accounts of what is taken to be the evolution of the “modern world”, i.e., the extent to which postoccidentalism is convincing as a kind of historical revisionism capable of forcing us to rethink what we take to *be* the factual basis of historical accounts of modernity. Thus, my theoretical-methodological perspective is, in the last analysis, *analytical*, *critical* and *historical*, although I do not claim to have carried out a thorough historical counter-critique of postoccidental theses. My goal has been more modest: to articulate my reasons for thinking there are tensions and problematic aspects in this attempt to resignify the meaning of “modernity.”

## **I.2. The corpus of writings under consideration**

The group of authors with whom this investigation is concerned are all Latin American writers, prominent in universities either in Latin America or in the United States. The writers who constitute the basic corpus for the present study are as follows: Santiago Castro-Gomez, Fernando Coronil, Enrique Dussel, Edgardo Lander, Arturo

Escobar, Walter Mignolo and Aníbal Quijano. Of this group, those who most clearly identify themselves with the concept of “postoccidentalism” are Castro-Gómez, Coronil, Mignolo and Lander. The others are identified with critiques of occidental forms of thought and representation which figure prominently in the theorizations of the authors included in the core group, and in some cases have contributed important key elements to postoccidental theory.

The corpus of writings with which the present investigation is most closely concerned is as follows (1) a selection from a group of essays published in three critical reviews at the end of the 1990s: *Teorías sin disciplina. Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, coordinated by Santiago Castro-Gómez and Eduardo Mendieta, México, Editorial Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1998; *Pensar(en) los intersticios. Teoría y práctica de la crítica poscolonial*, edited by S. Castro-Gómez, O. Guardiola-Rivera and C. Millan, Bogotá, Colección Pensar/Pontífica Universidad Javeriana, 1999; *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*, compiled by Edgardo Lander, Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 2000; (2) a collection of essays entitled *The Postmodern Debate in Latin America*, edited by John Beverly and José Oviedo, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993; (3) two unpublished essays in mimeograph form or available on the internet by Mignolo and Quijano respectively; (4) selections from longer works by Walter Mignolo and Fernando Coronil: Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995; Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000; Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, money and modernity in Venezuela*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1997. The longer works are not considered in their full thematic complexity, but only

insofar as they contain arguments similar to the shorter monographs. Thus, most of the monographs and books I am reviewing were written between 1997 and 2000, with two important essays by Dussel and Quijano respectively which go back to the collection *The Postmodern Debate in Latin America*.

Included in the “secondary bibliography” are writings which have provided a useful background to the present investigation in the area of theorizations of modernity (some of which are cited in the text), as well as other authors who figure prominently in the first two chapters (in particular, Immanuel Wallerstein, F.H. Cardoso, and Arturo Escobar).

### **I.3 Postoccidentalism within the scheme of postcolonial studies**

The authors cited as most closely identifying themselves with postoccidental critique locate their analyses within the overall purview of “postcolonial theory”, or postcolonial criticism, while claiming for it a kind of special status with respect to the latter, almost the status of a “prolegomena”, if I can be permitted to use that word, to postcolonial studies. Thus, Coronil, Mignolo and Castro-Gómez, in separate essays published together in a volume entitled *Teorías sin disciplina. Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, edited by Castro-Gómez and Eduardo Mendieta,<sup>1</sup> comment on the relationship between the postoccidental idea and both Edward Said’s concept of “Orientalism”, on the one hand, and Asian subaltern studies (an important component of postcolonial criticism), on the other.<sup>2</sup>

In the essay he contributed to this collection, Castro-Gómez sums up this relationship and, at the same, time, locates postoccidental criticism relative to

<sup>1</sup> México, Editorial Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> It would be beyond the scope of this introduction to consider the relationship between postoccidentalism and Latin American subaltern studies, although that relationship can, to some extent, be inferred from that between postoccidentalism and Asian subaltern studies, presented here.

postmodernist thought. After commenting on Mignolo's characterization of modern (social) science as "estrategias colonialistas de subalternización" complicit in "la modernidad [como] un proyecto intrínsecamente colonialista y genocida" (i.e., complicit in what Mignolo, following Dussel, calls "los 'tres grandes genocidios de la modernidad': la destrucción de las culturas amerindias, la esclavización de los negros en África y la matanza de los judíos en Europa"), Castro-Gómez proceeds with his classification of the critical perspectives<sup>3</sup> that emerged to confront this complicity between modernity/ modern science and colonial genocide and exploitation, as follows:

Pero, ¿qué ocurre una vez que se quebranta definitivamente el antiguo régimen del orden mundial establecido durante la Guerra Fría? Es el momento, nos dice Mignolo, en el que surgen tres tipos de teorías, provenientes de diferentes *loci* de enunciación, que rebasan epistemológicamente los legados coloniales de la modernidad: la *posmodernidad*, el *poscolonialismo* y el *posoccidentalismo*. Mientras las teorías posmodernas expresan la crisis del proyecto moderno en el corazón mismo de Europa (Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida) y de los Estados Unidos (Jameson), la teorías pocoloniales hacen lo mismo, pero desde la perspectiva de las colonias que recién lograron su independencia después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, como es el caso de la India (Guha, Baba, Spivak) y el Medio Oriente (Said)<sup>4</sup>. Por su parte, las teorías posoccidentales tienen su lugar "natural" en América Latina, con su ya larga tradición de fracasados proyectos modernizadores. Común a estos tres tipos de construcción teórica es su malestar frente al nuevo despliegue tecnológico de la globalización a partir

<sup>3</sup> I use the word "perspectives" rather than "theories", in response to a reading of a draft of this thesis by Catherine Walsh, who takes exception to the use of the term "theory" as applied to postoccidental analysis, even though Castro-Gómez refers to these points of view (including postoccidentalism) as "theories" in the passage cited here. Whether Castro-Gómez shares Walsh's view, and is using the term "teoría" loosely here so as to establish a parallel between postoccidental critique, on the one hand, and postmodern and postcolonial "theory" on the other (associated more frequently with the term "theory"), I am not prepared to say. However, I have come to share Catherine Walsh's scepticism about the appropriateness of the term "theory" as a way of describing postoccidental writings, and therefore have chosen to use the terms "criticism", "critique", "analysis", "perspective", "point of view", etc., depending on the context, in place of "theory" in my own characterizations, in order not to attribute to postoccidental analysis either a completeness or rigor which it neither has nor pretends to have, given its poststructuralist orientation.

<sup>4</sup> Mignolo, in his essay in this collection, "Posoccidentalismo: El argumento desde América Latina", op. cit., p. 32, spells out the genealogy of colonialisms and their theorizations more fully, as follows: "En lo que sigue, intento contribuir a aclarar ciertos términos del debate trayendo a la memoria la noción de occidentalismo y posoccidentalismo, que es el lugar de enunciación construido a lo largo de la historia de América Latina para articular los cambiantes órdenes mundiales y el movimiento de las relaciones coloniales. Desde el bautizo de la 'Indias Occidentales' hasta 'América Latina' (es decir, desde el momento de predominio del colonialismo hispánico hasta el momento de predominio del colonialismo francés), 'occidentalización' y 'occidentalismo' fueron los términos clave (como lo fue 'colonialismo' para referirse al momento de predominio del imperio británico). De modo que si 'poscolonialismo' calza bien en el discurso de descolonización del Commonwealth, 'posoccidentalismo' sería la palabra clave para articular el discurso de descolonización intelectual desde los legados del pensamiento en Latinoamérica."

de 1945, y su profundo escepticismo frente a lo que Habermas llamase el “proyecto inconcluso de la modernidad.”<sup>5</sup>

Coronil, in his essay in this same collection, sheds more light on the relationship between Said’s critique of “Orientalism” as a form of occidental knowledge, and the postoccidental critique of “Occidentalism.” After discussing Said’s project – the critique of oriental studies as an occidental form of representing the “Orient” which permits “la continuación de la hegemonía occidental sobre el mundo periférico y no europeo” – Coronil makes the following connection between “Occidentalism” and “Orientalism”:

Acepto pues la convocatoria de Said de incluir a los “orientalistas” en nuestro análisis, pero me referiré a éstos como “occidentalistas” para enfatizar que estoy principalmente interesado en las preocupaciones e imágenes del Occidente que informan las representaciones de las sociedades no-occidentales, ya sea que se localicen en el Oriente o en cualquier parte.

El occidentalismo como lo defino aquí no es la inversión del orientalismo sino su condición de posibilidad, su lado oculto (como en un espejo). Contrarrestar al occidentalismo a través de una simple inversión sería posible sólo en el contexto de relaciones simétricas entre el “Yo” y el “Otro” – pero entonces, ¿quién sería el “Otro”? En el contexto de relaciones igualitarias la diferencia no podría ser concebida como Otridad. El estudio de cómo el “Otro” representa al “Occidente” es una empresa de por sí interesante que pudiera ayudar a contrarrestar el poder que tiene el Occidente para hacer circular imágenes de las diferencias entre culturas.<sup>6</sup>

In a comment on this section of Coronil’s essay, Mignolo further clarifies the relationship between the “othering” of the “Orient”, by occidental forms of knowledge, criticized by Said, and the critique of Occidentalism as such:

El artículo de Coronil destaca, en primer lugar, la persistencia de las estrategias del discurso colonial y de la modernidad para construir una mismidad (Occidente) que aparece como construcción de la otredad (Oriente, Tercer Mundo, barbarie, subdesarrollo, etcétera). Partiendo de la construcción del orientalismo analizada por Said (1986), Coronil se plantea examinar no la construcción del Oriente, sino la noción misma de Occidente en la creación occidental del orientalismo.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Santiago Castro-Gómez, op. cit., pp. 181-182.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 129-130. Coronil offers a very similar account in the introduction (“The magical state and occidentalism”) to his full-length work *The Magical State: Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 13-14, which also reproduces the definition of Occidentalism cited earlier. Coronil’s notion of how “Occidentalism” creates “otherness” is explored more in detail in the next sub-section.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

In other words, “Orientalism” is assimilated, in this analysis, to “Occidentalism” as a more global (in the sense both of “more general” and “more worldwide”) ethnocentric tendency to “other” all forms of non-European culture in ways that seek to hegemonize occidental epistemologies and systems of valuation.

A final clarification on these theoretical interrelationships can be found in another Mignolo essay<sup>8</sup>, where he says that

La reflexión crítica sobre el colonialismo (occidentalismo, orientalismo) no afecta solo a los países del Tercer Mundo, sino a todo el planeta....Si la reflexión crítica sobre el colonialismo y los legados coloniales hoy se debe llamar poscolonialismo me importa, en realidad, poco. En cuanto a cuestión de nombres, tiendo cada vez más a hablar de posoccidentalismo, puesto que la occidentalización es la preocupación que se registra en las Américas....[L]o que en general se entiende por posoccidentalismo, posorientalismo, poscolonialismo es una formación específica del proyecto, más amplio, de reflexión sobre los legados coloniales.<sup>9</sup>

Amplifying this point, he takes note of the fact that principal theorists of Asian subaltern studies, such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, recognize that Asian subaltern studies imply a general study of subalternity, “una historiografía subalterna, como disciplina, dependiente de la historiografía hegemónica institucionalizada en la modernidad occidental (del atlántico norte)”<sup>10</sup>; i.e., Asian subaltern studies can be considered a special case of the critique of that Occidentalism first imposed on the Americas, and only subsequently, imposed by the British on its Asian colonies. Moreover,

En América Latina es posible plantear un problema....con respecto al occidentalismo y de la razón posoccidental [parecido a la razón posoriental], teniendo en cuenta claro que el occidentalismo, por un lado, no es el reverso del orientalismo sino su condición de posibilidad y, por otro, que América Latina se construye históricamente no como Oriente sino como el margen de Occidente.<sup>11</sup>

Here Mignolo, using the same phraseology as Coronil, affirms the status of postoccidentalism as a kind of prolegomena to other postcolonial studies, owing to its

<sup>8</sup> “Espacios geográficos y localizaciones epistemológicas: La ratio entre la localización geográfica y la subalternización de conocimientos”, unpublished mimeo, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

focus on historically prior forms of colonialism (in the Americas), but goes on to add another idea to this genealogy of the “post-colonialisms”: namely, that the Occident-Orient dichotomy, critiqued by Said, does not apply to the colonization of the Americas. The Americas were never seen, from the standpoint of the European geo-cultural imaginary, as an “Orient” in the sense of a polarity vis-à-vis Europe, enjoying some kind of equal weight and status. When it was clear that Columbus, in discovering the Americas, had not found a new route to the Orient, the Americas were viewed as an *extension* of the Occident – the “West Indies”. Thus,

Las Américas, contrario a Asia y a India fueron, desde 1500, el lugar de la extensión del Oeste Europeo: las Américas no se configuraron como América, sino como las Indias Occidentales y cuando América comenzó a reemplazar el nombre originario – cuando España caía, los imperios al norte de los Pirineos subían, y América del Norte emergía – bien pronto se nombró todo un hemisferio, el hemisferio occidental. Asia y parte de África, en cambio, pasaron a constituir el hemisferio oriental como fundación de lo que Edward Said (Said, 1978), describió y explicó como “Orientalismo.”<sup>12</sup>

From these citations of various loci, we can infer that postoccidentalism claims a complex kinship with other forms of postcolonialism (subaltern studies, the critique of orientalism, etc.), but also a kind of historical priority with respect to these critiques, inasmuch as postoccidentalism takes as its point of departure the imaginary of eurocentrism vis-à-vis its first colonial “other”, the Americas, and a 500 year history of colonial and neo-colonial domination of subalternized Amerindians and Afroamericans.

Finally, another author in the collection of essays cited above<sup>13</sup>, who does not figure among the writers focused on in the present investigation, offers a definition of a “postcolonial Latinamericanism” which, while not explicitly identifying itself as

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 9. This idea can be found as well in *Local Histories/Global Designs*: “ ‘Occidentalism’ was the geopolitical figure that ties together the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system. As such, it was also the condition of emergence of Orientalism: there cannot be an Orient, as the other, without the Occident as the same. For this very reason, the Americas, contrary to Asia and Africa, are not Europe’s difference but its extension.” Op. cit., p. 51. And a bit later, in a critique of Said, he says: “without Occidentalism there is no Orientalism, and Europe’s ‘greatest and richest and oldest colonies’ are not the ‘Oriental’ but the ‘Occidental’: the Indias Occidentales and then the Americas.” Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> *Teorías sin disciplina. Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, op. cit.



postoccidentalism, may help us locate the latter with respect to other forms of Latin American social theory. This author makes the following comment:

....[E]l latinoamericanismo poscolonial se autoconcibe como práctica epistémica antiglobal orientada hacia la articulación y/o produposibilidad [sic?]de contraimágenes latinoamericanistas respecto del latinoamericanismo históricamente constituido. En ellas el latinoamericanismo intenta constituirse como instancia teórica antiglobal, en oposición a las formaciones imperiales de conocimiento que han acompañado el movimiento del capital hacia la saturación universal en la globalización.<sup>14</sup>

Insofar as postoccidentalism is a form of Latinamericanism, it is also a *critical* Latinamericanism, seeking to conceive Latin American experience in such a way that the possibilities for a radical transformation of the relationship between Latin America and the globalized economy/geo-culture can be at least *envisioned*, from the standpoint of the cultural histories of its subaltern groups.

#### **I.4 The core postoccidental criticism of Occidentalism and the problem and central question of the investigation**

The general *problem of the investigation* concerns *the significance and reach of the critique of “modernity”* within a group of writings which make the concept of “postoccidentalism” the guiding concept of their critique, and insofar as this critique appears to be related to the ongoing debate, in Latin American studies, about the historical relationship between Latin America, as a multicultural/structurally heterogeneous region, and the industrial (increasingly, “postindustrial”) societies of Europe and North America.

A reader of this introduction not familiar with postoccidentalist writings might well be wondering at this point how this group of writers understands the notion of “Occidentalism”, as that which needs to be transcended toward a “post”.<sup>15</sup> The

<sup>14</sup> Alberto Moreiras, “Fragmentos globales: latinoamericanismo de segundo orden”, *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Mignolo, in the context of justifying the introduction of another “post”, acknowledges his, and other writers’, use of “postoccidentalism” as deriving from a 1976 essay by Roberto Fernández Retamar.

following passage from an essay by Fernando Coronil entitled “Más allá del occidentalismo: hacia categorías geohistóricas no-imperialistas”, aptly sums up what these writers see as fundamentally problematic about “occidental” modes of representing “reality”:

Lo que caracteriza al occidentalismo, tal como lo defino aquí, no es que moviliza a las representaciones estereotipadas de sociedades no-occidentales, ya que la jerarquización etnocéntrica de diferencias no es privilegio exclusivo del mundo occidental, sino que dicho privilegio está íntimamente conectado con el despliegue del poder global del occidente...

Desde mi punto de vista, el occidentalismo es inseparable de la hegemonía del Occidente, no sólo porque como forma de conocimiento es una expresión de su poder, sino porque establece lazos específicos entre el saber y el poder en el occidente. El occidentalismo es pues la expresión de una relación constitutiva entre las representaciones occidentales de las diferencias culturales y la dominación mundial del Occidente....

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“Agregar un ‘pos’ más a la pléyade ya existente quizás suene como una invitación al cansancio. Sin embargo, este aparente nuevo ‘pos’ no es tan nuevo. Roberto Fernández Retamar acudió a él en 1976, cuando publicó uno de sus artículos clásicos, “Nuestra América y Occidente” [in *Casa de las Americas* 98, 1976]. The debt to Fernández Retamar is significant, inasmuch as Retamar’s realization that the establishment of a neocolonial hegemony by the United States in 1898 reveals that Latin America as a region (especially considering its non-European ethnic groups whom Fernández Retamar considers “los latinoamericanos verdaderos” – Mignolo, loc. cit.) has been subjected to “occidentalization” and not simply “colonization”. Mignolo comments: “Para los pensadores en América Latina, el cruce y superposición de poderes imperiales se concibió no tanto en términos de colonización sino de *occidentalización*. Es por esta razón que ‘posoccidentalismo’ (en vez de ‘posmodernismo’ y ‘poscolonialismo’) es una palabra que encuentra su lugar ‘natural’ en la trayectoria del pensamiento en América Latina, así como ‘posmodernismo’ y ‘poscolonialismo’ lo encuentra en Europa, Estados Unidos y en las ex colonias británicas, respectivamente.” W. Mignolo, “Posoccidentalismo: el argumento desde América Latina”, in *Teorías sin disciplina. Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, op. cit., pp. 32, 33. Mignolo’s differences with Fernández Retamar in how he uses the term, discussed in the context of the essay just cited, are interesting, but not pertinent to the present investigation, except insofar as they demonstrate that Fernández Retamar is a key figure in the transition from the historical-structural critiques of eurocentrism by dependency theory (see Chapter One) to the cultural/poststructural critiques by postoccidental and other recent tendencies in Latin American social theory. Mignolo is critical of Fernández Retamar’s equation of the “postoccidental” with Marxism, since Mignolo sees Marxism, in a way similar to postmodernism, as an *occidental* critique of Occidentalism. This combination of a keen awareness of culturally non-European subalternity in Latin America with the belief that Marxism could adequately articulate the revindications of Amerindians and Afroamericans, adds to the sense of Fernández Retamar’s conception of postoccidentalism as a key transition between structuralist and poststructuralist/culturalist problematizations of power asymmetries between Europe/North America and the peoples of Latin America, since postoccidentalism very much shares the former idea while clearly staking out a post-marxist understanding of subalternity. It should perhaps also be pointed out that Mignolo, while sharing Fernández Retamar’s emphasis on the geopolitical significance of the emergence of the United States as a neo-colonial power in 1898 (and as the hegemonic power after WWII), sees its full significance in terms of the broad trajectory of the “modern/colonial world system” dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and uses the idea of “postoccidental” critique to establish modernity in its Iberian-American phase. From this perspective, U.S. neo-colonial hegemony is part of a much longer (“longue duree”) genealogy of occidental coloniality. This idea is discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

[P]or occidentalismo aludo al conjunto de prácticas representacionales que participan en la producción de concepciones del mundo las cuales:

1. Separan los componentes del mundo en unidades aisladas;
2. Desligan historias relacionadas entre sí;
3. transforman la diferencia en jerarquía;
4. naturalizan dichas representaciones; y por lo tanto
5. intervienen, aunque inadvertidamente, en la reproducción de las relaciones asimétricas de poder existentes.<sup>16</sup>

The problematization of modernity in postoccidental analysis seems to be based upon this view of occidental forms of representation as creating otherness out of difference, as hierarchizing the otherness that is represented (with “Europeaneity” at the apex of the hierarchy), these hierarchized differences becoming the epistemological justification of asymmetrical power relationships between Europeans and non-Europeans in the social, economic and cultural construction of the “modern world.”

The binary opposition between the “traditional” and the “modern”, enshrined in occidental sociology<sup>17</sup>, is thus seen to be a special case of hierarchized difference, from the postoccidental viewpoint, and is thus discredited *antemano* as an empirical category capable of yielding testable hypotheses about concrete experience.<sup>18</sup> If the “occident” creates “others” (“orientalizes”, in Edward Said’s sense) as “less than”, “inferior”, etc., then whatever categories it chooses to express this bifurcation are tainted by an a priori

<sup>16</sup> Fernando Coronil, “Más allá del occidentalismo: hacia categorías geohistóricas no-imperialistas”, in S. Castro-Gomez y E. Mendieta, eds., *Teorías sin disciplina. Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, México, Editorial Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1998, pp. 130-132. Mignolo, in *Local Histories/Global Designs*, parallels this analytical definition of Coronil’s, when he says: “If racism is the matrix that permeates every domain of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system [see the discussion of “coloniality” below: JS], ‘Occidentalism’ is the overarching metaphor around which colonial differences have been articulated and rearticulated through the changing hands in the history of capitalism...and the changing ideologies motivated by imperial conflicts.” Op. cit., p. 13

<sup>17</sup> I use the adjective “occidental” with sociology, as I do elsewhere with “social science(s)”, not to imply that there is some other sociology or social science which is *not* occidental, but only to underline the fact that in postoccidental usage, social science(s) is/are frequently so qualified, in order to emphasize the postoccidental insistence on the ethnocentricity of metropolitan epistemology.

<sup>18</sup> In a similar way, Latin American structuralism and dependency theory criticize the “dualism” of the traditional-modern distinction in modernization theory, thereby questioning it as an a priori imposition (with an ethnocentric bias) on the concrete historical reality of Latin American society, rather than as a valid theory, whether inductively arrived at from empirical data, or as a hypothesis capable of empirical verification.

dualism between (European) self and (non-European) other.<sup>19</sup> “Modernity”, therefore, as one of those categories – associated as it is with the (European) self (*el Yo*, in Coronil’s terms) – has as its essential function the establishment of a hierarchy of difference between that (European) self and its Other (*el Otro*). “En esta modalidad de representación, las culturas occidentales y no-occidentales aparecen como entidades radicalmente opuestas y su oposición se resuelve por la absorción de los pueblos no occidentales en Occidente triunfante y expansivo.”<sup>20</sup>

To the extent that postoccidental critique succeeds in its identification of “modernity” as a category of social science, one of whose functions (its most important function, from the postoccidental point of view, although postoccidental criticism is willing to recognize that this function is often hidden precisely from those who practice “occidental” forms of representing reality and the “other”) is to occlude a dualizing-hierarchizing scheme of knowledge/power behind the mask of “scientific objectivity”, it has also succeeded in casting serious doubt on any attempt to view “modernity” as a socio-historical category constitutive of, or even descriptive of, human experience in any universal and/or objective sense. “Modernity”, as a concept, thereby reveals itself as *ideological*, i.e., as inseparable from a logic of power and domination.

I accordingly formulated the *central question of the investigation*, in the following terms: what are the underlying assumptions and strategies of the postoccidental critique

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<sup>19</sup> It should be noted, however, that the “traditional-modern” distinction is used in the sociology of modernity to distinguish between evolutionary stages *within* European development itself, and is thus not, ipso facto, a eurocentric distinction. Moreover, postoccidental writings at times have recourse to the distinction, as in the following passage by Castro-Gómez: “Mientras que en sociedades tradicionales las relaciones intersubjetivas se encontraban ancladas en un espacio (aquí) y un tiempo (ahora) coincidentes, en las sociedades afectadas por la modernidad se produce un reordenamiento de la vida social en nuevas combinaciones espacio-temporales.” “Latinoamericanismo, modernidad, globalización” in *Teorías sin disciplina. Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, op. cit., p. 192. In this sense it may be misleading to view “occidental” sociology as “eurocentric” with respect to some of its most fundamental conceptualizations, and it is by no means clear that we can dispense with distinctions such as “traditional/modern”, even as we should be very cautious in how we understand and apply them.

<sup>20</sup> Coronil, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

of the concept of “modernity” – in which “modernity” signifies both an imaginary by means of which the European Subject constructs a non-European Other as well as a fundamental notion in occidental social science which purports to refer to a set of “objective” historical “facts”; and to what extent does that critique succeed in deconstructing “modernity” as a term which, *in contrast to its conventional meaning*, refers to a historically articulated set of discourses whose underlying purpose has been to justify European and North American hegemony and structural asymmetries vis-à-vis the peripheries of the capitalist world system, based on a pattern of depreciation and exploitation, along racist lines, of non-European peoples?

In exploring this question, it seemed to me that postoccidental theory makes claims that are both *totalizing* and *reductionist* in how they construe “modernity” as a socio-historical concept, and which thus appear to go *beyond* the concrete postoccidental analyses of specific connections between modernist and colonial discourses, and beyond an intent to establish a *parallelism* between capitalist modernity as a world system and colonialism as a set of historical practices.

The idea that manifold connections between “modernist” and “colonialist” discourses exist, that postoccidental analyses shed a great deal of light on those connections, and that the existence of these connections create at least a *prima facie* plausibility for the claim that “modernity” as a socio-historical phenomenon cannot be divorced from its articulation in colonial contexts, seemed to me to be entirely possible. However, what interested me was the fact that postoccidental theory seemed to regard the *entire trajectory* of “modernity” as fundamentally a colonialist project (the “totalizing” tendency which I saw in postoccidental discourse) and seemed intent on eliminating, or at least suppressing, any other “signifieds” related to the meaning of

“modernity” (the “reductionist” tendency which I saw in postoccidental theory). Therein was to be found the focus of my investigation.

In other words, what I was investigating was not one or another nexus between “modernity”, as a socio-historical concept that had been employed in historical and social scientific analyses with an occidental orientation, and colonialism as a discourse and a practice. This, it seemed to me, was the concern of specific postcolonial and subaltern *estudios de caso*. Nor was I concerned to evaluate the thesis that “modernity” and “colonialism” are two socio-historical concepts with common historical roots and articulations. Rather, what I wanted to interrogate was the insistence, on the more theoretical levels of postoccidental discourse, on a complete deconstruction and *resignification* of the term “modernity” so as to render it a tool of postcolonial criticism and to discredit it, at the same time, as an empirical-descriptive concept in social science.<sup>21</sup> “Social science”, because based to a large degree on the idea of “modernity” as a defining moment in the European developmental trajectory<sup>22</sup>, would thus, from this point of view, be reduced to the status of an *ideology* of “Occidentalism”, with “modernity” as its most fundamental ideological concept. (This, regardless of the

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<sup>21</sup> I take it that dependency theory had already unmasked the *normative* pretensions behind the “empirical” propositions of modernization theory; i.e., that it had demonstrated that what was pretending to be an empirical theory of the evolution of all historical societies, regardless of their contemporary insertion in the international system, was really the ahistorical imposition of a certain “norm” – western industrial society as manifested in Western Europe and the United States – on determinate national societies in the present day which, for good historical reason, could not possibly follow the historical pattern of western industrialization. However, having unmasked the normative pretensions of modernization theory, dependency theorists did not suppose, as I see it, that they had exhausted the empirical content of the concept of “modernity”, rendering it irrelevant to any socio-historical-cultural description of, say, Latin American societies. This further step, as I see it, is very much a part of the intent of the postoccidental theory.

<sup>22</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein has made the claim that the “great watershed” which is “the creation of the modern world” is “at the center of most contemporary social science theory, and, indeed, of the nineteenth century as well.” *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York, Academic Press, 1974, p. 3. This same locus figures in the discussion of the relationship between world systems theory and postoccidentalism in this introduction. See below.

conscious intent of social scientists themselves, so long as they failed to “de-colonialize” their way of thinking.)

## **I.5 Theoretical underpinnings of the occidental resignification of modernity**

### *I.5.1 The “modern world system” and postoccidentalism*

As I understand “modernity”<sup>23</sup>, from the post-occidental point of view, it is a complex term which, at least for the purpose of analysis, can be provisionally broken down into the following elements: (1) a period of *longue duree* (Braudel), from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present-day; (2) a geopolitical, geocultural and geoeconomic project of European expansion resulting in the creation of a world system (Wallerstein) that incorporates, or seeks to incorporate, all regions and peoples of the globe in asymmetrical relationships to Europe (in particular western Europe) as the metropolitan center of that system; (3) a *regime of truth* (Foucault), in which knowledge has been produced with the aim, at least in part, of justifying asymmetrical relations of power between colonizers (Europeans) and colonized (non-Europeans), such knowledge constructing its objects, its strategies and its ideologies of domination according to a eurocentric imaginary of European cultural and intellectual superiority over non-European “others”, according to racist and culturalist criteria.

Postoccidental critique can be seen as, among other things, the exploration of how these three elements – two that are structural and a third that is discursive – are interwoven historically (up to the present day) into a structural-discursive reality which

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<sup>23</sup> This is the first of two schematizations (the second being that by which I distinguish two main elements of the postoccidental resignification of modernity as coloniality and eurocentricity, which are presented in Chapters One and Two respectively) through which I try to present the logic, or “grammar”, as it were, of the postoccidental critique of modernity. I see these schemas as legitimate extrapolations from the writings under consideration, with the intent of bringing the elements together into a systematic whole for the purposes of the kind of analysis undertaken in this investigation. There are certainly other ways to analyze the postoccidental critique of modernity, but I believe the schemas used in the present investigation are legitimate and useful in understanding the postoccidental critique under consideration.

the world has come to understand as “modernity”. This schematization of the postoccidental problematic of modernity, however, must be tempered by the understanding that, in the process of reinterpreting the “world system” in terms of a discursive, poststructuralist logic, it becomes difficult to maintain a distinctness between the structural and the more properly symbolic or semiotic aspects of “modernity”. This will become clearer in what follows in this, and the next, subsection.

The first two aspects are based upon the theory of world systems, enunciated by Immanuel Wallerstein, et. al., and the structural historiography pioneered by Fernand Braudel, as applied, by postoccidentalism, to the early (Iberian/Atlantic) stages of mercantilist-capitalist expansion, the encounter between aboriginal Americans and Europeans and the subsequent Iberian conquest engendered by this European expansion.

Wallerstein’s structuralist, neomarxist theory of modern capitalism begins with the Braudelian notion of a *longue durée* within which various hegemonic phases of the articulation of the capitalist world economy can be historically distinguished, without thereby altering the *longue durée* itself. This is because Wallerstein has a systemic view of capitalism, which means that so long as the fundamental interactions and goals of the system remain intact, its *historical articulation* from, say, an Iberian to a Dutch to an English to a North American hegemonic phase – through which the “center” of the system changes its geopolitical focus but not its functional-structural relation to the system’s peripheries (which also keep evolving and shifting) – can be viewed as the *longue durée* of the system. That *longue durée* ends only when the system ceases to function. In other words, the shifting geopolitics and the “secular” economic cycles of the system constitute its “conjunctural” phases, but the economic rationale of its various geopolitical expressions – the “endless accumulation of capital” – constitutes the logic and dynamic of the system, whose functional components evolve through various



phases (mercantilist, commercial, financial), and the ups and downs of secular economic cycles, without altering that fundamental rationale.

Thus Wallerstein would seem to be interpreting Braudel's "longue durée" in economistic terms, in the sense that its *political* articulation has a superstructural relationship to its basically *economic* dynamic; and in the sense that Wallerstein's sociology of modern society takes as its unit of analysis the world capitalist system of productive and distributive relationships, i.e., "the capitalist world *economy*":

I assume that there exists a concrete singular historical system which I shall call 'the capitalist world-economy', whose temporal boundaries go from the long sixteenth century to the present. Its spatial boundaries originally included Europe (or most of it) plus Iberian America but they subsequently expanded to cover the entire globe. I assume this totality is a *system*, that is, that it has been relatively autonomous of external forces; or, to put it another way, that its patterns are explicable largely in terms of its internal dynamics. I assume that it is an *historical* system, that is, that it was born, has developed, and will one day cease to exist (through disintegration or fundamental transformation). I assume lastly that it is the dynamics of the system itself that explain its historically changing characteristics. Hence, insofar as it is a system, it has structures and these structures manifest themselves in cyclical rhythms, that is, mechanisms which reflect and ensure repetitious patterns. But insofar as this system is historical, no rhythmic movement ever returns the system to an equilibrium point but instead moves the system along various continua which may be called the secular trends of this system. These trends eventually must culminate in the impossibility of containing further reparations of the structured dislocations by restorative mechanisms....

To these methodological or metaphysical premises, I must add a few substantive ones about the operations of the capitalist world-economy. Its mode of production is capitalist; that is, it is predicated on the endless accumulation of capital. Its structure is that of an axial social division of labor exhibiting a core/periphery tension based on unequal exchange. The political superstructure of this system is that of a set of so-called sovereign states defined by and constrained by their membership in an interstate network or system. The operational guidelines of this interstate system include the so-called balance of power, a mechanism designed to ensure that no single state ever has the capacity to transform this interstate system into a single world-empire whose boundaries would match that of the axial division of labor.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Three Instances of Hegemony in the History of the Capitalist World Economy", in *The Politics of the World Economy: The States, the Movements and the Civilisations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 37-38.

From this structural-functional-historical concept of the capitalist world-system (which Wallerstein identifies with the “modern” world system – see below), postoccidentalism proceeds to develop its discursive analysis of modernity.<sup>25</sup>

It is taken as established empirically by postoccidental analysis, based on the reformulation of world systems theory by Wallerstein and Aníbal Quijano (see note 26 below), that a capitalist world-system emerged *precisely with the Iberian conquest of the Americas*, the establishment of transatlantic trade, and the insertion of the Americas, as its principal peripheral zone, into this (mercantilist/capitalist) world system, with Iberian Europe as the system’s core in the first stage of European expansion toward the “new world.”<sup>26</sup> All subsequent developments within this world system are seen as

<sup>25</sup> Perhaps it needs to be pointed out that there is no attempt in my analysis to *equate* the postoccidental view of the “modern world” (its version of the “modern world system”) with the “modern world system” as understood by Wallerstein. As I make clear below, Mignolo’s postoccidental analysis of modernity – shared by the other writers who constitute the core corpus of this investigation – introduces a key modification of the concept of a “modern world system” which, he claims, Wallerstein ultimately adopted as well, at least in part. (See next note.) However, it is worth quoting from Mignolo’s recent book, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, op. cit., in order to underline the central importance of Wallerstein’s fundamental concept to postoccidental analysis: “...I start and depart from the modern world system model or metaphor. As a starting point it simplifies my argument: the connection of the Mediterranean with the Atlantic through a new commercial circuit, in the sixteenth century, lays the foundation for both modernity and coloniality.” Op. cit., p. 51. I have added the emphases in order to make clear that the postoccidental critique of modernity relies upon, in the sense of using it as its point of departure, Wallerstein’s structural analysis of the *longue durée* of the modern capitalist world system. Mignolo’s tendency to view it as a “metaphor”, here and in other loci, seems to me somewhat disingenuous, but consistent with his recasting of Wallerstein’s structuralist analysis in poststructuralist terms. (See below.)

<sup>26</sup> This modification, while undertaken by postoccidental thinkers, was also in part a collaboration with Immanuel Wallerstein himself, who co-authored an article with Aníbal Quijano in 1992 entitled “Americaneity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World System”, *International Social Sciences Journal*, No. 134. In this article the structural interdependence of European capitalism and “the Americas as a geo-historical construct” was fully recognized by Wallerstein, whose earlier theorizations retained a certain element of eurocentricity, from the postoccidental point of view. Walter Mignolo quotes this article in his “La colonialidad a lo largo y a lo ancho”, in Edgardo Lander, comp., *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas*, Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 2000, pp. 57-58, as follows: “...Quijano y Wallerstein (1992)...ofrece un marco en el cual comprender la importancia de la idea de ‘hemisferio occidental’ en el imaginario del mundo moderno/colonial a partir de principios del siglo XIX: ‘The modern world-system was born in the long sixteenth century. The Americas as a geo-social construct were born in the long sixteenth century. The creation of this geo-social entity, the Americas, was the constitutive act of the modern world-system. The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalism world-economy. There could not have been a capitalism world-economy without the Americas. (1992:449).’ For Mignolo, the essential point is not whether, from a structuralist point of view, world capitalism could have existed or not without the “riquezas de las minas y de las plantaciones” of the Americas, but the fact that “la economía

dependent on the initial Iberian colonial stage as their basis, in the sense that each subsequent stage evolves in conformity with the logic of domination and exploitation established at the outset.

The reformulation of the “modern world system” as implying a colonial relation to the Americas and a new imaginary of the “western hemisphere” with the opening up of the Atlantic trade routes, and thus the transmutation of the “modern world system” into the “modern/colonial world system”, is *a key theoretical shift in postoccidental critique*. It is not only a shift in geo-historical terms, however, even though that may have been how Wallerstein saw it at the time he wrote the article with Quijano. It is also a shift from a structuralist to a poststructuralist/postcolonial/cultural perspective, in which the “logic” of the system cannot be understood exclusively, or even primarily, in terms of the *structure* of the center-periphery *economic* relationship. As Mignolo comments:

There are...several differences I would like to underline between the terminology and assumptions of the modern world system model or metaphor and my own conception of the modern/colonial world system. In the first place, I conceive of the system in terms of internal and external borders rather than centers, semiperipheries, and peripheries. Internal and external borders are not discrete entities but rather moments of a continuum in colonial expansion and in changes of national imperial hegemonies. The emergence of a new commercial circuit centered in the Atlantic and inclusive of both Spain and its domain in the Americas and the Philippines is one of the basic changes triggering a new *imaginary*... *Borders install in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system an other logic, a logic that is not territorial, based on center, semiperipheries, and peripheries.*<sup>27</sup>

The emphasis has been added to draw attention to the fact that the shift from “modern world system” to “modern/colonial world system” is also a shift from a structuralist, geo-economic analysis – in which material causalities are the basis of explanation and are correlated with a determinate geographical articulation of the system in terms of center, semiperiphery, and periphery – to a poststructuralist analysis in which the

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capitalista cambió de rumbo y aceleró el proceso con la emergencia del circuito comercial del Atlántico” and that, even more crucial for the postoccidental resignification of “modernity”, “A partir de este momento, del momento de emergencia y consolidación del circuito comercial del Atlántico, ya no es posible concebir la modernidad sin la colonialidad....” Op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, op. cit., pp. 33-36, emphasis added.

“system” is now understood – not in economic/neomaxist terms as a material base of productive social relations giving rise to a superstructure of political and cultural formations – but rather in terms of “imaginaries”, discursive formations, epistemologies, etc. which have the power to shape the material and social relations according to their cultural logic. We are a long way from the economism of world systems analysis, which is why Mignolo refers to the former as “a model or *metaphor*”. Its geo-economic structures are reinterpreted as geo-cultural formations.

Looked at in this way, when we use the term “modernity” to refer to this capitalist/colonial world system, we are now talking about the “modern/*colonial* world system”, whose imaginaries and discursive formations encompass the structural-material aspects of that system but are not their “superstructure”. What, for the purposes of analysis, I described above as the third dimension of modernity – i.e. the *regime of truth* and its various discourses developed over the last 500 years, which have been the epistemological and ideological support for that system – cannot ultimately be separated from the structural articulation of the system.

All forms of knowledge produced by the hegemonic center of this system (the successively dominant European powers and their colonial outposts) reflect this original expansionary eurocentric project, to a greater or lesser degree. All occidental forms of knowledge, therefore, produced from the Renaissance on, in particular philosophy (especially the philosophy of history and the theory of knowledge) and the social sciences, can be critically analyzed in terms of their complicity in the construction of a eurocentric imaginary and its various objects of knowledge, which implies that they can

be *deconstructed* in such a way that their eurocentricity is laid bare and their pretensions to universality<sup>28</sup> and scientific objectivity invalidated by their ethnocentric bias.

For the postoccidental, such deconstruction is part of an ongoing process of intellectual “decolonialization”<sup>29</sup>, since the occidental/eurocentric imaginary is seen as

<sup>28</sup> Santiago Castro-Gómez sees two “ideologies” as the foundational discursive elements of the modern (colonial) world system: racism (which he derives from Anibal Quijano’s concept of the *colonialidad del poder*, introduced below), and “universalism.” “Si el racismo sirve para legitimar la inferioridad de los colonizados o de los grupos subalternos en los Estados, el universalismo sirve para legitimar la superioridad de los colonizadores o de los grupos hegemónicos a nivel nacional. Nacido de la mano de la nueva ciencia, el universalismo es, ante todo, una postura epistemológica. Proclama la posibilidad de acceder a conocimientos objetivamente válidos sobre el mundo físico y social, disponiendo tan sólo del método adecuado para ello.” As Castro-Gómez goes on to say, this universalistic epistemology presents itself as transcendent to “culture”, is linked to *reason*, and essentialized as “una facultad compartido por todos los hombres, independientemente de su raza, edad o condición social...” In the formal notion of universality, defined in rationalistic terms, we find an idea that, in strict accordance with its own logic, *should* make the other foundational principal of modernity, namely racism, an impossibility (since racism implies a particularist *denial* of precisely the single human essence affirmed by universalism). However, in the genealogy of modernity that Castro-Gómez goes on to provide, we see that “reason”, having initially been de-historicized and made transcendent to culture, is re-historicized in 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of history (especially in Hegel, -- see citations by Enrique Dussel, in Chapter One, section 1.2, below) and the “scientific” study of race, such that it is connected with the modernist idea of the “evolution” of humanity from pre-rational to rational/spiritual stages. Thus the idea of “reason”, initially announcing the notion of “universality” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in a sense reiterating the Aristotelian idea of reason as the defining essence of the human species, gets intertwined with the other discursive foundation of the modern/colonial world system, i.e., racism, so as to produce, paradoxically, a “universalist” theory (i.e., one supposedly based on scientific reason) which particularizes and hierarchizes cultures and races from a eurocentric/eurosupremacist point of view. (I do not find this particular analysis in the literature, but variants of it are to be found and I think it is implicit in the general point of view of postoccidentalism.) Moreover, “reason” is further transmogrified, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, into *instrumentalized* reason or “rationalization”: “Mirado desde la perspectiva del sistema-mundo, el universalismo se integra plenamente en la lógica que Max Weber bautizó con el nombre ‘racionalización’,” underlying the tecnification of reason as a supposedly neutral way of organizing reality. “La neutralidad valorativa de la ciencia y la técnica se convierte así en garante ideológico de la ‘modernización’ impulsada por los Estados hegemónicos del sistema-mundo y, concretamente, por la burguesías dentro de estos Estados.” Santiago Castro-Gómez, “Teoría tradicional y teoría crítica de la cultura”, in Santiago Castro-Gómez, ed., *La reestructuración de las ciencias sociales en América Latina*, Colección Pensar, 2000, pp. 102-103. This notion of “modernization” (see next chapter) is thus that aspect of the project of modernity connected with the third, or technified, stage of reason, the 19<sup>th</sup> century transmogrification of 18<sup>th</sup> century rationality, its second stage. *Universalism*, as an ideology, is thus connected with the “second stage of modernity” (defined in Dussel’s terms -- see Chapter Two), while racism (*colonialidad del poder*) with its first, Iberian, stage. (However, as Castro-Gómez points out, the Bourbon reforms of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in effect brought the Spanish-American colonies under the same regime of truth that was producing bureaucratic absolutism in France, and that would lead to the birth of the modern state, a critical formation of modernity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, increasingly organized according to the dictates of “instrumentalized reason.”)

<sup>29</sup> Indeed, from Walter Dignolo’s point of view, the “deconstruction” of modernity in postoccidental theory is best understood as “decolonialization”, in order to distinguish it from postmodernist deconstructionism. “...postmodernity and postcoloniality designate (in my argument) the locations of two different modes of countering modernity. If ‘deconstruction’ is a mode or operation associated with the former, ‘decolonialization’ is the corresponding one associated with the latter.” *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press,

inseparably bound up with its colonial project and its construction of the colonized “Other”, the colonized culture/territory/nation, etc. This colonial project, moreover, cannot be separated from the “internal colonization”<sup>30</sup> carried out by Euro-Americans after the formal/political termination of the colonies, that is, after the formal colonial relationship with the Iberian metropolis had ended. Implied in this last idea is the notion that colonial forms of thought, i.e., colonial “epistemologies”, continued to exercise a hegemonic influence long after the political decolonization of the Latin American peripheries, and indeed have developed new “internal-colonial” (respecting the Creole-American elites) and neo-colonial (respecting new centers of hegemonic influence, such as England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) forms of articulation.

The above considerations provide the justification for regarding “postoccidentalism” as a form of postcolonial discourse, and perhaps even as the *foundational* postcolonial discourse, owing to its *locus of enunciation* in that part of the world which became the first historical colonial periphery of the modern world system, and which has been discursively *constructed* as inferior to, or less than, its European colonizers (and subsequent North American neocolonizers) through a long series of historical-structural-discursive stages, for a longer time than any other colonial periphery. This claim to the continuity of the “colonialization” of Latin America (and the Caribbean) well beyond the separation from the Iberian metropoli is further reinforced by the interpretation of the modernizing project of Creole elites after the break with Spain and

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1995, p. xii. This positioning of postoccidentalism vis-à-vis postmodernism has already been noted in this Introduction.

<sup>30</sup> Mignolo consciously acknowledges postoccidental theory’s debt to the theory of “internal colonization” (as he does its debt to dependency theory – see note 13, section 1.1, Chapter One), when he says, while reviewing the antecedents to postoccidentalism: “En cuanto la teoría del colonialismo interno, cabe recordar su importancia fundamental en la trayectoria del pensamiento crítico en América Latina, cualesquiera sean las posiciones o críticas en cuanto a su formulación.” “Posoccidentalismo: El argumento desde América Latina, op. cit., p. 40.

Portugal as an attempt to europeanize, i.e. “civilize”, their respective national societies, especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to occidental canons of knowledge and social behavior then in vogue, which served to perpetuate colonial forms of power (*colonialidad del poder*) in what was, supposedly, the “post-colonial” period. That is, these elites sought to justify, in the view of postoccidental critique, the imposition of particular moral and intellectual codes based on certain conceptions of “modernity” peculiar to 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America but derived, in large part, from European conceptions of knowledge and value, including a racist doctrine of the superiority of white Europeans over non-Europeans of color, which continued long after the constitution of supposedly liberal, egalitarian nation-states. Indeed, from the postoccidental viewpoint, Latin America has continued to be internally “intellectually colonized” up to the present day, by virtue of the “double consciousness” of the Creole elites, in which they have identified themselves as culturally European, even while claiming an American geopolitical identity.

The concept of “colonialidad del poder”, originating with Aníbal Quijano, is one of the foundational ideas of postoccidental critique. Quijano has formulated and reformulated this notion in a series of essays written in the late 1990s. The notion is well summarized in one of his most recent formulations, as follows:

Colonialidad del poder es un concepto que da cuenta de uno de los elementos fundantes del actual patrón de poder, la clasificación social básica y universal de la población del planeta en torno de la idea de ‘raza’. Esta idea y la clasificación social en ella fundada (o ‘racista’), fueron originadas hace 500 años junto con América, Europa y capitalismo. Son la más profunda y perdurable expresión de la dominación colonial y fueron impuestas sobre toda la población del planeta en el curso de la expansión del colonialismo europeo. Desde entonces, en el actual patrón mundial de poder impregnan todas y cada una de las áreas de la existencia social y constituyen la más profunda y eficaz forma de dominación social, material e intersubjetiva, y son, por eso mismo, la base intersubjetiva más universal de dominación política dentro el actual patrón de poder.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder, globalización y democracia”, *ALAI, America Latina en Movimiento*, 2000, p. 4 (Internet: <http://alainet.org/active/show>).

One way to understand, therefore, how the first two aspects of modernity cited above – those that derive from the structural theory of the modern world system, or “historical capitalism”, as found in the writings of Wallerstein – connect with the third – “modernity” as a regime of truth based on colonialist and neo-colonialist discourses – is to understand this key shift in terminology from world systems theory to post-occidental theory, i.e., from the concept of the “modern world system” to the concept of the “modern/colonial world system” (*sistema-mundo moderno/colonial*)<sup>32</sup>. This terminological reformulation is very significant as a way of understanding how post-occidental analysis appropriates world systems theory into its own, poststructuralist/postcolonial critique. Modernity is now conceived not only as coeval and co-emergent with early capitalism as a world system, but also as coeval and co-emergent with *colonialism as a set of power relations based on (in the sense of “justified by”) a eurocentric discourse of European superiority over non-European “others”*. The significance and implications of this collapsing into one conceptual complex of what appear as distinct phenomena in other forms of discourse will become clearer in subsequent chapters. In order to better understand the theoretical

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Walter D. Mignolo, “Diferencia colonial y razón postoccidental” in Santiago Castro-Gómez, *La reestructuración de las ciencias sociales en América Latina*, Bogotá, 2000, p. 3, in which he describes “la diferencia colonial geo-histórica” as “el lugar de las Américas en el orden del *sistema-mundo moderno/colonial*” (emphasis added). Also, “La colonialidad a lo largo y a lo ancho: el hemisferio occidental en el horizonte colonial de la modernidad”, in Edgardo Lander, compilador, *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*, Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 2000, p. 55, where “el *sistema-mundo moderno/colonial*” is referred to, significantly, as an “imaginario”, thus signalling the shift from a purely structural to a semiotic analysis. (Emphasis added..) Again, in *Local Histories Global Designs*, Mignolo comments: “One can say that Spain was the beginning of modernity in Europe and the beginning of coloniality outside of Europe. This view remains the canonical view today: there are books about colonialism and about modernity, but they do not interact – their genealogies are different. The reason for such a division is either the belief (contested by Quijano and Dussel) that modernity is only a European business and coloniality something that happens outside of Europe...or the conception that coloniality is from the national perspective of the colonizing country.....[M]odernity and coloniality are the two sides of the modern world system, although in Wallerstein’s version this double side was not clearly articulated. It was only recently, when Quijano and Wallerstein cosigned an article (“Americaneity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World System,” 1992 [see note 26, above: JS], that coloniality made its appearance and brought to light the articulation of modernity/coloniality and the relevance of the Americas, and the sixteenth century in it.” Op. cit., pp. 51-53)



transformation that has taken place, however, we need to probe more deeply into the postoccidental critique and resignification of the world systems model.

### *1.5.2 The postoccidental turn: from the “modern world system” to the “modern/colonial world system”*

Wallerstein, in *The Modern World System, Vol. I*, introduces the notion of the “modern world” without qualifying it as “capitalist” or as a “world system”, when he says,

One of the major assertions of world science is that there are some great watersheds in the history of man. One such generally recognized watershed, though one however studied by only a minority of social scientists, is the so-called Neolithic or agricultural revolution. The other great watershed is the creation of the modern world.<sup>33</sup>

He immediately goes on to explain, however, what he means by “the creation of the modern world” in such a way as to strongly imply that he equates that conjunctural initiation of a “longue durée” with the structural changes wrought by the phenomenon of 16<sup>th</sup> century mercantile capitalism:

To be sure, there is immense debate as to what are the defining characteristics of modern times (and hence what are its temporal boundaries). Furthermore, there is much disagreement about the motors of this process of change. But there seems to be widespread consensus that some great structural changes did occur in the world *in the last several hundred years*, changes that make the world of today qualitatively different than the world of yesterday. Even those who reject evolutionist assumptions of determinate progress nonetheless admit the difference in structures.<sup>34</sup>

This interpretation is made more likely if we refer back to the passage from Wallerstein’s essay “The Three Instances of Hegemony in the History of the Capitalist World Economy”, quoted above where, as we have seen, Wallerstein “assumes” that

there exists a concrete singular historical system which I shall call ‘the capitalist world-economy’, whose temporal boundaries go from the long sixteenth century to the present. Its spatial boundaries originally included Europe (or most of it) plus Iberian America, but they subsequently expanded to cover the entire globe.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York, Academic Press, 1974, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> See note 24, above.

Thus, by the logic of association, we can conclude that the “great structural changes” that he refers to as occurring in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and which he associates with the “creation of the modern world”, are also those that are associated with the shift from feudalism to capitalism, a shift which – as he was later persuaded – cannot be separated from the concomitant discovery and colonization of the Americas. That is, the great structural shift from feudalism to capitalism in Europe is inextricably bound up with the phenomenon of colonialism.<sup>36</sup>

The postoccidental understanding of modernity would seem to fall into the category described by Wallerstein as the understanding of those who, while rejecting “evolutionist assumptions of determinate progress nonetheless admit the difference in structures.” Having said this, however, it seems clear that the postoccidental resignification of the “modern world system” as the “modern/colonial world system” implies much more than the idea of a more encompassing *structure* (that more encompassing structure being the modern world construed as a nexus between Europe and the Americas, rather than Europe taken by itself, in the reformulation by Wallerstein and Quijano). When Mignolo says that, prior to the emergence, in postoccidental thought, of “a complementary perspective from the hidden side [of the ‘modern’ world system, which is] ‘coloniality’....modernity and coloniality are looked

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<sup>36</sup> Colonialism, in turn – and this, as we shall see, is key to the postoccidental reformulation of the “modern world system” as the modern/*colonial* world system – is inseparable from relations of power based on “coloniality”, i.e. racial hierarchization. “Coloniality” (*colonialidad del poder*) is a *cultural discourse* (“la clasificación social básica y universal de la población del planeta en torno de la idea de ‘raza’ – see the passage from Quijano quoted on p. 23 of this Introduction) with, however, *structural* (social-economic) *effects*. Thus *colonialism*, as a structural dimension of the newly emergent capitalist world system, implies the socio-cultural imaginary of *coloniality*, and vice-versa. From Wallerstein’s recognition of the centrality of the colonization of the Americas in the emergence of the capitalist world system, postoccidental analysis grafts onto that “model” or “metaphor” (as Mignolo calls it) the poststructuralist notion of “coloniality” which is now seen to be inseparable from the emergence and evolution of the world system in the 500 year “longue durée” of the capitalist world economy. This idea is not in Wallerstein’s understanding of either capitalism, colonialism or modernity, which is why I footnote it here, as well as to indicate how critical is the Wallersteinian collaboration with Quijano to what I am calling “the postoccidental turn”, in its rethinking of world systems analysis.

at separately, as two different phenomena," he is not exempting Wallerstein's earlier formulation of the "modern world system" from assuming this disjunction, and indeed goes on to say that "there could be no other reason why Wallerstein conceived a 'modern' and not a 'modern/colonial' world system, and why all his more recent analyses are done from within the history of the 'modern'....which he locates in the French Revolution."<sup>37</sup>

In his essay "La colonialidad a lo largo y a lo ancho, Mignolo explains in greater detail Wallerstein's predilection for the era of the French Revolution as the foundation of *cultural* modernity. On the one hand, this would seem to be inconsistent with Wallerstein's periodizing the "modern world" as coming into being with the establishment of Iberian mercantilism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. If this event is at the heart of the "great structural changes" that brought about the "modern world system", why is "modernity", as a *cultural* phenomenon, deferred until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and why the French Revolution as its foundation? Why this lag between "structure" (base) and "culture" (superstructure)? And why the shift in geographic orientation from a world system articulated in terms of Europe and the Americas (16<sup>th</sup> century Iberian-American colonial mercantilism) to Europe proper, as the scene of an endogenous production of "modern culture"?

Mignolo begins to answer this question with the following:

Respondiendo a las críticas dirigidas al fuerte perfil económico del concepto de sistema-mundo moderno, Immanuel Wallerstein introdujo el concepto de geocultura (Wallerstein 1991). Wallerstein construye el concepto, históricamente, desde la Revolución Francesa hasta la crisis de 1968 en Francia y lógicamente como la

<sup>37</sup> *Local Histories/Global Designs*, op. cit., p. 30. It would appear that Wallerstein's co-authorship of the article with Quijano came after the "more recent analyses" referred to here. However, I have no knowledge of whether Wallerstein, in addition to changing his view of the geopolitical imaginary of the expansion of Europe in the creation of the modern world system, also changed his view of geo-culture. It would appear that this is not the case, since Mignolo is continuing to criticize Wallerstein in the more recently published *Local Histories/Global Designs* for failing to take the postoccidental/poststructuralist turn, so to speak.

estructura cultural que ata geoculturalmente el sistema-mundo. La 'geocultura' del sistema mundo-moderno debería entenderse como la imagen ideológica (y hegemónica) sustentada y expandida por la clase dominante, después de la Revolución Francesa.<sup>38</sup>

Though he does not say so explicitly, Mignolo seems to be alluding to Wallerstein's neomarxist understanding of "culture" as the superstructure of the material relations of capitalist forms of production and distribution. Since Wallerstein sees capitalism as a *world system* (and not, as in classical Marxism, as first a national system of production), his conception of culture must be conceived as the cultural-political *superstructure* (ideology) of the world system. He therefore introduces the concept of "geo-culture." However, since he retains a version of Marxist class analysis, he sees the capitalist world system, in its geo-cultural aspect, as only fully emergent with the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a hegemonic class with a developed political ideology capable of giving definitive political form to social relations within capitalist Europe in such a way that it could be universalized as the ideology of the world system as a whole. This perhaps explains the "lag", in Wallerstein's theorization, between the foundation of the "modern" capitalist world economy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the emergence of a modern "geo-culture" and the geographical displacement from the Atlantic Ibero-American circuit to France, the heart of the bourgeois revolutionary vanguard of 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. A citation by Mignolo of Wallerstein confirms this interpretation:

Geo-cultures come into existence at one moment and, at a later moment, may cease to hold sway. In the case of the modern world-system, it seems to me that its geo-culture emerged with the French Revolution and then began to lose its widespread acceptance with the world revolution of 1968. The capitalist world-economy has been operating since the long sixteenth-century. *It functioned for three centuries, however, without any firmly established geo-culture. That is to say, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, no one set of values and basic rules prevailed within the capitalism world-economy, actively endorsed by the majority of the cadres and passively accepted by the majority of the ordinary people. The French Revolution, lato senso, changed that. It established two new principles: (1) the normality of political change, and (2) the sovereignty of the people....*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 56, emphasis added by Mignolo.

The idea in the above passage implies, from Mignolo's point of view, that Wallerstein completely ignores the "geo-culture" of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Iberian mercantilism in its relation to the conquered peoples and imported African slaves of the Americas.

El imaginario que emerge con el circuito comercial del Atlántico, que pone en relaciones conflictivas a peninsulares, amerindios y esclavos africanos, no es para Wallerstein componente de la geo-cultura. Es decir, Wallerstein describe como geo-cultura del sistema-mundo moderno el imaginario hegemónico y deja de lado tanto las contribuciones desde la diferencia colonial como desde la diferencia imperial: la emergencia del hemisferio occidental en el horizonte colonial de la modernidad. La geo-cultura de Wallerstein es, pues, el imaginario hegemónico de la segunda fase de la modernidad, y es eurocéntrico en el sentido restringido del término, centrado en Francia, Inglaterra y Alemania, desde la perspectiva de la historia (del imaginario nacional francés).<sup>40</sup>

From Mignolo's point of view, Wallerstein fails to see the significance of his own understanding of the emergence of the "modern" world with 16th century Iberian-American mercantilism.<sup>41</sup> Wallerstein still thinks of capitalism as an endogenously European phenomenon, and still sees its evolution in eurocentric terms. He is

blind to the colonial difference and prisoner of the very self-imaginary constructed by the intellectuals of the second stage of modernization, once France, Germany, and England displaced Spain and Portugal from the economic and intellectual arena. He is

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>41</sup> Mignolo also notes an ambiguity in Wallerstein between "capitalism" and "modern world system", when he says, in *Local Histories/Global Designs*: "Within the discussion among theoreticians and historians adhering to modern world system, the 'origins' of capitalism and the 'origins' of the modern world system constitute a point in question. Giovanni Arrighi's discussion of the non-debate between Ferdinand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein (Arrighi 1998, 113-29) is about the origin of capitalism that Braudel locates in thirteenth-century Italy. When Wallerstein takes 1500 as a reference point, it is not clear whether he is referring to the origin of capitalism or to the origin of the modern world system, which implies, but goes beyond, capitalism." Op. cit., p. 37, emphasis added. This almost parenthetical remark by Mignolo casts some doubt on the supposition that either world systems analysis or postoccidental analysis actually *equate* "capitalism" with "modernity." What seems clearer, however, is that both would distinguish between capitalism as a *world system* and capitalism in its first manifestations as the mercantilism of Italian city-states. That is, both view capitalism defined as a *world system* as a 16<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon involving expansion westward toward the Americas. It also seems clear that for Wallerstein, the establishment of capitalism as a world system is the structural basis for all subsequent cultural changes which have come to be associated with "modernity". But as we have just seen, there is substantial *disagreement* between Wallerstein and Mignolo on the relationship between capitalism as a systemic-structural phenomenon and modernity as a cultural phenomenon. For Mignolo, it makes no sense to separate them in space and time as does Wallerstein. For Mignolo, modernity is the whole complex of structural and cultural-discursive relationships set up by the encounter between a capitalistically expanding Europe and the lands and peoples of the Americas, which means that, for Mignolo, modernity is geographically a Euro-American and historically a 16<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon.

missing the point of the constitutive character of the Americas for the imaginary of the modern/colonial world....<sup>42</sup>

Thus the postoccidental resignification of the “modern world system” shifts the focus from a structural evolution basically endogenous to Europe – drawing the non-European peripheries into its structural vortex, its internal dynamic, but not *co-constituted* by that linking up with the periphery – to a dialectical relationship between a Europe seeking its articulation in terms of a “patron de poder” based on coloniality, as defined above, and the Amerindian and African peoples who *co-constitute* that world through their unwilling complicity in this patron de poder. This *patron del poder* which is coloniality marks modernity from its foundation as an essentially colonial-discursive phenomenon, and serves as the guide to the deconstruction of the *conventional* concept of modernity – understood as an endogenously European phenomenon diffused outward from center to periphery – and to its resignification in postoccidental terms.

The chapters that follow explore in detail what I see as the two essential components of that deconstruction and resignification of modernity, which I view as two different, but related, critiques: (1) “modernity as coloniality”; (2) “modernity as eurocentricism”. “Coloniality” is dealt with in Chapter One, “eurocentrism” in Chapter Two. Both concepts are critiqued in Chapter 3. Following Chapter Three, I summarize my problematization of the postoccidental deconstruction and resignification of modernity in a “Conclusion.”

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-57.

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE POSTOCCIDENTAL RESIGNIFICATION OF MODERNITY AS “COLONIALITY”**

In this chapter, I look at the postoccidental deconstruction and resignification of the socio-historical concept of “modernity” in terms of one of the key elements of that deconstruction and resignification, namely “coloniality”. As I see it, “coloniality” is a concept with both structural and discursive dimensions, and functions in postoccidental critique as a fundamental and constitutive element of “modernity”, such that the latter cannot be understood apart from the articulation of capitalism in the peripheries of the world economy according to a racist logic of exploitation.

In order to place the concept of “coloniality” in a larger context of Latin American social theory, in this chapter I look at the relationship between the postoccidental critique of modernity and the sets of concepts: center/periphery and development/ underdevelopment which, as I see it, constitute an important part of the conceptual background to the postoccidental critique of modernity. In the Introduction I saw it as important to locate postoccidental criticism in relation to postcolonial theory and world systems analysis, in order to clarify its problematic in relation to bodies of theory with which it claims an affinity, while insisting on its distinct approach to postcolonialism, the modern/(colonial) world system, etc. In the present chapter, I view the key concept of “coloniality” as emerging from the postoccidental resignification, in poststructuralist terms, of the binary concepts of center/periphery and development/underdevelopment, thereby establishing important differences between its critique of modernity and the criticisms of occidental modernization theories in the 1950s to 1970s by Latin American structuralist and

dependency schools. That analysis is presented in section 1.1. Section 1.2 presents the transition from what postoccidental writer Santiago Castro-Gómez calls “anti-colonialist theories” (in which dependency analysis is included) to a fully postcolonialist (including postoccidentalist) critique. A conclusion follows in section 1.3.

## 1.1 “Dependency” and “development” in relation to “coloniality”

### 1.1.1. Preliminary considerations

The postoccidental point of view is incomprehensible unless it is understood as a version of postcolonial analysis, as a critique of colonialism (and neo-colonialism) from a critical, third world (specifically Latin American) standpoint. Postoccidental writings make a great deal of the Foucauldian notion of “locus of enunciation.”<sup>1</sup> In agreement with a tendency in postmodernist thought, postoccidental analysis insists on the relativity of all discourses, that is, the relativity of the claims made about reality by a discourse to its “location” within a system of power relations which it seeks to articulate, justify, explain, etc. Postoccidental discourse is enunciated from the standpoint of both the Amerindian peoples colonized by Iberian conquistadors and the peoples of African origin subsequently

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<sup>1</sup> In Walter Mignolo’s rendering: “Scholarly discourses (as well as other types of discourse) acquire their meaning on the grounds of their relation to the subject matter as well as their relation to an audience, a context of description (the context chosen to make the past event or object meaningful), and the *locus* of enunciation from which one ‘speaks’ and, by speaking, contributes to changing or maintaining systems of values and beliefs. For Foucault, the *locus enuntiationis* (*mode d’enonciation* in his terminology) was one of the four components of the discursive formations he conceived in terms of social roles and institutional functions. [Mignolo’s note at this point: “Michel Foucault, *L’archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969)”]....[F]rom the perspective of the locus of enunciation, understanding the past cannot be detached from speaking the present, just as the disciplinary (or epistemological) subject cannot be detached from the nondisciplinary (or hermeneutical) one. It follows, then, that the need to speak the present originates at the same time from a research program that needs to debunk, refurbish, or celebrate previous disciplinary findings, and from the subject’s nondisciplinary (gender, class, race, nation) confrontation with social urgencies. I certainly do not advocate the replacement of disciplinary with political underpinnings, but I attempt to underline the unavoidable ideological dimensions of any disciplinary discourse, particularly in the realm of the human sciences.” Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995, pp. 5-6.



enslaved by American Creoles (Euroamericans).<sup>2</sup> Thus its point of view is not only Latin American, but also, subaltern. It enunciates a view of the Latin American relation to the centers of European and North American power from the standpoint of those who have been marginalized by the structural and discursive application of that power in the context of colonial and neo-colonial relations.

The postoccidental position thus hinges on its claim to speak, if not *for* those groups and their descendents, at least from their vantage point, from their status as colonized, subalternized, and historically marginalized (as seen from the standpoint of European and Creole-American hegemonic historical narratives). At the same time, it claims to uncover the relativity and particularism (ethnocentrism) of the “universalizing” modernist narrative it is concerned to deconstruct, and thus to de-universalize and de-hegemonize it, making it more vulnerable to forms of resistance based upon counter-hegemonic interpretations of social-historical reality in the Latin American context.

In this sense, postoccidental analysis also implies the notion of “decolonizing”<sup>3</sup> the academic/intellectual thinking of (especially) Creole and mestizo intellectuals in Latin

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<sup>2</sup> I believe that there is also evidence to suggest that postoccidentalism speaks from the point of view of the Iberian and Iberian-American claim to a foundational role in the creation of modernity, i.e., from the point of view of that part of Europe, semi-peripheralized in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by northern European (first Dutch, then British) capitalism, thereby finding its originally hegemonic status in the creation of the capitalist world system in the 16<sup>th</sup> century eclipsed by other European powers. It thus seems to me that postoccidental writers are also enunciating, *in part*, a form of Hispanicist discourse, albeit one that is somewhat in tension with their postcolonialist ideological commitments, even while claiming to be a basic ingredient of the latter. See, e.g., the first three citations (from two different essays by Enrique Dussel), in section 2.2 of Chapter Two, below.

<sup>3</sup> See text and footnote 30 in the Introduction, above, that explain in more detail the relationship between postoccidentalism and “de-colonialization”, from Mignolo’s viewpoint. Coronil’s view of the “colonization” of Latin American social discourse emerges in the following passage: “The self-fashioning of Europe as the home of modernity has been premised on the colonization of vast regions of the world that are seen as backward and in need of civilization. The ambivalent Latin American discourse of modernity, in its rejection of European domination but its internalization of its civilizing mission, has taken the form of a process of self-colonization which assumes distinct forms in different political periods.” Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State*, op. cit., p. 73.

America, to the end of separating themselves from their complicity in perpetuating the hegemonic narratives of the intellectual and cultural traditions in which they have been formed. "Postoccidental reason", to use a phrase of Mignolo's, is viewed as another stage in that process of intellectual decolonization, as part of a long counter-hegemonic tradition in Latin American social thought.

It is not only colonialism, in general, that is the object of postoccidentalism's historical deconstruction and reconstruction, but Iberian colonialism, in particular, viewed as the foundation in the construction of modernity. The question can be raised at this point: why is the periodization of "modernity" as a 16<sup>th</sup> century, Ibero-American phenomenon so important to postoccidental theory? Why is so much emphasis placed on establishing "modernity" as the concomitant of the 16<sup>th</sup> century process of, first Portuguese, and subsequently Spanish, colonization of the Americas? Why is this historical development considered to be the defining moment in the creation of modernity? And what, in this historical conjuncture, is considered to be constitutive of this creation of "modernity"?

In considering these questions, we should perhaps consider the fact that the advent of something like "modernity" in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is not that controversial, even outside of the postoccidental or world systems perspectives, despite the fact that modernity is sometimes identified with, variously, the European scientific revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the 18<sup>th</sup> century European Enlightenment, the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial revolution, or 20<sup>th</sup> century "modernism", and even cultural phenomena more properly understood as "postmodern" (owing to the fact that one of the functions of the term "modernity" is that it connotes that which is "new" and contemporary, and thus resists historicization as something that "has been," in favor of something that is "always becoming.")

However, the term “modernity”, in spite of its polisemia, lack of precise reference, and tendency to attach itself to that which is contemporary, nevertheless is generally understood, by those who approach the term historically, to refer to a broad and deep genealogy of structural (economic, geopolitical, social) and cultural changes whose *origins*, at least, are sometime in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, continuing to, if not the present day, at least up until the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, proceeding through successive stages of social, political, economic and technological evolution.

What is more controversial, however, is *the rejection of the idea that the emergence of “modernity” was an intra-European or endogenously European phenomenon*, i.e., the denial of the “diffusionist” thesis that “modernity” refers to a set of structural-cultural changes *produced first in Europe* and subsequently *extended* to other parts of the world, where those changes still have not been fully absorbed (evolving through a succession of phases, including the more recent phase in which the United States became a new center of this “diffusion”) — but was, instead, from the outset a *global* system (as explained in the Introduction, section I.2, above), co-constituted by colonizers and colonized in the period of European expansion towards its peripheries, especially the Americas: in other words, that “modernity” is, in historical-discursive terms, inseparable from the creation of a *system*, both structural and symbolic, of *colonial relationships of power*.

The rejection, by Latin American social theory, of the metropolitan bias of the modernization theories of the early postwar period has not, in other words, in and of itself done away with the idea that “modernity” represents something originally *European* (and subsequently North American, owing to the fact that the United States participated early on

in the process of industrial modernization and thus established itself as culturally and geopolitically “modern” in the occidental sense).

As we have seen in Chapter One, even in the periodization of the origin of the “modern world system”, by Wallerstein, as coeval with Iberian mercantilist expansion toward the Americas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there is a disjunction between “modernity” understood as the 16<sup>th</sup> century structural foundation of capitalism as a *world system*, articulated *geoeconomically* in terms of center and periphery, and “modernity” as a “*geoculture*” endogenous to Europe, produced by the revolutionary political events and ideas of the French Revolution more than a century later, and subsequently “diffused” to the peripheries as the geocultural, ideological imaginary of the world system.

These preliminary considerations are important in the attempt to understand the subtle, yet radical, shift in the conceptualization of center and periphery from dependency to postoccidental analysis, in particular in relation to the concepts of “development/underdevelopment” and “modernization.” In the following subsection I attempt an outline of this shift, as an important key to understanding the significance of the postoccidental idea of “coloniality” in relation to modernity.

### *1.1.2. Dependency analysis and its relation to postoccidental critique and the concept of coloniality*

The attempt to provide a thorough analysis of the relationship between dependency and postoccidental analyses is beyond the scope of the present investigation. However, it seems necessary to at least attempt a comparison of their conceptual bases, for the reason that dependency analysis constituted the first major thrust by which Latin American social

theory sought to counter the metropolitan bias of what might be termed “modernization ideology” in development theories coming from, especially, the United States after World War II. As such, it provided the paradigmatic background for the culturalist-poststructuralist forms of analyses that were to follow, beginning in the 1980s.

In spite of the postoccidentalist acknowledgement of the importance of dependency analysis as a challenge to the “occidental” understanding of modernity, postoccidental perspective tends to view that challenge as more “anti-colonial” than “postcolonial”/postoccidental, a distinction which will be further explained later in this chapter. However, because postoccidentalist writers tend to see dependency analysis as a stage in the “decolonization” of Latin American social theory – a process which is viewed as having reached a kind of culmination in postoccidental analysis – it seems important to attempt a comparative analysis of dependency and postoccidental perspectives, in order to hopefully clarify the distinctness of the latter with respect to the problem of modernity.

The Latin American structuralist and dependency theories of the 1950s-1970s anticipated the notion of the capitalist world system, articulated in terms of center and periphery, later developed by world systems analysis (and used as an important point of departure by postoccidental analysis). These theories, or frameworks of analysis, taken together, also rejected neoclassical economics (especially in relationship to its theory of international trade and “comparative advantage”) and modernization theory as ahistorical and *geographically* eurocentric (i.e., applicable only to certain parts of the world at certain historical junctures, those parts of the world achieving a pre-eminence which then led them to produce theories in which that historical evolution was normatized and naturalized).

Cristóbal Kay sums up the significance of this “challenge from the periphery” in the following terms:

This book [*Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment*] aims to contribute to the discussion on the state of development theory by presenting the key ideas of what I call the Latin American school of development. There are two main strands in this school: structuralism and dependency. Structuralism developed as a critique of neoclassical analysis, while dependency analysis engaged in a critique of modernization theory. Neoclassical and modernization theories were proposed by economists and sociologists from the centre, and especially the Anglo-Saxon world. The Marxist strand within dependency analysis is critical of orthodox Marxism as well as of structuralism. Thus, there is a critique of theories emanating from the centre as well as an ongoing debate between Latin American social scientists themselves.

The Latin American school of development was born in the late 1940s at a time when the neoclassical and Keynesian theories were dominant in economics and modernization theory in sociology. These ideas had shaped the minds of many social scientists in the Third World. “In a sense, their theoretical equipment was twice removed from reality – it reflected the doctrines developed for *other* countries in response to *earlier* events.” In a seminal essay Seers, who just before writing this essay had worked from some years in the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the hotbed of structuralism, argued that orthodox economics was built in and for developed industrial economies and therefore really deals with what is “a highly special case”.... Given their overwhelming influence, it required independent minds to point out that these Northern paradigms corresponded to the needs and characteristics of mature capitalism and were therefore of limited value in addressing *the development problems of the Third World*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cristóbal Kay, *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment*, London, Routledge, 1989. The sentence in quotation marks is cited by Kay as from D. Seers, “The cultural lag in economics”, in J. Pajestka and C. H. Feinstein, eds., *The Relevance of Economic Theories*, London, MacMillan, 1980., p. 6. The phrase (“a highly special case”) is from D. Seers, “The limitations of the special case”, in K. Martin and J. Knapp (eds.), *The Teaching of Development Economics: Its Position in the Present State of Knowledge. The Proceedings of the Manchester Conference on Teaching Economic Development*, London, Frank Cass, 1967, p. 5. I have added the emphasis to Kay’s comment because the italicized phrase highlights the fact that, as we shall explore further below, the asymmetry between center and periphery is construed, in the Latin American theories, as a *problem of development* (and implicitly of *underdevelopment*), and that the geopolitical distinction between “first world” and “third world” is, at least from the postoccidental perspective, *naturalized* in both Cepalist structuralism and dependency analysis, and thus in some sense viewed as an asymmetry between “more modern” and “less modern”, according to a developmental logic (i.e., more “developed” and “less developed”). That this asymmetry was to be resignified in dependency analysis in structural-historical terms that challenged the “stagism” of metropolitan-based modernization theory does not mean that all traces of eurocentric evolutionism have been expunged from the dependency perspective, from the postoccidental point of view. As we shall see, both postoccidentalism and the “postdevelopmentalism” of Arturo Escobar seek to radically question the notion of “asymmetry” in this sense, by viewing the very notions of “development” and “underdevelopment” as culturally biased, discursive constructions, and thus, in a sense, depriving dependency discourse of its objective reference.

The structuralist theories of Raul Prebisch and CEPAL, while providing the basis for subsequent dependency critiques (as well as for world systems analysis) with its invention of the center-periphery distinction – together with the notion of the interdependent and asymmetrical nature of development in the center and underdevelopment in the periphery and the phenomenon of unequal exchange – still operated to a large extent within the framework of modernization theory, even as the analysis of the unequal terms of international trade broke with the schema of neoclassical economics.

Indeed, the social-political view behind the economic policy of import substitution industrialization was, to some extent the idea of producing a form of development internal to Latin American societies which would produce “modern”, industrialized societies resembling those in the industrialized center of the capitalist system. That this “modernization” would have to come about through deliberate policy decisions rather than through a “natural”, evolutionary process reflected a significant break with the evolutionism or “stagism” of the metropolitan theory, and reflected the CEPAL findings concerning persistent asymmetry between “center” and “periphery” in the terms of trade and the possibilities for capital accumulation in the periphery, but industrialization and modernization were still viewed as the desirable and necessary goals of “development”, and were understood normatively in “occidental” terms. In this sense, Cepalist structuralism tended to conflate “development” with “modernization” (industrialization-cum-economic growth), on the assumption, shared by most modernization theorists, that economic modernization would lead inevitably to political democracy along liberal lines.

Structuralists proposed to replace the externally propelled development path inherited from the colonial period with an inward-directed development strategy on the basis of an import-substituting industrialization process....Structuralists anticipated that industrialization

would not only replace the old oligarchical order but lead to the development of *a modern and efficient bourgeois democratic state and society*.”<sup>5</sup>

The Cepalist concept of an international capitalist system articulated in terms of “center” and “periphery” was thus initially conceived as a way of understanding asymmetries in the terms of international trade which, as the CEPAL economists saw it, prevented capital accumulation in the “peripheries” (defined in terms of classical economic concepts of accumulation), and thus inhibited the development of industrialized, capitalist economies in those peripheral national societies. This critique revealed that Rostow’s concept of “stages of growth”, leading to a “take-off” stage that would inevitably produce mature capitalist economies in the “underdeveloped” world, was in defiance of the realities of international trade and capital accumulation in the relation between industrial centers, on the one hand, and peripheries producing and exporting raw materials and primary products and importing manufactured goods, on the other. The concepts of “center” and “periphery”, in other words, were elaborated in order to conceptualize these asymmetries and in order to envision a form of capitalist development – through deliberate and strategic state interventions – in, as yet, semi-capitalist (structurally heterogeneous) national economies still largely dependent on the industrial centers for their economic dynamism.

The use of these concepts (“center” and “periphery”) in later dependency theory, on the other hand, was more extensive and more profound, since it involved an exploration of the *politics and sociology* of peripheral societies as a consequence and a concomitant of their relationship to the industrial metropolises. Dependency analysis, therefore, as presented in its most influential form (at least in Latin America) by F.H. Cardoso and E. Faletto in *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina*, broke more radically with the sociological

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 21, emphasis added.



assumptions of modernization theory, to some extent as a response to the failure of Cepalist industrialization strategies to overcome Latin American dependence on exports to industrial countries.<sup>6</sup> In formulating its subtle and complex dialectical understanding of peripheral underdevelopment and development, dependency analysis makes problematic the relation between “development”, on the one hand, and “modernization” and “modern society” (“modernity”) on the other, since “development” in the context of peripheral national societies is always being articulated in terms of the complex interplay between the peripheral nation-states’ external dependency on *already modernized* industrial centers, on the one hand, and the internal dynamics of the peripheral societies’ internal class struggles, on the other, with no clear, unilinear development in the direction of a modern bourgeois capitalist society and liberal democratic state, in European or North American terms.

Thus, while Cardoso and Faletto hold out the possibility for a *kind* of modern capitalist development in the countries of the periphery (what they call “associated-dependent development”), as a further stage of nationalist industrialization policy involving peripheral states’ alliances with transnational firms<sup>7</sup>, they seem to imply that no form of “peripheral capitalism” can reproduce modern industrial society in the “occidental” meaning of that term. In this sense, Cardoso’s and Faletto’s reformist version of dependency shares with other strains (including Marxist versions) the emphasis on “interdependence and the absence of autonomous or self-sustained capacity for growth in dependent countries,”<sup>8</sup> and

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *Dependencia y Desarrollo en América Latina*, vigésima edición, México, Siglo XXI Editores, 1986, p. 6 ff.

<sup>7</sup> This form of development is extensively reviewed in *Dependencia y Desarrollo en América Latina* in the “Postscriptum”, written ten years after the original version of the book and specifically concerned with the role of transnational corporations in peripheral capitalist development.

<sup>8</sup> Cristóbal Kay, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

thus significantly departs from the modernist, progressivist optimism of Cepalist structuralism and orthodox Latin American Marxism of the earlier postwar period.

There is thus an implicit questioning, from the dependency analytical point of view, of the concept of "modernity" as an outcome of a modernization process. Moreover, "modernization" is increasingly viewed as a *technocratic* process of capitalist industrial development in the periphery, dominated by national and transnational elites, perpetuating the marginalization and exclusion of much of the population from the "modern" sectors.

For these, as well as other, reasons, it is possible to argue that, for dependency analysts, the concept of "development" (and, presumably, the concept of "underdevelopment") has been emptied of its "occidental" signification as "progress", as a normatized and inevitable path toward the full emergence of modern, industrialized societies along Euro-North American lines, and that dependency theory represents a historical-structural critique of the occidental understanding of "modernity", even though "modernity" as a specifically *cultural* concept is not yet fully problematized, never mind deconstructed as a form of eurocentric discourse.

Indeed, as Heinz Sonntag sees it, there is a rupture, partly in response to the crisis of global capitalism at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, between the structuralist theories of CEPAL and the Marxism contemporary with it, and all forms of dependency analysis, and this rupture is precisely over the notion (if not yet the "discourse") of occidental "progress." Both the earlier tendencies assumed some form of "progress" toward democratic socialism. Both, "pese a las divergencias epistemológicas y teóricas entre los dos paradigmas [Cepalist structuralism and orthodox Marxism] más significativas de las ciencias sociales de la época [of the 1950s to 1960s]...comparten una

visión eufórica acerca de la posibilidad de desarrollo.” Thus, the progressivist vision of the pre-crisis era is, for Sonntag a vision (shared with occidental social science), “del progreso y la convicción no solo de su inevitabilidad, sino también del hecho de que implicaría una cada vez mayor racionalidad de las sociedades y felicidad de sus integrantes.”

Both of these earlier tendencies shared, that is, the conviction that economic change and changes in class structure (e.g., the growth of urban entrepreneurial and working classes and the diminution of the power of rural oligarchies and latifundists) would lead to democratic political systems, to modern states capable of overcoming both internal asymmetries of power and external dependency with respect to the centers of advanced industrial capitalism, a conviction frustrated by the inability of the ISI projects to overcome their structural limitations in the economic domain, and by the emergence of a succession of military dictatorships, including what Guillermo O'Donnell designated as “bureaucratic-authoritarian” regimes in the 1960s and 1970s, in the political domain, partly as a *response* to the class conflicts produced by economic modernization. As Sonntag sees it, both views (i.e., Cepalism and orthodox Latin American Marxism) confused “las racionalidades tecnoeconómica y política” and supposed that

la “modernización” capitalista de las sociedades latinoamericanas, alcanzada por la vía de la implantación del “desarrollo hacia dentro” o de la realización de la revolución democrático-burguesa, iba a generar las condiciones para el establecimiento de la democracia política como forma de régimen permanente del Estado....Este supuesto pasaba por alto la particularidad del legado histórico y del funcionamiento del Estado en los países periféricos.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This and the preceding citations are from Heinz R. Sonntage, *Duda-Certeza-Crisis: La evolución de la ciencias sociales de América Latina*, Caracas, Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 1988, pp. 51-57. This supposition also perhaps misunderstood the causal relationship between economic and political modernization, as the thesis of Samuel Huntington argues. Cf. Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968.

Against this background, Sonntag sees “el ‘dependentismo’ como ruptura”. With its “énfasis en las múltiples mediaciones entre agentes y estructuras....el dependentismo constituye una ruptura, esta vez en el plano teórico y no solamente en relación a las prácticas de las ciencias sociales.”<sup>10</sup> This rupture is a recognition of the contradictions between increased “modernization” of the state (in technocratic-rationalist terms) and increasing economic modernization (“industrialization”), on the one hand, and the intensification of social-economic inequality and state repression of popular political activity, on the other. Because “modernity” in the occidental tradition represents itself as the historical coming-together of industrial economy with greater democracy and the liberation of the potentialities of civil society, this conception of “modernity” was, at least implicitly, seen as problematic in Latin America in the late 1960s and 1970s, and increasingly viewed as separate from “modernization” in the narrow sense, paralleling the divergence between the concepts of “economic growth” and “development”.

It is in this context, perhaps, that we can understand Cardoso’s reference, in his essay “La originalidad de la copia: la CEPAL y la idea de desarrollo”, to “el ‘occidentalismo’ cepalista” in its response to attempts to formulate “otro estilo de desarrollo” (in the face of the reality of “el ‘estilo maligno’” of peripheral capitalist development), that is

“vías no-contradictorias hacia el desarrollo, como las sostenidas por los proponentes de un ‘nuevo orden económico internacional’ y un estilo de desarrollo basado en el esfuerzo propio, – igualitario, y no deslumbrado por el desarrollo tecnológico, además de respetuoso de los límites ecológicos...”<sup>11</sup>

In Cardoso’s account of this clash of ideas, the economists and sociologists of CEPAL view the theoreticians of this “other style of development”, (presumably “no occidentalista”), as

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> Fernando H. Cardoso, “La originalidad de la copia: la CEPAL y la idea de desarrollo”, in *Revista de la CEPAL*, Segundo Semestre de 1977, Naciones Unidas, Santiago de Chile, 1977, p. 37.

refusing to accept the fact that “el progreso de desarrollo capitalista es contradictorio por naturaleza”.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, Cepalist thinkers received these attempts to formulate “el otro desarrollo”, “la ‘crítica de la crítica’ ” which would avoid “el ‘estilo maligno’ ” of capitalist development in the periphery, “con cierto escepticismo.” Imbued as it was with “la escuela clásica (liberal y marxista, con todas las contradicciones propias) por muy contaminado que esté por las contribuciones heterodoxas que enriquecieron (y confundieron) los aportes cepalinos”,<sup>13</sup> Cepalist structuralism could not transcend its “occidental” orientation (Cardoso does not present it is a *bias*, per se) toward more critical and utopian schemas. Thus, as Cardoso tells us, Raul Prebisch, in

uno de sus textos más eclécticos (*Transformación y Desarrollo: la gran tarea de América Latina*, de 1970) logró aceptar varias modas: el problema del exceso de población y su crecimiento acelerado, los ‘maleficios’ provocados por una tecnología que utiliza un elevado coeficiente de capital, la dependencia, las deformaciones del empleo, etc. Sin embargo, en el trabajo publicado últimamente “Crítica al capitalismo periférico” rehace su trayectoria teórica en un especie de reafirmación del manifiesto de 1949, *enriquecido* con los temas pertinentes: dependencia, desigual distribución de los frutos del progreso técnico, democratización. El texto prácticamente no rompe la línea – ‘clásica’, me atrevería a decir – de la CEPAL. En este sentido no defiende temas ni explicaciones apenas *ad hoc*. En el documento no se advierte la incorporación de las cuestiones relativas al ‘otro estilo de desarrollo’.<sup>14</sup>

Cardoso goes on to say that Prebisch’s refusal to adopt the discourse of “another style of development” was, in part perhaps, owing to “el inconveniente de un pragmatismo racionalista”, but, at a more fundamental level, was the result of Cepalist theory’s being a form of thought which emerged within a certain historical moment (the exhaustion of the model of export-led growth in Latin America), and which was profoundly and fundamentally structuralist in its theoretical and methodological orientation (“[el Cepalismo] no quiere seguir confundiendo lo accidental con lo fundamental, el ciclo con

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

tendencias inexorables en una sola dirección, la moda y la retórica con problemas centrales de la sociedad y del conocimiento"). What Cepalist theory lacked in revolutionary vision was compensated by a certain "coherencia" which makes it possible to criticize it from "puntos de vista más radicales".<sup>15</sup> It cannot, however, be consigned to the dustbin of history, as Marx tried to do with Hegelian dialectic. It lives on, as Cardoso sees it, as a basic point of orientation for Latin American social theory.

This sympathetic critique from the standpoint of one of dependency analysis' most important and influential thinkers suggests that: (1) Cardoso was himself ambivalent about identifying "development" in a third world context with "capitalist development", even when redefined as *peripheral* capitalist development, or as "associated capitalist development", while (2) at the same time sharing the Cepalist scepticism about more utopian ("non-occidental") "styles" of development<sup>16</sup>, seemingly accepting the Cepalist point of view that "el progreso de desarrollo capitalista es contradictorio por naturaleza".

As mentioned above, this ambivalence did not prevent Cardoso from theorizing, and eventually putting into practice in his political career, the further idea of "associated capitalist development" in Brazil. More importantly, from the standpoint of the present investigation, it did not lead him to question the *concept of development* per se, as perhaps linking all of the historical-structuralist attempts to envision the postwar future of Latin America and its social-political-economic process.<sup>17</sup> It is not the position of the present

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> In the "Postscriptum" to *Dependencia y Desarrollo en América Latina*, Cardoso seems to recognize that the increasing distance between the state and civil society in nations such as Brazil, which were developing according to this model of "associated capitalist development", posed the problem of whether popular movements could continue to be articulated through the institutional politics of the state, or whether they would seek out increasingly utopian forms of political mobilization.

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, "neo-structuralist" concepts of development, in partial defiance of neoliberal interdependence models, continue to be theorized and put into practice in Latin America. Cardoso himself continues to speak

investigation that this was a failing. The point here is to try to establish why, in postoccidental critique, the concept of “development” is understood as referring to a eurocentric, hegemonic discourse whose logic is the “occidentalization” of subaltern groups in the Americas.

It seems to me important to establish, therefore, that postoccidental deconstructionism views “development/underdevelopment” as terms referring to an “occidental” discourse, because I think this helps to explain the logic of the postoccidental view of “modernity” as a “patrón de poder” (“coloniality”) with its origins in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and thus more fundamental, in some sense, than “dependency”, a concept linked to the formally “postcolonial”, independence period. If “development,” a concept that is clearly linked to post World War II social science and to the imaginary of “*tercermundismo*”, can be deconstructed and resignified as the name for the *latest in a series of eurocentric modernist discourses*, stretching back five centuries, even while claiming to be an important branch of “modern” postwar social scientific theory (e.g., in the form of “development economics”)

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in the language of “development”, as a recent interview with Marco Romero, of the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, makes plain when Cardoso, in response to Romero’s questioning him about the accomplishments of his administration, says: “...Brasil ha avanzado mucho en el fortalecimiento de la democracia, de los Derechos Humanos y la protección del medio ambiente. Por supuesto, hay mucho que hacer todavía, y por ello es necesario insistir en el rumbo trazado, es necesario avanzar en el programa de reformas que hemos empezado a partir del Plan Real. La sociedad ha cambiado profundamente, ha tomado conciencia de los problemas y, a su vez, el Estado ha aprendido a trabajar junto con la sociedad no solo en defensa de los valores *sino también en la búsqueda de los objetivos de desarrollo y bienestar*.” “Entrevista con Fernando Henrique Cardoso” en *Comentario Internacional*, numero 3, 1 semestre 2002, Quito, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, p. 60, emphasis added. Cardoso made these comments in the context of defending his administration against the charge of having been exclusively concerned with “la estabilidad”, i.e. with neoliberal policies of adjustment. What this passage illustrates, I think, is Cardoso’s concept of “development” as involving the evolution of social justice and the empowerment of civil society *together* with the kind of capitalist development that is possible in the periphery. His response to his own questioning, in 1979, of the possibility of this organic concept of development seems to have been his own attempts, as president of Brazil, to keep alive the notion of “development” as distinct from narrowly defined technocratic modernization or “economic growth”. Nevertheless, it would seem that postoccidental critique is not particularly interested in distinctions *internal* to developmentalist theory, although writers like Mignolo and Escobar do acknowledge the critical dimension of dependency analysis from time to time (see passages from Escobar and Mignolo, below.)

in both “center” and “periphery”, then the idea that there exists a “longue durée”, a trajectory of occidental modernist-*colonialist* discourse and practice with a unitary, if historically ramified, logic or “grammar”<sup>18</sup>, is given greater credibility.

The failure of “development” to produce “modernity” in Latin America in the strictly “occidental” sense of the term (even while bringing about a certain form and level of “modernization”) is thus seen to *highlight* the “occidental”/ethnocentric nature of the notion of “development”, and to intensify the problematization of “modernity” – begun by dependency and other “post-structural” (in the restricted sense of post-Cepalist) viewpoints – as a colonialist metanarrative. As Santiago Castro-Gomez puts it: “....[L]as teorías posoccidentales tienen su lugar ‘natural’ en América Latina, con su ya larga tradición de fracasados proyectos modernizadores.”<sup>19</sup> The “failure” of Latin American “development”, as viewed by postoccidental critics, to overcome structural heterogeneity, “modernize” the state, or homogenize Latin American cultural heterogeneity, provides the historical background for its deconstruction as a hegemonic discourse, thereby depriving it of its status as an “objective” social-scientific category in some “universalist” sense. This “failure” may have been partly responsible for the shift from a critique of Latin American *dependency*, in *structural*-historical terms, to a critique of “modernity” in *cultural*-historical terms. The latter, in turn, is seen to require a much longer “durée” for its articulation than the former, and is viewed primarily in poststructuralist, rather than in structuralist, terms.

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<sup>18</sup> “....[L]o que los teóricos poscoloniales empiezan a ver es que la *gramática* misma de la modernidad – desde la cual se articularon todas las narrativas anticolonialistas [see below for what this author means by “anticolonialista”] – se hallaba y vinculaba esencialmente a las prácticas totalizantes del colonialismo europeo.” Santiago Castro-Gomez, “Latinoamericanismo, modernidad, globalización”, in *Teorías sin disciplina. Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, op. cit., p.172.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.



Modern Latin American *structural dependency* is thus seen to have its origins in, and to owe its logic and articulation to, a 16<sup>th</sup> century *cultural hegemony* which has reproduced itself, in various forms, for the last 500 years. To cite a sentence from the passage of Coronil's quoted in the introduction, "el occidentalismo es pues la expresión de *una relación constitutiva entre las representaciones occidentales de las diferencias culturales y la dominación mundial del Occidente....*" I have added the emphases, because I think it is important to understand that, for postoccidentalism, the socio-cultural *imaginary* of "Occidentalism" has the power to *constitute* the dominant political-economic structures. Structures are thus, at least in large part, semiotically *con*-structed. In the conceptualizations of postoccidentalism, the relationship between "base" and "superstructure", as understood by Marxism (and, to some extent, by its "posts"), is reversed, as it were. Postoccidental critique, following Foucault, sees elite "knowledge" as hegemonic discursive formations capable of *embodying* determinate relations of power between the wielders of those forms of knowledge/discourse and those objectified by them.

This shift in focus will hopefully become clearer later in this chapter. What I am emphasizing at this point is that the *earlier* shift from Cepalist structuralism to the critical, neo-Marxist historical-structural approach of dependency theory is minimized in importance by the poststructuralist and postcolonial logic of postoccidentalism which tends to reduce that earlier shift to one made within the same "universe of (occidental) discourse", as it were, rather than viewing it as a better fit between "theory" and "reality." Without the benefit of the meta-perspective of discourse analysis, from this point of view, dependency analysis cannot see that it is still operating within a determinate "regimen of

truth", in the Foucauldian sense, governed by hegemonic forms of knowledge generated in the occidental centers of world capitalism.

Thus, if dependency theory marks an advance in Latin American social criticism from the point of view of postoccidental critique, it is in significant measure because it brings Latin American social thought *closer* to an awareness of the essentially "occidental" and discursive nature of the concept of "development", and by implication all modernist, forms of discourse. In this sense, from the postoccidental point of view, dependency analysis is a bit like Moses, who brings the Israelites to the gates of the promised land but is unprepared to enter it himself. "Dependency" must give way to "coloniality", as the fundamental critical category for understanding the asymmetries *between* Latin America and the "north" (and *within* Latin America, in its dominant-subaltern dialectic), and the establishment of the unit of analysis in dependency theory as the dependent national society and its competing class interests will be re-enunciated in terms of the "locus" of historically marginalized and exploited non-European peoples of the periphery, with their 500-year resistance to europeanization/ occidentalization.

### 1.1.3 *The deconstruction of "development" as discourse: transition to "coloniality"*

This shift from viewing "development" and "underdevelopment" as concepts denoting objective realities, to viewing these terms as names for hegemonic discourses "constructing" their objects, is the point of departure for Arturo Escobar's critique of "development" in his book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*.<sup>20</sup> In this book, Escobar is concerned with the deconstruction of

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<sup>20</sup> Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995.

“development” as a discursive formation. Because he views “development” as a term referring to an occidental modernist *discourse* seeking to *construct* “objective” categories such as “underdevelopment”, “third world”, etc., his critique can be seen as an important link between the problematizations of dependency theory – which still tend to view “development” (*desarrollo*) and “underdevelopment” (*subdesarrollo*) as categorizations of objective dimensions of Latin American socio-economic-political reality – and postoccidental critique, which, along with Escobar, views “development” as a discursive formation, the last in a series of “modernizing” discourses imposed on non-Europeans by Euro-North American colonialism/neo-colonialism,<sup>21</sup> thereby displacing and marginalizing non-European local histories, epistemologies, and practices.

From Escobar’s point of view, “development can be seen as a chapter of what can be called an anthropology of modernity, that is, a general investigation of Western modernity as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon.”<sup>22</sup> His deconstruction of development is part of what Escobar views as the need for an overall investigation (deconstruction) of occidental modernity. To clarify what he means by this “general investigation of Western modernity”, Escobar goes on, from the sentence just quoted, to cite Paul Rabinow’s notion of an “anthropology of modernity”:

We need to anthropologize the West: show how exotic its constitution of reality has been; emphasize those domains most taken for granted as universal (this includes epistemology and economics); make them seem as historically peculiar as possible; show how their

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<sup>21</sup> As Walter Mignolo puts it, there have been “tres etapas previas de la globalización [which he views as the current stage], bajo las banderas de la cristianización (por parte del imperio español), la misión civilizadora (por parte del imperio británico y la colonización francesa) y el desarrollo/ modernización (por parte del imperialismo norteamericano).” Walter Mignolo, “Globalización, procesos civilizatorios y la reubicación de lenguas y culturas”, in *Pensar (en) los intersticios*, op. cit., 1999, p. 59.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

claims to truth are linked to social practices and have hence become effective forces in the social world".<sup>23</sup>

In this poststructuralist and culturalist<sup>24</sup> critique of development (Escobar who, while not explicitly calling his deconstruction "postoccidental" – he prefers to call his approach "post-developmental" – clearly shares most, if not all, of the deconstructive perspective of Mignolo, Coronil and Castro-Gómez), we find perhaps a key to the difference in perspective between dependency analysis and postoccidental analysis.<sup>25</sup>

Escobar *recognizes* the rupture with Cepalist structuralism (alluding to Cardoso's 1977 essay "La originalidad de la copia: la CEPAL y la idea de desarrollo" quoted above<sup>26</sup>) represented by Cardoso's approach to dependency, even while downplaying its importance, according to the following genealogy of this phase of Latin American social theory: (1) the CEPAL ideas did challenge "a number of tenets of orthodox economic theory (particularly the theory of international trade)" and did provide "a more complex view of development,

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12. The citation from Rabinow quoted here is "Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology", in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. Clifford and George Marcus, Berkeley, University of California Press, p. 241.

<sup>24</sup> Escobar describes his methodology, at the very beginning of his book, as follows: "The overall approach taken in the book can be described as poststructuralist. More precisely, the approach is discursive, in the sense that it stems from the recognition of the importance of the dynamics of discourse and power to any study of culture. But there is much more than an analysis of discourse and practice; I also attempt to contribute to the development of a framework for the cultural critique of economics as a foundational structure of modernity, including the formulation of a culture-based political economy." Ibid., p. vii. Escobar clearly acknowledges, as does Mignolo, his debt to Michel Foucault's analyses of the relationship between knowledge and power, in the form of regimens of truth and their corresponding social practices.

<sup>25</sup> I do not necessarily mean to imply that this deconstruction is wholly justified. As I see it, there is a tendency in both Escobar's "post-developmentalism" and the postoccidental critique to conflate "modernization" and "development", in their periodizations of modernity as a series of occidental discourses, thereby passing over an important, if implicit, distinction within dependency analysis. It thereby pretends to discount the critique of occidental modernity inherent in dependency analysis, by historicizing the critical dimension of dependency analysis as a kind of proto-postoccidental critique instead of seeing it as a rival analysis, flawed perhaps, but still relevant, still contemporary as a paradigmatic analytic framework.

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit. However, I find in this essay of Cardoso's more of an emphasis on the "originality" of Cepalist structuralism than on its being a "copy". Escobar seems to have missed, as I see it, Cardoso's profound appreciation of the Cepalist paradigm shift. Cardoso seems to me more intent in this essay on defending the Cepalist ideas against its critics than on criticizing those ideas, even as he points out their limitations.

which included structural considerations, and showed greater concern for the standard of living of the masses.”<sup>27</sup> However,

Despite these differences, economic development remained in essence, in the eyes of these economists, a process of capital accumulation and technical progress. In short, as Cardoso (1977) pointedly put it, CEPAL thinking constituted ‘the originality of a copy.’

That is to say that CEPAL’s proposals were easily assimilated into the established views, to the extent that they lent themselves to a modernization process that international experts and national elites were eager to undertake. Its fate was to be absorbed into the power grid of the dominant discourse. One may say generally that at the level of discursive regularities, the CEPAL doctrine did not constitute a radical challenge.<sup>28</sup>

(2) He then goes on to ask how “Marxist or neo-Marxist theories of development” which emerged in the 1960s – in which he includes “theories of dependency, peripheral capitalism, and unequal exchange” – fared in relation to the dominant discourse of development.

To what extent did Marxist or neo-Marxist views become circumvented, appropriated, or subverted by the dominant discourse? Many of the concepts these theories used can be described according to the conceptual basis of classical political economy. Even if concepts such as dependency and unequal exchange were new, *the discursive space in which they operated was not*. Nevertheless, because they functioned within a system that had a different set of rules (that of Marxist political economy, in which concepts such as profit and capital establish a different discursive practice), they are – *at the level of discursive strategies* – a challenge to the dominant frameworks. In sum, although *they did not constitute an alternative to development, they amounted to a different view of development* and an important critique of bourgeois development economics.<sup>29</sup>

Because of Escobar’s methodological and political orientation, here, i.e., “discourse analysis,” he views the “discursive space” of dependency theory as situating it as a *critical theory of development*, but as yet incapable of questioning *the concept of “development” as such*, which is the aim of Escobar’s deconstruction.

It is Escobar’s point of view that the paradigmatic structure within which Latin American structuralist and dependency analyses were operating, while allowing for a

<sup>27</sup> Arturo Escobar, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p 85.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 83-84. Emphases added.

counterdiscourse from the periphery which contradicted the metropolitan bias of neoclassical economics and the cultural dualism of modernization theory, did not allow for a questioning of the *paradigm of development* as such. From Escobar's poststructuralist perspective, therefore, the *critical* dimension of dependency theory does not render it immune to the critique of "development" as a concept dominated by a hegemonic-discursive logic:

Until the late 1970s, the central stake in discussions on Asia, Africa, and Latin America was the nature of development. As we will see, from the economic development theories of the 1950s to the "basic human needs approach" of the 1970s – which emphasized not only economic growth per se as in earlier decades [as in the "modernization" theories of, e.g., W.W. Rostow or W. Arthur Lewis in the 1950s - JS] but also the distribution of the benefits of growth – the main preoccupation of theorists and politicians was the kinds of development that needed to be pursued to solve the social and economic problems of these parts of the world. Even those who opposed the prevailing capitalist strategies were obliged to couch their critique in terms of the need for development, through concepts such as "another development," "participatory development," "socialist development," and the like. In short, one could criticize a given approach and propose modifications or improvements accordingly, but the fact of development itself, and the need for it, could not be doubted. Development had achieved the status of a certainty in the social imaginary.

Indeed, it seemed impossible to conceptualise social reality in other terms.... The fact that most people's conditions not only did not improve but deteriorated with the passing of time did not seem to bother most experts. Reality, in sum, had been *colonized by the development discourse*, and those who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it, in the hope that in the process a different reality could be constructed.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 5. Emphasis added. Sonntag, though not from a poststructuralist point of view, confirms the centrality of "development" as the dominant category in Latin American social theory throughout this period. As late as 1988, he could still characterize Latin American social science in the following manner: "Aparte del deseo casi existencial de saber qué es América Latina.... la gran obsesión (en el sentido positivo) [note bene: JS] del pensamiento social latinoamericano ha sido el desarrollo. Para el cepalismo y el marxismo 'ortodoxo', éste tiene inicialmente una imagen-objetivo bien clara, esto es: lograr un capitalismo maduro a semejanzas del que habían alcanzado los países centrales de Occidente (si bien el segundo concebía este logro sólo como paso previo e indispensable para la revolución socialista, voluntaristamente postergada en función de las directrices de las internacionales comunistas). Ambas corrientes cambiaron su parecer sobre esta imagen-objetivo sobre la marcha de su desenvolvimiento, de modo que las últimas formulaciones del capitalismo apuntan hacia una mezcla de liberalismo y socialismo (para repetir la fórmula de Prebisch) y el marxismo, con matices internos en las diferentes partidos comunistas, tiende a enfatizar más la necesidad de un pase rápido a esa revolución. El dependentismo, en cambio, lo percibe como un proceso en marcha, aun cuando con características y contradicciones específicas, dado e impulsado desde la inserción de América Latina en el sistema capitalista mundial... En todo caso, los tres paradigmas, con énfasis diferenciado, dedican sus esfuerzos a esclarecer las cuestiones que implica el desarrollo: cuáles son sus puntos de partida en términos de las estructuras existentes, cuáles las modalidades de su proceso, cuáles las medias que deben tomarse para acelerarlo, cuáles los agentes colectivos involucrados, cuáles las contradicciones que se crean,

The phrase to which italics have been added calls attention to Escobar's belief that if, on one level, it was accepted, even by the elites of the dominant western powers, that "colonialism" was a thing of the past, a historical stage that had to be transcended in the new world order following the defeat of fascism (and before the reality of the Cold War was fully evident)<sup>31</sup>, on another level some new form of discourse had to be created to account for the obvious fact that asymmetries of wealth and power between center and periphery did not, and could not, cease to exist with the formal, political independence of former colonies.<sup>32</sup> If, as Wallerstein and other neo-Marxists argue, the capitalism of the postwar era continued to operate in terms of a core-periphery relation<sup>33</sup> and an international division of labor that favored the former over the latter, a new "postcolonial" discourse had to be constructed from the center that, on the one hand, "explained" (and thus, in some sense justified) the basic asymmetry of the relation between core and periphery while, at the same time, appeared to *include* the former colonies (and so-called "neo-colonialized" areas, such as much of Latin America) in the dynamic of *modernization* (modernization

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cuáles las perspectivas y consecuencias que se presentan, etc." Heinz R. Sonntag, *Duda-Certeza-Crisis: La evolución de las ciencias sociales de América Latina*, Caracas, Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 1988, pp. 137-140.

<sup>31</sup> Though the idea of "development" perhaps reached its full expression in the "Alliance for Progress" during the Kennedy administration, when it was consciously linked to the Cold War strategy of containment of Soviet influence, Escobar traces its earlier political and ideological incarnation to the enunciation by Harry Truman of "his concept of a 'fair deal' for the entire world", on January 20, 1949 (op. cit., p. 3), (before the complete hardening of U.S.-Soviet bipolarity had take effect and when there was still some kind of internationalist spirit left over from the Soviet alliance with the West and the United Front against fascism). Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that "developmentalism" was a strategy for dealing with a *politically* post-colonial world, before it was a Cold War strategy, thus placing it within what postoccidentalism regards as the long trajectory of occidental "colonial" discourses.

<sup>32</sup> As, indeed, the economic dependency of Latin American countries, in spite of their 130-odd years of political independence by 1950, was seen to highlight from Cepalista and *independentista* viewpoints.

<sup>33</sup> Wallerstein, of course, added the important category of "semi-periphery" which, in a certain sense, reflects the growing structural complexity of postwar capitalism as compared with its earlier, more clearly "colonial", phases; indeed, the category of "semi-periphery" is necessary, in part, to account for the fact that certain countries that had clearly fit the "third world" profile of peripheral dependency, were advancing well beyond that status and assuming the status of producers of value-added goods that were highly competitive in the world market. (It should be pointed out, however, that Wallerstein sees the category of "semi-periphery" as a characteristic of the earliest stages of the capitalist world-system, not as an exclusively postwar phenomenon.)

theory, of course also conflated modernization with development) as a *horizon*, a hope held out for the amelioration of that asymmetry in the future, through appropriate programs of "development." If this horizon continually distanced itself from the urgent present, this could be attributed to the obstacles in the "underdeveloped" world to "development" and "modernization", obstacles that were seen as largely "cultural" (with an ethnocentric bias) in the metropolitan theories and mostly socio-political-economic in the theories from the periphery, (though clearly the Latin American structuralist and dependency analyses were far more aware of the complexity of the structures and dynamics involved in this "underdevelopment"), but obstacles nonetheless in both sets of theories. Development was understood as a process of *structural* change requiring the *agency* of various actors. The problem was how to articulate policies (agency) that would change structures and result in a more level playing field between "first world" and "third world," (though, again, from the point of view dependency analysis, the process was far more complex and less "voluntarist" than this description suggests, involving the agency of a wide variety of social actors, in their social-political struggles, and not only policy makers within the state technocracy).

Escobar argues that this postcolonial discourse was really a neo-colonial discourse in which the advancement and felicity of one part of the world was seen as dependent on the superior knowledge and development of another part of the world.<sup>34</sup> But he also recognizes that those who employed that discourse (both in the core and in the periphery) for the most part really believed that it was a visionary and emancipatory way of looking at the "third

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<sup>34</sup> Of course strictly speaking this applies only to the metropolitan theories, since, as we have seen, the Latin American theories of Cepalist structuralism and dependency were precisely efforts to theorize the problem of development and underdevelopment *from the periphery*, and thus to counteract the tendency to look to the "center" for the solution to Latin American problems. Still, I think Escobar would argue that the terms in which the Latin American theories were framed still depended on metropolitan social science and the hegemonic concept of "development."



world", "third world" being a concept created along with "underdevelopment" in order to articulate the geo-historical relationship between core and periphery in a supposedly "postcolonial" context in which all national regions were in theory "equal" geopolitical players on the world stage, provided they all were actively seeking the holy grail of social, economic and political development. In theory, that is, the "less developed" parts of the world could, given the correct way of understanding their underdevelopment, become "developed" and thus modern, powerful states. In his preface, Escobar states that his book "arose out of the need to explain this situation, namely, the creation of a Third World and the *dream of development*, both of which have been an integral part of the socio-economic, cultural, and political life of the post-World War II period."<sup>35</sup>

That the critique of "development" in this sense is part of a more general critique of "modernity" as a system of occidental discourses is clearly a part of Escobar's understanding of the term. I quote a passage from which an earlier citation was taken:

I contextualize the era of development within the overall space of modernity, particularly modern economic practices. From this perspective, development can be seen as a chapter of what can be called an anthropology of modernity, that is, a general investigation of Western modernity as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon... [which has given rise to] the regime of development, perhaps as a specific mutation of modernity.<sup>36</sup>

From this point of view, "modernity" and, insofar as they are articulated according to the rules of discourse of "developmentalism", the concepts of "center" and "periphery" as well, must be deconstructed as hegemonic concepts producing hierarchy out of difference, rather than as terms referring to an objectively "real" historical-structural asymmetry.

In this deconstruction, "center and periphery" are resignified in cultural terms, as the dominance (hegemony) of "occidental" discourses and the marginalization of "subaltern"

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<sup>35</sup> Escobar, op. cit., p. vii.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

traditions, histories, epistemologies, etc. Thus, Walter Mignolo, in his book *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, territoriality and colonization*, attempts to resignify “center and periphery”, from the postoccidental perspective, in the following terms:

I am using throughout this book the dichotomy center/periphery. I am not using it on the assumption that there is one ontological center (Europe) and various ontological peripheries (the colonies). I hope to show that the center is movable...as is the personal pronoun “I,” and as are the notions *same* and *the other*. It so happened, however, that during the sixteenth century Europe began to be construed as the center and colonial expansion as movement toward the peripheries – that, of course, from the perspective of a European observer....From the perspective of the European peripheries, the center remained where it was, although in danger of radical transformations. I take the center/periphery dichotomy from Immanuel Wallerstein...although I am aware of the criticism to which Wallerstein has been subjected, mainly for denying to peripheral formations their own histories....One of the main goals of this study is, precisely, to bring to the foreground the “histories” and the “centers” that European missionaries and men of letters denied to people from colonial peripheries. Only within an evolutionary model of history could center and periphery be fixed and ontologized. Within a co-evolutionary model and a pluritopic hermeneutics, centers and peripheries coexist in a constant struggle of power, domination, and resistance.<sup>37</sup>

Implicit here is that only through a radical deconstruction (in the sense of “de-colonialization”) and resignification of the concept of “modernity” as a *cultural* ideology of “center” and “periphery”, as implying ethnocentrically constructed hierarchies of difference between Europeans and colonial “others”, can the more profound significance of Latin American “dependency” be understood, at least from the locus of enunciation which is the subaltern and the “colonial difference.” And part of this process is the deconstruction of “development” as a stage in the discursive trajectory of “modernity” as an occidentalist discourse.

It is not that postoccidental analysis fails to recognize the contribution made by dependency analysis (along with theories such as internal colonialism and marginalization)

<sup>37</sup> Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality and Colonialism*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995, p. 337n. See as well, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, pp. 35-37, loc. cit. in Introduction.

to the Latinamericanization, so to speak, of the debate over modernity, and its questioning of the concept of “modernization”. Thus, for example, Mignolo comments on dependency analysis in the context of an assessment of early contributions to the postoccidentalist critique, as follows:

En la transición entre las dos décadas [the 1960s to the 1970s], la teoría de la dependencia (en sociología y antropología), complementaron el escenario de la producción intelectual en América Latina. Ambas, teoría de la dependencia y del colonialismo interno, son a su manera reflexiones ‘posoccidentales’ en la medida en que buscan proyectos que trasciendan las dificultades y los límites del occidentalismo. Ambas son respuestas a nuevos proyectos de occidentalización que no llevan ya el nombre de ‘cristianización’ o de ‘misión civilizadora’, sino de ‘desarrollo’.<sup>38</sup>

Mignolo immediately adds, however, that the integration of dependency theory into “area studies”, and the selection of the version of dependency enunciated by Gunder Frank “desde el norte” as the token, so to speak, for dependency theory, undermined its autochthonous, counterhegemonic and critical thrust:

....[L]a mirada desde el norte... convierte a América Latina en un área para ser estudiada, más que un espacio donde se produce pensamiento crítico. Lamentablemente, esta imagen continúa vigente en esfuerzos recientes como el de Berger, en el cual de la dependencia pasa naturalmente a integrarse a la tradición de estudios Latinoamericanos en Estados Unidos [the reference is to Mark T. Berger, *Under Northern Eyes. Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas 1898-1990*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996, pp. 106-122]. Para que la teoría de la dependencia no se pierda en el concierto universal de las teorías apropiadas por los estudios latinoamericanos en Estados Unidos y quede reducida a un simple sistema conceptual desencarnado, conviene no perder de vista su lugar (históricamente geográfico y colonialmente epistemológico) de enunciación.<sup>39</sup>

Implicit in this assessment is that while dependency analysis is, on the one hand, “postoccidental”, in its apparent rejection of the discourse of “development” (because conflated here with “modernization”) its fitness as a proto-critique of Occidentalism owes as much to its “locus of enunciation” (as a critical social theory *desde América Latina*) as it

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<sup>38</sup> Walter Mignolo, “Poscolonialismo: el argumento desde América Latina”, in Castro-Gómez, ed., op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

does to its content or conceptualization which, Mignolo implies, is only partially decolonialized and postoccidental.

A further clarification of the relationship between "dependency theory" and postoccidental critique occurs in a passage from *Local History/Global Designs*

A note on "dependency theory" and its mark in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system is here necessary for two reasons. One, is the fact that dependency theory was one of the responses, from Latin America, to a changing world order that in Asia and in Africa took the form of "decolonization." In the Americas, independence from colonial powers (Spain and England) was obtained long before in what can be labelled the first wave of decolonization (U.S. and Haitian revolutions; Spanish American independence): Dependency theory "preceded" – on the one hand – by a few years Wallerstein's "modern world system metaphor" as an account from the perspective of modernity. It was "followed" – on the other hand and in Latin America – by a series of reflexions (in philosophy and the social sciences) as an account from the perspective of coloniality. Both Quijano and Dussel are indebted to the impact of dependency theory in its critique to [sic] "development" as the new format taken by global designs once the "civilizing mission" was winding down with the increasing process of decolonization. Although dependency theory has been under attack from several fronts (Cardoso 1977), it is important not to lose sight of the fact that from the perspective of Latin America, it clearly and forcefully put in the agenda the problems involved in "developing" Third World countries."<sup>40</sup>

There seems to be an attempt here to view dependency analysis (here referred to as "theory", though the use of this term was controversial within dependency circles and was explicitly rejected by Cardoso) as a critique of "development", which postoccidentalism views as a stage in eurocentric, hegemonic discourse and practice. But there is an obvious ambiguity here, and indeed a double discourse, in a sense, since Mignolo concludes by underlining the importance of dependency analysis as a Latin American perspective that "clearly and forcefully put in the agenda the problems involved in 'developing' Third World countries," placing in quotation marks, yet apparently validating at the same time, a term that Cardoso and Faletto use quite literally and without reservation. The distinction

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<sup>40</sup> Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, op. cit., p. 54. The reference to Cardoso is to: Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "The Consumption of Dependency Theory in the United States", *Latin American Research Review* 12, No. 3, 1977.

between “development” and “modernization”, crucial it would seem to understanding dependency analysis in its challenge to modernization theory and its attempt to problematize “development” in a richer, non-economistic, way, is conflated and glossed over in the postoccidental attempt to assimilate dependency analysis into its own discourse as a kind of semi-decolonialized form of thinking. In so doing, the whole notion of “development” (and “underdevelopment”) is given a pejorative, “occidental” signification, and therefore marginalized as a concept for understanding the relationship between Latin America and the centers of advanced capitalism.

## **1.2 The shift from “anti-colonial” critique to the postcolonial/postoccidental critique of modernity, articulated in terms of “coloniality”**

Social theories based upon the idea that “colonialism” – especially in the form of neo-imperialist forms of domination emanating from the new, postwar world power, the United States – continued to be the fundamental reality in relations between the centers and peripheries of the world system, were certainly abundant in the period prior to post-colonialist criticism.

However, according to the postoccidental/postcolonial point of view, these “anticolonial” approaches to third world “underdevelopment” continued to operate in such a way as to reinforce the “binarisms” in the theorization of the core-periphery relationship, because they had not yet deconstructed the epistemologies within which their discourses had to be formulated.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This, despite the fact that, as the passages from Escobar and Mignolo quoted above suggest, postoccidental writers do give credit to “anti-colonialist” theories like dependency for an at least partial de-colonialization of their geopolitical understanding, while retaining their epistemological dependence on “occidental” social science.

Thus, as Santiago Castro-Gómez sees it, the “anticolonial” discourses of the 1960s and 1970s were unable to transcend the hegemony of the modernist biases of occidental social science. Postcolonial discourse, on the other hand “contribuye a deslegitimar aquellos paradigmas univeralizantes definidos por la modernidad, en donde las prácticas colonialistas europeas aparecían como elementos *irrelevantes* a los procesos modernos de constitución de saber.”<sup>42</sup>

The anticolonialist discourses of the 1960s, and even the philosophy of liberation or the dependency analyses of the 1970s, on the other hand, were not able to separate themselves from those “paradigmas universalizantes”, and thus could not see the connection between colonialism and “modern” forms of knowledge, such as occidental social science.<sup>43</sup>

La crítica al colonialismo se entendía como una ruptura con las estructuras de opresión que habían impedido al Tercer Mundo la realización del proyecto europeo de la modernidad. No obstante, las narrativas anticolonialistas jamás se interrogaron por el *estatus epistemológico* de su propio discurso. La crítica se articuló desde metodologías afines a las ciencias sociales, las humanidades y la filosofía, tal como éstas habían sido desarrolladas por la modernidad europea desde el siglo XIX. De hecho, el logro de la modernidad se constituyó en el horizonte crítico-normativo de todos los discursos anticolonialistas. La dependencia económica, la destrucción de la identidad cultural, el empobrecimiento de las minorías, todos estos fenómenos eran considerados como “desviaciones” de la modernidad

<sup>42</sup> Santiago Castro-Gómez, 1998b, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>43</sup> Seen from this point of view, it is not surprising that the Cuban Revolution, the *anti-colonial Latin American movement par excellence* of this era, based its revolutionary perspective to a large extent on a socialist *dependentista* view of Yankee “neo-colonialism”. As Jorge Castaneda sees it: “La esencia de la innovación cubana se puede resumir en seis tesis y en una premisa teórica que justifica las consideraciones estratégicas y tácticas. La premisa teórica la desarrollaron principalmente los cubanos, pero en una modalidad *ad hoc*. Más adentrada la década y casi *ex post*, esta premisa acabó denominándose teoría de la dependencia, un hábeas coherente y articulado de supuestos históricos, económicos, sociales y políticos sobre América Latina. En síntesis, esta perspectiva postulaba el estatuto virtualmente neocolonial del hemisferio, el carácter disfuncional del capitalismo en la región y la consiguiente impotencia histórica de las clases empresariales locales, la inexistencia de canales democráticos de expresión y reforma, y la inviabilidad de cualquier forma de desarrollo no socialista.” Jorge G. Castaneda, *La utopía desarmada: Intrigas, dilemmas y promesa de la izquierda en América Latina*, México, T/M Editores, 1993, p. 85. Mignolo tells us (*Global Designs/Local Histories*, op. cit., pp. 94-95) that the Cuban Revolution was an inspiration for Retamer’s coinage of the term “postoccidentalism”, but there is no contradiction here because, as we have already seen (note 15, Introduction), “postoccidentalism” was understood by Retamer in a Marxist framework. In this sense, it seems to me, we can include the Cuban Revolution in this “anti-colonialist” imaginary defined by Castro-Gómez, since, from the postoccidental perspective, it is still dependent on occidental epistemological categories and theorizations (“desarrollo”/dependency/neo-Marxism).

que podrían ser corregidas a través de la revolución y la toma del poder por parte de los sectores populares....Pues bien, lo que los teóricos poscoloniales empiezan a ver es que la *gramática* misma de la modernidad – desde la cual se articularon las narrativas anticolonialistas – se hallaba vinculada esencialmente a las prácticas totalizantes del colonialismo europeo.... Desde este punto de vista, las narrativas anticolonialistas, con su juego de oposiciones entre los opresores y los oprimidos, los poderosos y los desposeídos, el centro y la periferia, la civilización y la barbarie, no habrían hecho otra cosa que reforzar el sistema binarios de categorización vigente en los aparatos metropolitanos de producción del saber.<sup>44</sup>

What this implies is that a critique of colonial/neo-colonial relations must also be a critique of the forms of knowledge made hegemonic by “modern” social science. “Colonialism” (or neo-colonialism/ imperialism) refers not only, and perhaps not primarily, to a set of *structural* relationships between core and peripheral economies, but to a set of *discourses* which place the colonized “other” *outside* those modern social science discourses as an *object* of study. In this way, discourses that articulate theories of “modernization” or “development” make it appear that societies or cultures identified as “not-yet-modern”, “underdeveloped” – or even, in anticolonialist terms, dependent, marginalized, exploited, etc. – reinforce the dualism of dynamic center and passive periphery that world systems and postcolonial approaches seek to break down.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 172-173.

<sup>45</sup> It is worth noting here, however, that world systems theory is not always exempted by postoccidentalist criticism from this tendency to view the center as cause and the periphery as effect of an agency emanating from the former. Thus, Fernando Coronil, while pointing out that the world systems approach has the virtue of shifting the focus of analysis of capitalism from the advanced capitalist *nations*, as sui generis units of capitalist production and wealth accumulation, to the world system as the unit of analysis, nevertheless may be guilty of perpetuating this dependency view of their interconnection. “...the treatment of the nation as a self-contained unit often leads to the interpretation of international economic phenomena as the outward projections of the endogenous dynamics of the more advanced nations....[A]dvanced capitalist nations are typically studied as autonomous units, while peripheral societies are seen in terms of the impact that center nations have on them. An alternative position argues that the dynamics of the ‘world system’ explains the development of nations (Wallerstein 1976). This position shifts the focus from the dominant nations to the international system *but risks preserving the view that peripheral nations are to be understood as being shaped by external forces*. Even when an explicit effort is made to account for the histories of non-European peoples and to observe the interaction between expanding metropolitan nations and peripheral societies, the tendency is to cover these societies under the mantle of capitalism and to see capitalism as an external force.” Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 33, emphasis added. In a note on this passage, Coronil adds, referring to his 1996

"Modernity", therefore, is not something that peripheral societies *lack* through a failure to *modernize*. "Modernity", rather, is the *system*, structurally-discursively articulated and rationalized, in which so-called "modernized" societies and so-called "unmodernized" or "incompletely modernized" societies continue to interact in asymmetrical relationships of power, one of whose aspects is the production of "theories" from both center and periphery that normatize (and thus tend to obscure) what Walter Mignolo refers to as "the colonial difference" – i.e., the reality of the modern world system as seen from the standpoint of its *co-constitution* by the colonial periphery – as unequal levels of "development", or "civilization", or "modernity."

In this sense, "modernity" is a structural-discursive system which includes the capacity to obscure its own origins and its own logic by obscuring the "colonial difference",<sup>46</sup> the meaning and logic (or "grammar" as postoccidentals sometimes like to say) of colonial relationships *from the subaltern point of view*.<sup>47</sup> From that point of view, all attempts to "normatize", "explain", "naturalize", scientifically "objectivize" the asymmetry implied by those relationships are deconstructed as hegemonic, eurocentric epistemologies of power

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essay "Beyond Occidentalism: Towards Non-imperial Geohistorical Categories", *Cultural Anthropology*, 11 (1):51-97: "Through the discussion of works by Wolf (1982), Mintz (1985), Taussig (1980), and Mitchell (1988), among others, I have noted how the development of capitalism in the periphery tends to be seen as an 'external' force that originates in metropolitan centers." This passage illustrates well the delicate balance in postoccidental theory between maintaining, on some level and in certain contexts, the structural distinction between center and periphery (and thus the fundamental insight of dependency and world systems theory), on the one hand, while discrediting, in its post-structuralist resignification of center and periphery in cultural-discursive terms, the notion of an endogenous European modern capitalism, on the other. How, and whether, these two perspectives are ultimately compatible is one of the key interrogatives that originally gave rise to the present investigation.

<sup>46</sup> Walter Mignolo, "Diferencia colonial y razón postoccidental", in *La reestructuración de las ciencias sociales en América Latina*, Santiago Castro-Gómez, ed., Bogotá, Colección Pensar, 2000.

<sup>47</sup> "...by guiding our understanding toward the relational nature of representations of human collectivities, [the 'occidental' perspective] brings out into the open their genesis in asymmetrical relations of power, including the power to obscure their genesis in inequality, to sever their historical connections, and thus to present as the internal and separate attributes of bounded entities what are in fact historical outcomes of connected peoples." Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State* op. cit., p. 14, emphasis added.



and domination, as discourses located within a “regime of truth” whose logic is the *colonialidad del poder*, and which are thus, at the very least, complicit in this logic.

Moreover, oppositional theories, insofar as they have not passed through the intellectual “decolonialization” involved in a critique of the occidental premises implicit in their own epistemological basis, actually perpetuate the asymmetry they are dedicated to eliminating.

Citing Gayatri Spivak, Castro-Gómez says:

...ningún discurso de diagnóstico social puede trascender las estructuras homogeneizantes del conocimiento moderno. Lo cual significa que ninguna teoría sociológica puede “representar” objetos que se encuentren por fuera del conjunto de signos que configuran la institucionalidad del saber en las sociedades modernas. Todo saber científico se encuentra, ya de antemano, codificado al interior de un tejido de signos que regulan la producción del “sentido”, así como la creación de objetos y sujetos del conocimiento.<sup>48</sup>

“Modernity”, from the postoccidental perspective, is thus not a stage in the evolution of the human race, nor a process of increasing civilization or social-technological progress spreading throughout the world with Europe as its point of origin, nor the outcome of a “process of development.” “Modernity” is a discursively constructed system of colonial relations, a “patrón de poder” in which certain parts of the world and their cultures have been objectivized as *less civilized*, or *less developed* as a way of rationalizing their insertion into a world system in which their subordinate status is the (most important) condition for the technified and consumerized form of life enjoyed by majorities in the centers of that system.<sup>49</sup> “Modernity” is thereby reduced to an ideology of domination.

<sup>48</sup> Castro-Gómez, 1998b, op. cit., pp. 172-173.

<sup>49</sup> The postcolonial perspective of postoccidentalism thus goes beyond world systems theory, and other Marxist-based viewpoints, by asserting an *internal relation* between colonial exploitation and economic organization within the metropolitan center. As Coronil puts it (utilizing the idea of “lado oscuro” found in both Dussel and Mignolo – cf. *passim*), “...el colonialismo es el lado oscuro del capitalismo europeo; no puede ser reducido a una nota a pie de página en su biografía. La ‘acumulación primitiva’ colonial, lejos de ser una precondition del desarrollo capitalista, ha sido un elemento indispensable de su dinámica interna. El ‘trabajo asalariado libre’ en Europa constituye no la condición esencial del capitalismo, sino su modalidad productiva dominante, modalidad históricamente condicionada por el trabajo ‘no libre’ en sus colonias y otras

The system that this ideology rationalizes and morally justifies has been associated, for 500 years, with determinate geopolitical relations between nation-states within the system's core and between that core and peripheral (as well as semi-peripheral) areas, those geopolitical relationships in turn intimately connected with the "patrón de poder" of "coloniality" (*colonialidad*), an arrangement that now is breaking down in the latest, "globalized" stage of that capitalist world system. Because postoccidentalism, like world systems theory, sees the ongoing class and ethnic antagonisms which characterize the system economically and culturally, as having been held in check by the hegemonic articulation of the system of nation-states and the imaginary of "developed" and "underdeveloped" nations, postoccidentalism has theorized the breaking down of the interstate system as the breaking down of a hegemonic ideology, increasingly exposing the naked power relations on which those class and ethnic antagonisms are based, once shorn of their embeddedness in modernist and developmentalist discourses.<sup>50</sup> Postoccidental discourse sees itself as contributing to that breakdown by deconstructing "modernity" as a eurocentric discourse no longer capable of sustaining and hegemonizing the structural and cultural change that it has helped to bring about; that is, a globalized, transnational, de-

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partes." Fernando Coronil, "Naturaleza del poscolonialismo: del eurocentrismo al globocentrismo", in *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*, op. cit., p. 93. This position is consistent with Coronil's determination to reverse the conventional perspective on the "causality" between core and periphery. In effect, he is viewing colonial exploitation as a "cause" of capitalist class relations. (This argument, however, seems to me to be more structural than discursive/poststructural.)

<sup>50</sup> See Immanuel Wallerstein, "The withering away of the states", in *The Politics of the World Economy: the States, the Movements, and the Civilizations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, *passim*, for an analysis of the effects of globalization on the inter-state system from the structuralist-functionalist perspective of world systems theory. See Santiago Castro-Gomez, "Ciencias sociales, violencia epistémica y el problema de la 'invención del otro'", in *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*, Edgardo Lander, comp., Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 2000, for a discussion of modernity as the regime of truth corresponding to the "project" of the nation-state, whose current stage of eclipse under globalization can be best understood through a combination of world systems and poststructuralist/cultural analysis. See also, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2000.

centered capitalist world system<sup>51</sup> is undermining the “coloniality of power” which has sustained it and supported it through a vast and intricate articulation of asymmetrical relationships of power *between* core and periphery and *within* both core and periphery through all of the various stages of “modernity.”<sup>52</sup>

The idea that “modernity” is inseparable from colonialism and neo-colonialism (the structural-historical articulation of geopolitical and geoeconomic relationships between core and periphery) and from “coloniality” (the structural-discursive articulation of relationships between Europeans or their descendents and non-Europeans or their descendents, manifested socio-economically and culturally in forms of racial discrimination and domination) also implies that it is inseparable from “eurocentricity”, i.e., from the ideology of European expansionism as, in succession, a “Christianizing”, a “civilizing,” and a “modernizing” project.<sup>53</sup> As I see it, postoccidental theory seeks to deconstruct this eurocentric cultural ideology of the “modern/colonial world system” in order to lay bare its

<sup>51</sup> Some commentators, e.g. Manuel Castells (see Chapter Three, below), markedly distinguish the current *global system* from the *world capitalist system* in Wallerstein’s sense, based on the criterion of instantaneous global communication which characterizes what Castells calls “the information society.”

<sup>52</sup> Thus, postoccidental theory has much in common with, and owes much to, various poststructuralist and postmodernist theories emanating from Europe and the United States in the wake of postindustrialism and globalization, but also takes a “postcolonial” posture with respect to those theories: i.e., insists on including them in its deconstruction of occidental forms of knowledge and theories of reality. Postmodernism, from the postoccidental point of view, is no more aware than modernism is of the “colonial difference”, and therefore fails to see that its deconstruction and critique of modernity is a *theory of occidental postmodernity*, in reality dependent upon a *postcolonial theory of modernity* which it lacks. See passage quoted from Castro-Gómez, cited in n. 11, Introduction, section I.2, for a commentary on Mignolo’s schema of the relationship between postmodernism, postcolonialism and postoccidentalism. Also, Walter Mignolo, “La colonialidad a lo largo y a lo ancho: el hemisferio occidental en el horizonte colonial de la modernidad”, in *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*, op. cit., p. 58: “...ya no es posible concebir la modernidad sin la colonialidad, el lado silenciado por la imagen reflexiva que la modernidad (e.g., los intelectuales, el discurso oficial del Estado) construyo de sí misma y que el discurso postmoderno criticó desde la interioridad de la modernidad como autoimagen del poder. La postmodernidad, autoconcebida en la línea unilateral de la historia del mundo moderno continúa ocultando la colonialidad, y mantiene la lógica universal y monotópica desde la izquierda y desde la derecha...”

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Walter Mignolo, “Globalización, procesos civilizatorios y la reubicación de lenguas y culturas”, in S. Castro-Gómez, O. Guardiola-Rivera and C. Millán de Benavides, eds., *Pensar (en) los intersticios. Teoría y práctica de la crítica poscolonial*, Bogotá, Colección Pensar, 1999, p. 57. See Chapter Three, 3.1, for a fuller discussion of this trajectory as presented in the article just cited.

structure of domination and exploitation over both human beings and the natural world, (analogous to Marx's demystification of the "naked market relations" of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial capitalism so as to make manifest the true relationship between capital and labor). The analysis of the postoccidental critique of eurocentricity thus comprises the subject of the next chapter.

### 1.3 Conclusion

The core objective of this chapter has been to develop an understanding of the postoccidental concept of "coloniality" as marking an important shift in the view of "center" and "periphery" (and thus a shift in the understanding of center-periphery "asymmetry") from that which characterized earlier perspectives such as Cepalist structuralism and dependency analysis. Just as postoccidental critique, as I have presented it in the Introduction to this investigation, incorporates the structuralist model of a capitalist world system into its poststructuralist view of that world system as a "modern/colonial world system" constituted by the Iberian discovery of its "other", and thus defined discursively by "coloniality" ("*colonialidad del poder*"), so it resignifies the historical-structural distinction between center and periphery as a geo-cultural imaginary of ethnocentric superiority, also with its origins in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Iberian conquest.

In both of these conceptual shifts, there is the same tendency: that of resignifying "modernity" as the dialectical other side of European colonial hegemony over the Americas since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thus depriving it of its triumphalist occidental significations. The modern world is not the outcome of the triumphant expansion of European rationality, civilization, progress to the rest of the world: rather, "modernity" is a term which refers to

a kind of *espejismo* through which one part of the world – Europe – has created a narrative about itself as “superior”, as the bearer of “civilization”, higher forms of knowledge and sensibility, etc. only through the creation of an “other” which is constructed as lacking in all of these positive attributes. This “eurocentricity”, as the second fundamental element of the postoccidental deconstruction and resignification of modernity, is the subject of the next chapter.

As just noted, there is a strongly dialectical character to postoccidental signification, reminiscent of Kojève’s reinterpretation of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic. There is an irony in this, since Hegel, as we shall see in the next chapter, is viewed by postoccidental criticism as responsible for the most flagrant and influential elaboration of eurocentrism, as a historical imaginary, in the occidental tradition.<sup>54</sup> With the critique of eurocentrism, the

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<sup>54</sup> Hegel’s eurocentrism comes up not only in Dussel’s critiques (see next chapter), but in all of the core postoccidentalists writers under consideration. There are very interesting discussions of Hegel in Coronil, especially, in “Mas allá del occidentalismo”, op. cit., 1998, pp. 133-136 and in *The Magical State*, op. cit., pp. 387-388. In the former, he cites Fanon’s complaint about the distorting effect of (Hegel’s) eurocentrism in the application of the master-slave dialectic to the colonial periphery: “De acuerdo con Fanon, la comprensión dialéctica hegeliana de la relación Amo-Esclavo no se aplica a las relaciones entre las razas tal como éstas se definen en las interacciones centro-periferia, porque en al esclavitud colonial ‘el amo difiere básicamente del amo descrito por Hegel. Para Hegel hay reciprocidad: aquí el Amo se ríe de la conciencia del esclavo. Lo que quiere del esclavo no es reconocimiento sino trabajo’ [quoted by Coronil from Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, Grove Press, Nueva York, 1967].” Coronil goes on to cite an example of a eurocentric application of Hegel’s dialectic to the colonial periphery, Tzvetan Todorov’s *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, Harper and Row, Nueva York, 1984, about which he wrote an entire essay (cited in Chapter Three, note 26, below). In a similar way to Fanon’s complaint, Coronil criticizes Todorov’s book for being among “la mayoría de las obras que transponen el esquema Amo-Esclavo a situaciones históricas preservan[do] su sesgo eurocentrista mientras vulgarizan su sentido dialéctico y esencializan sus categorías filosóficas. En este sentido vulgarizado de la dialéctica *La Conquista de América: la cuestión del Otro* de Todorov es implícitamente una obra hegeliana. Hace el recuento de cómo los ‘yo’ europeos (presentados como los ‘yo’ universales) aprenden la alteridad a través de la experiencia de la conquista, destrucción y dominación de los mesoamericanos.” Op. cit., p. 136. While it seems to me quite proper to point out these vulgarizations of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, and the fact that the *form* of that dialectic is applied at the same time that the *content* (the concrete historical colonial “other”) is ethnocentrically deprived of the humanity that Hegel clearly ascribes to the slave-other in the European context, I cannot help finding it ironic that Coronil fails to acknowledge the fact that the Hegelian concept of the dialectic itself, as a way of apprehending reality, is not only not in question, but that it is one of the fundamental critical-conceptual tools applied by him and other “postoccidentalists” even as they are supposedly going beyond (“mas allá”) occidental forms of knowledge. This is not a criticism I develop in the present investigation, but I mention it because it is an example of what makes me sceptical about the anti-occidentalism of postoccidentalists. There

## CHAPTER TWO: THE POSTOCCIDENTAL CRITIQUE OF “MODERNITY” AS EUROCENTRICISM

In this chapter, the other main element of what I see as the postoccidental deconstruction and resignification of “modernity”, namely “eurocentricism”, is presented. There are two aspects to this critique of eurocentricism, as I see it: (1) the critique of eurocentricism as an imaginary of European *originality* in the creation of the modern world; (2) the critique of eurocentricism as an imaginary of European temporal-historical *advancement* relative to (i.e., *over*) non-Europeans. Together, these critiques attempt, as I see it, to deconstruct what postoccidentalism sees as the essentially ethnocentric nature of capitalist modernity, and thereby to provide a basis for the postcolonial resignification of modernity in non-ethnocentric terms.

### 2.1 The deconstruction of the myth of an endogenously created European modernity

We are now in a better position to consider the question of why it is so important to postoccidental theorists to locate in space and periodize in time the emergence of modernity with the discovery and colonization of the Americas. For it is in this “moment”, from the postoccidental perspective, that Europe begins to truly see itself as a “center” of a world system, albeit not yet with a fully pan-European consciousness (that will come later), but certainly with an imaginary that separates all Christian Europeans from all the “others”.

The idea that “modernity” is eurocentric is meant to satisfy, as I see it, two objectives of postoccidental theory that are in tension, and that need a dialectical form of resolution: (1) on the one hand, postoccidental theory cannot, and does not wish to, deny that modernity emerges through a project of European expansion, that its historical *impetus* is

European; (2) on the other hand, postoccidental theory does not want to accept the thesis that what was expanding toward other parts of the world was “modernity” as such.

Thus, on the one hand, to see modernity as “eurocentric” is compatible with the thesis that, in conformity with empirical historical data, there would never have been anything we call “modernity” were it not for the need of western Europe in general, and specific European countries and social actors within those countries, in particular, to seek out other parts of the world as sources of raw materials, land and labor. This is one meaning of “eurocentrism” in relation to modernity, what we might call its descriptive-empirical meaning, from the standpoint of a European locus of enunciation (as opposed to what we might call its critical-dialectical, meaning, from the standpoint of the “colonial difference”, a distinction not always made clear in postoccidental analysis). On the other hand, there can be no “center” if there is no periphery. Thus, while the *impetus* for “modernity” originates in a *dynamic* at the center, it is only by finding its peripheries, in structural terms, or its “others”, in cultural-discursive terms, that Europe *is* that impetus for the construction of the “modern” world. Or, putting it in terms of the re-formulation of world systems terminology discussed above in Chapter One, only by creating a system of *colonial* relations were Europeans able to create a *modern* world system: the modern world system is a *modern/colonial* world system.

Now it is important to see that, on one level, there is nothing obvious about the equation of modernity with the establishment of a world system of colonialist cultural and economic relationships. There had been various empires – prior to the expansion of Europe via the discoveries and conquests of Spain and Portugal – which had produced “colonies”, but which did not produce a modern world in the sense in which we think of it today. Without going into the distinction in the writings of Wallerstein between an economic world system

based on trade in basic goods, rationalized forms of production, division of labor, etc. (capitalism) and imperial systems based on trade of preciousities, tribute, etc. suffice it to say that from Wallerstein's point of view there is a kind of tautology in the notion that a *capitalist* world system is also a *modern* world system. There could not have been a "modern" world, in the historical sense in which we understand the term, without capitalism. Thus far, however, there is nothing here to impute a similarly tautological character to the modernity-coloniality "equation" or co-implication.

There is nothing very new or surprising in the equation between modernity and capitalism, inasmuch as most theorizations of modernity seem to share the assumption that it was the structural changes associated with capitalism that in large measure helped to bring about the alterations in social relations and cultural patterns that go into constituting the "modern" world. However, it has generally been assumed (at least by occidental social science) that capitalism, as a structural break with pre-existing forms of production and social relations, and its cultural *antecedents* (e.g., the "spirit of capitalism", in Weber's usage, associated with northern European Protestantism), as these began to manifest themselves in western, and especially northwestern, Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, were endogenously European phenomena, however one wished to explain them – i.e., in classical economic terms, in Marxist terms, in Weberian terms, etc. – historically and analytically distinguishable from the *colonial expansionist aspect* of capitalism as a world system. This view appears to favor the idea that "modernity" is endogenously European (along with historical-cultural phenomena such as the Renaissance, the 17<sup>th</sup> century scientific revolution, etc. which are seen, from this point of view, as the historical building blocks, so to speak, of modernity).



Postoccidental theory wants to challenge these kinds of assumption. In so doing, it seeks to resignify the quasi-tautological relationship between “modernity” and “capitalism”, not by denying their intimate connection, but by deconstructing and resignifying “modernity” as a term referring to a “globally” constituted – rather than to an endogenously, locally, European-constituted – phenomenon. From this viewpoint, colonialism becomes the conceptual middle term, so to speak, between capitalism and modernity, without which neither capitalism nor modernity are thinkable. In making this move, it seems to me that postoccidental analysis hopes to provide a new way of theorizing the relationship between capitalism and colonialism that has been so problematic in Marxist and post-Marxist theory. Rather than viewing colonialism as a kind of epiphenomenon, or second-order result, of capitalist modes of production and capitalism’s relentless search for profit – defined as a dynamic internal to national (European) societies – it is viewed instead as a *prerequisite* of capitalism defined as a *world system*, and thus as a fundamental condition for that *internal* European dynamic, which in turn gives rise to *modernity* as a dialectical *relationship* between the center and its peripheries. The expansionary impetus for national capitalist economies presupposed the colonization of peripheries rich in metals and an available captive labor force. But these connections imply, in turn, that “modernity”, insofar as it is associated with the cultural and social changes produced by capitalism, cannot be conceived as an endogenously eurocentric phenomenon, diffused outward from an occidental center, and that it is inextricably bound up with colonial relations of power and the ethnocentric imaginary through which Europeans distinguished themselves from those they colonized.

Enrique Dussel begins one of his various essays on eurocentrism and modernity with the following paragraph:

Dos paradigmas opuestos, el eurocéntrico y el planetario, caracterizan la cuestión de la modernidad. El primero de ellos concibe la modernidad, desde un punto de vista eurocéntrico, como un fenómeno *exclusivamente* europeo originado durante la edad media, que luego se habría extendido por el mundo entero.<sup>1</sup> Max Weber por ejemplo, sitúa el 'problema de la historia universal' mediante la siguiente pregunta: 'a qué combinación de circunstancias debe atribuirse el hecho de que en la *civilización occidental*, y solamente en la civilización occidental,<sup>2</sup> han hecho su aparición fenómenos culturales que (como nos<sup>3</sup> gustaría pensar) corresponden a una línea de desarrollo que posee valor y significado universal'.<sup>4</sup> De acuerdo con este paradigma, Europa poseía características *internas* excepcionales que le permitieron superar, a través de su racionalidad, a todas las demás culturas.<sup>5</sup>

In denominating, *antemano*,<sup>6</sup> this Weberian thesis a eurocentric one, Dussel seeks to deprive it of its claim to scientific objectivity, to view it, discursively, as a hypothesis

<sup>1</sup> In a note on his own text, Dussel, comments: "Como una 'sustancia' que es inventada en Europa y que luego se extiende por todo el mundo. Se trata de una tesis metafísica-sutancialista y 'difusionista', que además contiene una 'falacia reduccionista.'" Enrique Dussel, "Mas allá del eurocentrismo: El sistema- mundo y los límites de la modernidad", in S. Castro-Gómez, O. Guardiola-Rivera and C. Millán de Benavides, eds., *Pensar (en) los intersticios: Teoría y práctica de la crítica poscolonial*, Bogotá, Colección Pensar, 1999, p. 199n.

<sup>2</sup> In another note on his own text, Dussel says at this juncture: "La traducción no resulta adecuada para explicitar la expresión que Weber utiliza en el original alemán: *Auf dem Boden*, que quiere decir desde el interior de su horizonte regional. Quisiera argumentar que 'en Europa' realmente significa el desarrollo de la modernidad de Europa como 'centro' de un 'sistema global' y no como un sistema *independiente*, como si 'solamente desde su interior' y como resultado de un desarrollo puramente interno se hubiese dar lugar al proceso, tal y como pretende el eurocentrismo." Ibid., p. 199n.

<sup>3</sup> Another Dussel note: "Este 'nos' refiere precisamente a los europeos eurocéntricos." Ibid., p. 200 n. For a similar singling out of the European "we", see Fernando Coronil's critique of Todorov's *Discovering America* in his article "Discovering America again: the politics of selfhood in the age of post-colonial empires" in *Michigan Romance Studies*, Ann Arbor, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Dussel's citation: "Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trad. Parsons, Talcott, New York: n.d. 1958, 13: el énfasis es mío. Con posterioridad pregunta Weber: 'Por qué razón el desarrollo científico, político, artístico o político de esos lugares [China e India] no siguió el camino de la racionalización que es peculiar de Occidente?' (25). Para argumentar esta cuestión Weber yuxtapone a los Babilonios, que no habrían matematizado la geometría, con los Griegos, quienes sí lo hicieron (sólo que Weber no sabe que los Griegos lo aprendieron de los Egipcios): igualmente arguye que la ciencia habría surgido en Occidente, pero no en India ni en China ni en ninguna otra parte de la cual el Occidente Latino aprendió la exactitud empírica y 'experiencial' Aristotélica (como los Franciscanos de Oxford, los Marcilios de Padua, etc.). Todos los argumentos helenocéntricos y/o eurocéntricos, como el de Weber, pueden ser refutados y falseados si se toma 1492 como la fecha última de comparación entre la supuesta superioridad de Occidente respecto de las otras culturas." Ibid., p. 200 n. Walter Mignolo quotes this same passage from Weber in his book *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 3-4, commenting immediately after citing it that "Weber was blind to the colonial difference and to the subalternization of knowledge built into it."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 146

<sup>6</sup> I say "antemano" because I do not see in Dussel's argument the refutation of the Weberian thesis that exact empirical science (like the modern technology based on it) is a basically European creation, notwithstanding the contributions of other cultures and notwithstanding possible errors by Weber in accounting for its genealogy. Try as I may, moreover, I do not understand what Dussel means by his claim, quoted in note 4 above, that "todos los argumentos helenocéntricos y/o eurocéntricos, como el de Weber, pueden ser refutados y falseados si se toma 1492 como la fecha última de comparación entre la supuesta superioridad de Occidente

incapable of arriving at anything but ethnocentrically biased conclusions. Dussel thus strikes at perhaps the single most important icon of occidental social science, and the father of all sociologies of modernity which, fatally flawed by their eurocentric bias from Dussel's point of view, are disqualified as capable of instructing us as to what "modernity" really *is*, by Dussel's instructing us as to what modernity cannot claim to *be*. The poststructural logic of postoccidental critique here, is in a sense that of finding the *locus of enunciation*, and thus relativizing the discourse, though Dussel attempts this relativization through an alternative account, as we shall see, of the origin of "world history".

Of course the critique does not stop here: postoccidental theory can, and must, construct alternative discourses, with alternative loci of enunciation – not with a claim to "scientific objectivity" (in the positivist sense), which is rendered impossible by the relativity of all discourses to their loci of enunciation – but with a claim to letting the other narrative(s) be heard, thereby contributing to the "universality" of multiple perspectives, the only possible

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respecto de las otras culturas." I understand that he sees that date as disestablishing the eurocentric claim to cultural superiority based, (as Dussel analyzes it), on a false genealogy from Greek antiquity to European modernity, whereas in reality (in Dussel's view) it was based on creating an "alterity", the non-European "other", vis-à-vis which the European claim to superiority was ethnocentrically constructed, *beginning* with the Encounter in 1492. He seems to imply that because the European scientific revolutions, in the main, came *after* that date, that they cannot claim any unique (eurocentric) backward linkage to Hellenism. (See section 2.2. below.) However, I do not see how Weber's claim to the originality of European empirical science rests on that (putatively) fictitious genealogy. As I will try to show in Chapter Three, section 3.2.3 the claim by, not only Weber, but by other more recent historians of science, of the West's advantage over other cultures in terms of hegemonic dominance from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on, due to its pursuit of exact science and modern technology, does not in and of itself constitute, let alone justify, a claim to cultural eurosupremacism (since that advantage in and of itself does not negate other aspects in which Europe was clearly at a *disadvantage* vis-à-vis other cultures, even after its scientific discoveries had begun). I also argue, (see note 17 and the Conclusion to this chapter), that the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> mathematical and scientific revolutions were accomplished, in one significant respect, due precisely to a *rupture* with European scholastic classicism (and thus with Europe's link to the ancient past). Unconvinced by Dussel's argument, therefore, I tend to see his claim that Weber's thesis – that the distinctly European claim to originating the form of exact, empirical science which produced modern technology is a eurocentric one – as derived from his critique of eurocentrism in general, rather than as the result of a convincing historical analysis. Mignolo's claim, likewise, that "Weber was blind to the colonial difference and to the subalternization of knowledge built into it" does not appear to me justified in this case. What relevance does this criticism have to the claim that exact, empirical science and its accompanying technological developments have been largely European in origin?

form of universality permitted us, not only from a poststructuralist perspective, but also from the post-positivist perspective of a social scientist such as Wallerstein.<sup>7</sup>

"Modernity", as a concept, thus loses some of its signification as a discernibly "objective" and "universal" structural change in human social relationships, to the extent that it is linked to an ethnocentric discourse used to *rationalize and justify* socio-economic structural changes involving a determinate set of power relations (colonialism/ coloniality). The idea of "modernity" as a *global systemic structure* (and thus "universal" in an *empirical* sense, but *not* in terms of its claim to being a teleology of global progress based on a putatively universal system of rational principles discovered by Europeans) is thus left more or less intact, while the discourse which has sought to universalize it epistemologically/ axiologically is de-universalized and provincialized.

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<sup>7</sup> This multi-perspectival notion of understanding history is embraced by Wallerstein as well, not only in the well-known report of the Gulbenkian Commission, but in his earlier *The Modern World System I*, where his "historical sociology" implies not just a breaking down of disciplinary barriers, but a recognition of the social scientist's locus of enunciation and her/his evaluative commitments, within the context of social reality as a system of power relations and contemporary struggles over hegemony. As he says: "A social system and all its constituent institutions, including the sovereign states of the modern world, are the loci of a wide range of social groups – in contact, in collusion, and above all, in conflict with each other. Since we all belong to multiple groups, we often have to make decisions as to the priorities demanded by our loyalties. Scholars and scientists are not somehow exempt from this requirement. Nor is the requirement limited to their nonscholarly, directly political roles in the social system....Objectivity is honesty within this framework. Objectivity is a function of the whole social system. Insofar as the system is lopsided, concentrating certain kinds of research activity in the hands of particular groups, the results will be 'biased' in favor of these groups. *Objectivity is the vector of a distribution of social investment in such activity such that it is performed by persons rooted in all the major groups of the world-system in a balanced fashion.* Given this definition, we do not have an objective social science today. On the other hand, it is not an unfeasible objective within the foreseeable future." Op. cit., pp. 9-10, emphasis added. In *Abrir las ciencias sociales: Informe de la Comisión Bulbenkian para la reestructuración de las ciencias sociales*, México, Siglo XXI Editoriales, 1996, both the problem of objectivity and the problem of universality in the social sciences is taken up. With respect to the former, the report opts for a connection between objectivity and both the "intersubjectividad" and "inclusividad" of social science practice. The latter, on the other hand, is associated with "una ciencia social más 'multicultural' o 'intercultural'," which is what I am associating with the kind of universality that postoccidentalism seems to be calling for. However, it is not clear that postoccidentalism can meaningfully speak of a "reform" of the social sciences, given its assignment to social science – through a kind of guilt by association (association, that is, with "occidental metanarratives") – of an occidentalist prejudice. I.e., it is unclear what remains of the truth claims of "social science", once its occidentalist bias has been deconstructed. As I see it, this is one of the unresolved epistemological questions in postoccidental theory. It would appear that postoccidentalism proposes itself as a propaedeutic, or prolegomena, to a post-colonial critical social theory and epistemology, thereby replacing "social science" as this has been understood. Herein, it seems to me, lies another tension between postoccidentalism and world systems theory.

But the strategy of the critique goes even further, as I see it. The Wallersteinian concept of a an objectively describable, structurally articulated world system gives way, as I suggested in the Introduction, to the idea of a cultural-discursive articulation of that world system. "Modernity", as signifying a transformation in the materiality and social structuration of human life, is resignified as a shift in power relations and the discursive formations ("regimens of truth", in Foucault's terms) that articulate social relations of power, which does not negate the structural, material transformations but which *signifies* them according to a certain cultural logic. The modern (capitalist) world "system" is, in a sense, from this viewpoint, a system of signs, a semiotically "structured" world of determinate class (Europe) and racial-caste (colonial periphery) relations.

Having reduced Weber's hypothesis to reductionism, provincialism and ethnocentrism, Dussel proceeds to attack another icon of Western hegemonic thought, Hegel, whose philosophy of history is viewed as the logical (in the sense of ideo-logical) basis of Weberian social science. Dussel continues as follows:

Filosóficamente, nadie expresa esta tesis acerca de la modernidad mejor que Hegel: 'El espíritu alemán es el espíritu del nuevo mundo. Su objetivo es la realización de la Verdad absoluta como la auto-determinación (*Selbstbestimmung*) ilimitada de la Libertad – esa Libertad que tiene su propia forma absoluta como su pretensión'.<sup>8</sup> Para Hegel, el espíritu europeo (el espíritu alemán) es la verdad absoluta que se determina o realiza a sí misma sin deber nada a nadie. Esta tesis, que denomino el paradigma eurocéntrico (en oposición al paradigma mundial), se ha impuesto no solamente en Europa y Estados Unidos, sino también en toda la esfera intelectual de la periferia mundial.<sup>9</sup>

Having associated Weber's thesis about European pre-eminence in the discovery of empirical science and scientific universality with Hegel's philosophy of history as its foundational paradigm, Dussel is now ready to make another very important conceptual move in postoccidental theory: that of exposing the connection between eurocentrism as a

<sup>8</sup> Dussel's endnote citation: "Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *The philosophy of history*, trad. Sibree, J., New York: Dover Publications, 1956. Ibid., p. 200n.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

geographical locus of enunciation (and its subsequent hegemony in all of its geographical periphery) and the eurocentric historization of time in terms of an ethnocentric evolutionism.<sup>10</sup> Dussel continues as follows:

La cronología de esta posición tiene su propia geopolítica: la subjetividad moderna se desarrolla espacialmente, según el paradigma eurocéntrico, desde la Italia del Renacimiento a la Alemania de la Reforma y la Ilustración, y de allí a la Francia de la Revolución Francesa.<sup>11</sup> a través de todo este proceso, Europa permanece como el eje central. La división 'pseudo-científica' de la historia en Antigüedad (como antecedente), Edad Media (como época preparatoria) y Edad Moderna (Europa) constituye una organización ideológica y una deformación de la historia. Se trata de una periodización que crea problemas éticos con relación a otras culturas. La filosofía, especialmente la ética, necesita romper con este horizonte reduccionista para abrirse al 'mundo', a la esfera planetaria.<sup>12</sup>

The guiding principals of much of the postoccidental critique can be found in this paragraph, whose central ideas are to be found in one or another locus in virtually all of the writings that can be categorized as postoccidental. We find here, of course, an affinity with European postmodernism's assault on the European "metanarrative" of universal historical progress, but with the added dimension of a postcolonial and "planetary" ethical perspective which serves as an indictment of the abuse of other cultures to which, presumably, this willful distortion of history has led.

From this deconstruction of the foundation of occidental philosophy and social science as a eurocentric claim to the original and *sui generis* character of European history, a kind of postoccidental "paradigm" is created – (in the Kuhnian sense of a conceptual framework for a "normal science", i.e., a kind of postoccidental research, to which a great deal of postoccidental thought and writing is devoted). This paradigm allows the postoccidentalist to deconstruct a wide variety of European-colonized relationships and discourses, having to do with issues such as the supposed superiority of lettered over oral culture (another

<sup>10</sup> This is the thematic of section 2.2, where it is analyzed in detail.

<sup>11</sup> Dussel's note: "De acuerdo con Hegel en Habermas, Jürgen: *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*. Frankfurt: n.d.1988, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-148.

Weberian thesis singled out by postoccidentalism), the superiority of rationalism over naturalistic or animistic epistemologies, the discourse of “civilization” versus “barbarism”, of “Christian” versus “infidel”, etc. and to counter them with a reappraisal of the many indigenous narratives, local histories and local epistemologies that these discourses covered over and depreciated.

Thus, at the basis of postoccidental analysis is its equation of the view of modernity – found in much of the historiography and social science produced by “occidental” scholarship – with a eurocentric belief in European superiority over colonial “others”: others whose own histories, forms of knowledge, systems of value, cosmologies (conceptions of space, time, genesis, growth, evolution, etc.) are depreciated, in a systematically discursive way, by the imposition of a paradigm whose success as a generator of power over nature and other human beings is mistakenly taken as a sign of its epistemological and axiological superiority over other forms of knowledge and systems of value. From the point of view of this critique, occidental achievements are neither as lofty as the eurocentric imaginary has represented them, nor as original (endogenous) as they have been supposed to be.

## **2.2 The postoccidental critique of occidentally defined historical time.**

In a passage quoted from Dussel in section 2.1, above<sup>13</sup>, mention was made of that aspect of eurocentric modernist discourse which interprets the geopolitical supremacy in geographical space of the entity known as Europe in terms of a eurocentric *chronology* and *periodization* in relation to other cultures. Dussel has analyzed in detail how this historical narrative distorts, from his point of view, the historical connection between European

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<sup>13</sup> This passage is cited in the previous footnote.

modernity and classical antiquity, claiming a “pseudo-historical” direct link between the European Renaissance and Greek classical culture. I present here a compressed version of this analysis.

Dussel questions these backward linkages of the European historical narrative on historical grounds<sup>14</sup> and, in so doing, seeks to discredit the eurocentric narrative of European “civilization,” as both unique (i.e., culturally-historically specific) and “universal” (i.e., the norm, the standard for humanity as a whole) at the same time. Dussel’s critique of this claim to a unique backward linkage to classical antiquity on the part of the European historical imaginary makes clearer why the 16<sup>th</sup> century Iberian colonization of the Americas is so crucial to the postoccidental critique of modernity.

The claim to such a backward linkage, as Dussel sees it, presupposes that a “world history” already existed (prior to the emergence of a capitalist world system in the 16<sup>th</sup> century), and that Europe is heir (as Hegel supposed) to an unbroken tradition from Greco-Roman antiquity to the present (i.e. Hegel’s time). Dussel argues, however, that European culture has no unique claim (nor even the most convincing one) to that linkage and that, in any case, there *is* no world history prior to the westward expansion of Portugal and Spain toward the Americas near the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Es decir, nunca hubo empíricamente Historia Mundial hasta el 1492 (como fecha de iniciación del despliegue del “Sistema-mundo”). Anteriormente a esta fecha los imperios o sistemas culturales coexistían entre sí. Sólo con la expansión portuguesa desde el siglo XV, que llega al Extreme Oriente en el siglo XVI, y con el descubrimiento de América hispánica, todo el planeta se torna el “lugar” de “una sola” *Historia Mundial*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For the specifics of this historical deconstruction, see Enrique Dussel, “Europa, modernidad y eurocentrismo”, en *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*, Edgardo Lander, comp., Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 2000, p. 46. In this deconstruction, Dussel also notes the superior claim of Islamic culture, e.g., to a direct link to classical antiquity.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 46.



Dussel's argument seems to be as follows: Europe's claim to being the center of a universal historical development only begins to be credible with the era of European colonialism. Its centrality is that of a colonial metropolitan center (of a world-colonial system) economically and culturally enmeshed with its peripheries. Only with the initiation of its relationship to the non-European "other" does its centrality in world history begin to have a concretely empirical, not to mention an ideological, basis. Portugal and Spain, by going beyond the confines of Europe to a "new world" unknown to Europeans, initiate a world history, and therefore the beginnings of "modernity", in the sense of the imaginary of a co-temporal geo-space. This imaginary is made possible by the incorporation of continental America into the existing cartography of Europe, Asia and Africa. It is the imaginary of a spatially finite, yet circumnavigable, globe tied together by commerce and the articulation of intercontinental geopolitical power.<sup>16</sup>

España, como primera nación "moderna"....abre la primera etapa "Moderna": el mercantilismo mundial. Las minas de Potosí y Zacatecas (descubiertas en 1545-1546) permiten acumular riqueza monetaria suficiente para vencer a los Turcos en Lepanto veinticinco años después de dicho hallazgo (1571). El Atlántico suplanta al Mediterráneo. Para nosotros, la 'centralidad' de la Europa latina en la Historia Mundial es la *determinación fundamental de la Modernidad*. Las demás determinaciones se van dando en torno a ella (la subjetividad constituyente, la propiedad privada, la libertad del contrato, etc.) El siglo XVII (p.e. Descartes, etc.) son ya el fruto de un siglo y medio de 'Modernidad': son efecto y no punto de partida. Holanda (que se emancipa de España en 1610), Inglaterra y Francia continuarán el camino abierto.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> I am interpolating here, as far as the article being quoted is concerned. The connection between modernity and the economic and cultural knitting-together of the "Old World" and the "New World" (see a critique of the notion the "new world" by Mignolo, cited below) into a planetary imaginary seems to lie at the basis of what Dussel conceives as "modernity" and its connection with a "world history." He makes this connection explicit in an earlier article, quoted below and cited in note 18. This view is, of course, consistent with the world systems view of modernity as well, cited in the Introduction to this investigation.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 46. I criticize, in Chapter Three, one aspect of this passage: its assumption of a cultural "longue durée" corresponding to the history of the capitalist world system. However, here I am interested in Dussel's view of how the European imagination historicized its own evolution in relation to other cultures, and find his conception of "world history" as co-emergent with Iberian expansionism, and his critique of European claims to a unique backward link to classical civilization, credible and compelling up to a point. However, while it is true that medieval Europeans would never have known of Aristotle or Greek mathematics and astronomy without their contact with Moslem intellectuals, for example, I do not see how one can deny the unique way in which key European intellectuals engaged the knowledge of antiquity so as to produce totally unique and revolutionary syntheses (from the Renaissance on) that were self-consciously modern, in the sense of a break

From this point of view, *European modernity* is deprived of its connection to an antique lineage of civilizing discourses, narratives and cultural formations (the pretended *backward* linkage) and is instead linked to a geopolitical imaginary and a series of civilizing discourses which *it itself produces* from 1492 *onwards* vis-à-vis its colonial “other”, even as it “inscribes” (to use a favored term of Walter Mignolo) its supposed unique connection to a civilized Greco-Roman past in its construction of that “other” as uncivilized, barbaric (i.e., deprived of the supposed European connection to a civilized antiquity). As Dussel expressed it in his “Frankfurt Lectures” on “Eurocentrism and Modernity” delivered some years before the essays quoted in the previous subsection:

Modernity is, for many (for Jürgen Habermas or Charles Taylor, for example), an essentially or exclusively European phenomenon. In these lectures, I will argue that modernity is, in fact, a European phenomenon, but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity that is its ultimate content. Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the “center” of a *World History* that it inaugurates; the “periphery” that surrounds this center is consequently part of its self-definition. The occlusion of this periphery (and the role of Spain and Portugal in the formation of the modern world system from the late fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries) leads the major contemporary thinkers of the “center” into a Eurocentric fallacy in their understanding of modernity. If

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both with antiquity and with Europe’s own medieval scholastic Christianity, which had turned ancient wisdom into a self-limiting, backward-looking reverence for ancient authority. This break with the authority of tradition, including the traditions of high classical antiquity, is what lends credibility to the idea of an endogenous European modernity, rather than a smug eurocentric belief in an unbroken connection with classical civilization. As I will argue in Chapter Three, there seems to me to be a consistent tendency in postoccidental analysis to view “Occidentalism” under the guise of a “longue durée” trajectory that occludes the very real sense in which the occidental trajectory has been characterized by revolutionary rupture, and that it is this characteristic of “Occidentalism”, more than any other, which supports its claim to an endogenously produced “modernity”, i.e., the idea of Europe as a scene of successive epistemological ruptures. The marriage which took place in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe between empirical observation and mathematical logic and the quantification of natural forces, from this point of view, “is the most dramatic moment...in the history of what will separate Europe from all other civilizations, producing that uniquely quantitative science and the technology that follows from it, that will, for better or for worse, revolutionize the human relationship to nature.” Charles Kors, “God’s Mathematical Order: the New Cosmology”, video lecture series, Arlington, The Teaching Company, 1990. Thus, while I would tend to agree with Dussel that the European imaginary of being at the center of world history is a consequence of the Iberian/European project of colonial expansion from the 15<sup>th</sup> century on, rather than being based on a unique European link to antiquity, this new-found centrality in world history does not seem to me, in and of itself, to explain the subsequent dynamism of European expansion. This dynamism, as I understand it, has *precisely* to do with the specific way in which European intellectual culture assimilated, and *transcended*, ancient knowledge, thereby producing new forms of knowledge which lent themselves to geopolitical and geoeconomic hegemonic projects.

their understanding of the genealogy of modernity is thus partial and provincial, their attempts at a critique or defense of it are likewise unilateral and, in part, false.<sup>18</sup>

Thus modernity, for Dussel, is a phenomenon inseparable from the European constitution of the colonial "other" on whom it projects a subordinate role in the creation of "world history", (but with whom this European construction of modernity establishes an inseparable connection, with its 16<sup>th</sup> century Iberian westward expansionary phase of European mercantilism). The colonial "other" is incorporated into this world history from the perspective of a European imaginary that now sees the task of the European colonizer as that of bringing the Christian faith and civilization (supposedly a Greco-Roman-Hebraic classical legacy unique to Europeans) to primitives/infidels who lack a history, who are outside of historical time, simple creatures of nature, etc. Up to a point, this is the argument that modernity is inseparable from coloniality and eurocentrism, as presented and criticized in Chapter One and section 2.1 above. However, a new and important element has been introduced – the notion of a European imaginary of historical time.

On the basis of this imaginary, a teleological conception of history is created in which Christian eschatology is the foundational ideology of what will evolve into a secular civilizing project. From this standpoint, "modernity" can be seen as a secularization of what one postoccidental writer calls a "Christian chronotopology":

"...la cristiandad europeo-medieval instituyó una cronotopología del mundo por medio de la cual se trazó un mapa del mismo que eliminó los *loci* espacio-temporales de otras culturas. La forma particular por medio de la cual esta cronotopología adquirió semblanza se produjo en el cronograma de la evangelización. Esta evangelización llevó al desentrañamiento de otros cronotopos y de otras experiencias de trascendencia...."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Dussel, "Eurocentrism and modernity", in J. Beverly and J. Oveido, eds., *The Postmodern Debate in Latin America*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993.

<sup>19</sup> Eduardo Mendieta, "Modernidad, posmodernidad y poscolonialismo: una búsqueda esperanzadora del tiempo", in S. Castro-Gómez and E. Mendieta, op. cit., 1998, p. 155.

Eduardo Mendieta, the author of the above passage, entitles the subsection following it “La modernidad como secularización del cronograma cristiano” which he begins with the following comment:

“Valiéndose de otros medios, la modernidad perpetuó la cronotopolgía cristiana. La modernidad es la autodescripción de la sociedad a partir del tropo de la secularización de la historia divina. ¿En que consiste tal secularización? Consiste básicamente en la noción de progreso, la tan conocida separación de la Iglesia del Estado, el desarrollo y la diferenciación social....El progreso, el desarrollo y la diferenciación social son los instrumentos por medio de los cuales nuestras sociedades persisten en su modernidad. Calificar nuestras sociedades de modernas es, en cierta medida, una repetición de la empresa de los misioneros cristianos quienes se autoadjudicaban un estatus providencial, es decir la misión del sujeto blanco como sacrificio: evangelizar y colonizar al infiel.”<sup>20</sup>

According to the ideas expressed in this passage, a clear line can be drawn between the discourse/practice of Christianization (evangelization) and modernity-as-progress (and its accompanying practices), since the former, by constructing the hierarchical relation “Christian-infidel”, creates the basis for the latter’s eurocentric hierarchizing of the distinction between “traditional” and “modern”, or between “underdeveloped” and “developed.” In postoccidental terms, this amounts to the temporal-historical hierarchization of cultures, with a European “self” seen as historically/temporally “more advanced” than non-European “others”, and thus somehow “further ahead” in “historical time”, a notion that is manifestly implausible and counter-intuitive when viewed in terms of time as a universal temporal “arrow”, so to speak, of co-evolution in which all historical trajectories are *relative* to one another, because all are referable to the same, universal planetary-evolutionary time.

Walter Mignolo provides a periodization of the modern chronotopology (that is, an analysis of how the occidental view of historical time evolved historically) beginning with the 16<sup>th</sup> century colonial expansion. His periodization helps us to understand how

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

postoccidental theory sees the interpenetration of colonial discourse with eurocentric imaginaries of space and time. Mignolo, like Mendieta, sees the Christian-evangelist phase of Iberian conquest as the first phase in a trajectory of colonialist discourses and practices which have continued up to the present day (up to the stage of “globalization”, in its current sense). As he sees it, there have been

“tres etapas previas de la globalización [which he views as the current stage], bajo las banderas de la cristianización (por parte del imperio español), la misión civilizadora (por parte del imperio británico y la colonización francesa) y el desarrollo/ modernización (por parte del imperialismo norteamericano).<sup>21</sup>

From the point of view of Mignolo and other post-occidental writers, the prioritizing in European historical narrative of its (European) development from medieval to modern, (with its claim, as Dussel points out, to a unique connection with the classical Greco-Roman legacy), while at the same time denying a coeval historical evolution to other cultures, is what he calls “the denial of coevalness”, (when it appears in essays written in English), or “*la negación de la contemporaneidad*” (in essays written in Spanish). It is a centrally important idea in the postoccidental deconstruction of the European imaginary of space and time as applied to the core-periphery relationship – and of “modernity” eurocentrically defined. It is this “denial of coevalness” that makes it possible to construct the colonial “other”, located *geographically* in the periphery of the world system, as *temporally* “living in the past” or living “outside of history” and as needing to be brought into the chronotopology of Europe through the colonizing/Christianizing/civilizing/modernizing project.

This denial of coevalness is the product of a discursive evolution in which, according to Mignolo, the exotic nature of the “other” encountered by the European in the early stages of

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<sup>21</sup> Walter Mignolo, loc. cit. 1999, p. 59.

exploration (e.g., of the Americas) is transformed from an alterity in geographical space to an alterity in historical time, such that the “primitive” or the “barbarous” (the exotic-savage) becomes the “other” of pre-history, a proto-historical human (or culture) who (or which) only enters into “*history*” as such with her/his (its) encounter with the European “civilizer.” This “civilizing” aspect of the occidental project reaches a crucial stage in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the representation of the colonized non-European as existing outside of history, because external to the teleological unfolding of “reason” – as defined in 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment terms – as the organizing principal of human relationships.<sup>22</sup>

This discursive construction proceeded through stages which corresponded to the expansion of Europeans toward “new worlds.” Thus, says Mignolo in his essay “Globalización, procesos civilizatorios y la reubicación de lenguas y culturas”:

Unas cuantas décadas antes de la emergencia de un continente desconocido (desde la perspectiva de los observadores europeos) y de la gente desconocida que lo habitaba, los confines de la geografía coincidían con los de la humanidad. Se pensaba que más allá de los confines geográficos habitaban criaturas exóticas con dos cabezas, tres brazos, y cosas parecidas. Los límites de la geografía coincidían con los límites de la humanidad. Sin embargo, en cuestión de dos o tres décadas, ambos confines (los del mundo y los de la humanidad) se empezaron a transformar radicalmente. Las criaturas exóticas que alguna vez habían habitado los rincones desconocidos del mundo fueron reemplazados por los salvajes (o canibales) que habitaban el Nuevo Mundo.<sup>23</sup>

At this juncture, when geographical fantasy had been replaced by the actual encounter with the empirically real “other”, the eurocentric imaginary began to construct discourses of asymmetry between the European and that “other”. These discursive constructions proceeded along two lines of force:

Los confines geográficos y los de la humanidad fueron reubicados por dos fuerzas: por un lado, la transformación del conocimiento generada por las interacciones culturales entre gentes que hasta este momento no sabían unos de otros; y por otro, la creciente conciencia

<sup>22</sup> Or, as in Mary Louise Pratt’s way of stating it, a view of non-European peoples as inhabitants of “a world whose history was about to begin” with the arrival of Europeans with their modernizing/civilizing project. In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, New York, Routledge, p. 126.

<sup>23</sup> Walter Mignolo, “Globalización, procesos civilizatorios y la reubicación de lenguas y culturas”, in op. cit., 1999, pp. 57-58.

de la expansión de la tierra más allá de los límites de lo conocido. Los caníbales y los salvajes fueron ubicados en un espacio que empezó a concebirse como un Nuevo Mundo.<sup>24</sup>

The imaginary of "New World" is another stage in the construction of the eurocentric imaginary.<sup>25</sup> Without entering into a discussion, at this point, of the genealogy of the various stages in the construction of this imaginary, suffice it to say that Mignolo has provided us with a foundational moment in the "denial of coevalness", by having us focus on the implicit asynchrony between the eurocentric notion of a "new world", on the one hand, and an already-established (from the eurocentric point of view) and supposedly ancient European chronology claiming its origins in Greco-Roman antiquity, on the other. The "diachrony" that will become much more central in later stages of the eurocentric discourse about the "other" has begun to make itself manifest, even if only implicitly. In order to claim a normative and universal status for the European chronotopology, "time" has been split into two: universal (European) *history*, on the one hand, and the particular temporalities (*non-historical*, i.e., non-developmental, as well as non-universal, i.e., incapable of serving as a civilizational norm) of all the non-European cultural "others".

As Mignolo sees it, the European imaginary that separated the "cannibals and savages" of the "New World" from the European was basically geographical and spatial in its incipient stages. It was an imaginary of space and distance, the space and distance between two worlds, one that was known, the "old world", and one that was unknown, the "new world." But "old" and "new" had not yet acquired a *temporal-historical* meaning, as such. That changed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

A finales del siglo XIX, los confines espaciales se volvieron cronológicos. A comienzos del periodo moderno [in the 16<sup>th</sup> century], ocurrió una transformación entre los confines

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Mignolo points out, not without considerable irony, the ethnocentric arrogance of the European designation of a part of the world as "new", because it was hitherto unknown to the "discoverers", a world which was obviously anything but "new" to its indigenous inhabitants!

geográficos y humanos: a fines del siglo XIX, los salvajes y los caníbales del espacio se convirtieron en los primitivos y exóticos orientales del tiempo. Mientras que el siglo XVI fue el escenario de un caluroso debate acerca de los confines de la humanidad, con Las Casas, Sepúlveda y Victoria como personajes principales de la controversia, hacia el siglo XIX el problema ya no era si los primitivos y los orientales eran humanos o no, sino, más bien, qué tan lejos estaban del presente Estado de civilización de la humanidad. A Lafiteau (*Moeurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, 1724) se le ha dado crédito como uno de los pensadores más importantes en este proceso de convertir a los salvajes/caníbales en primitivos/orientales y de desplazarlos a una escala cronológica opuesta a la distancia geográfica. La “negación de la contemporaneidad” fue el resultado final de reubicar a los pueblos en una jerarquía cronológica en vez de hacerlo en lugares geográficos. La reubicación de lenguas, pueblos y culturas en el tiempo y no en el espacio, que encuentra su formulación más sistemática en la *Filosofía de la historia* (1822) de Hegel, no había sido refutada, hasta hace unos cincuenta años, por los intelectuales involucrados en los movimientos de liberación y descolonización.<sup>26</sup>

The idea of a “chronological hierarchy” obviously only makes sense if we *deny* (in a logic-defying way) the obvious fact that persons spatially/geographically distant and largely unknown to one another are still *coeval in time*, and therefore, as Mignolo says, “co-evolving.”<sup>27</sup> A chronological hierarchy ranking cultures in terms of their temporal “location” in an imaginary teleology of unfolding stages of development only makes sense if we grant *ontological* status to what that imaginary represents, as if it were something *objectively given*, rather than constructed by particular historical subjects as an imaginary in which they could see themselves as hierarchically superior. Once we deconstruct such a chronological hierarchy as an ethnocentric discourse, we are able to see the *coevalness* of all cultures at any given moment, and to understand them as “co-evolving” within their particular geo-cultural contexts.

This acceptance of coevalness, in turn, requires a recognition that the geographical notions of “center” and “periphery”, through which the colonial project is articulated, are themselves wholly relative and cannot be understood in a culturally hierarchical sense.

<sup>26</sup> Mignolo, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> See passage quoted below, cited in note 28, for Mignolo’s notion of “co-evolution”, as well as the same passage quoted at greater length in Chapter One.



Mignolo sees the deconstruction of the spatial geography of center and periphery as, at the same time, opening up the perspective of “co-evolution” in time. I requote part of a passage cited in Chapter One (where it was cited in the context of an analysis of the relation between postoccidentalism and dependency theory):

I am using throughout this book [*The Darker Side of the Renaissance*] the dichotomy center/periphery. I am not using it on the assumption that there is one ontological center (Europe) and various ontological peripheries (the colonies). I hope to show that the center is movable..., as is the personal pronoun “I”, and as are the notions *same* and *other*. It so happened, however, that during the sixteenth century Europe began to be construed as the center and colonial expansion as movement toward the peripheries – that, of course, from the perspective of a European observer.... One of the main goals of this study is, precisely, to bring to the foreground the ‘histories’ and the ‘centers’ that European missionaries and men of letters denied to people from colonial peripheries. Only within an evolutionary model of history could center and periphery be fixed and ontologized. Within a coevolutionary model and a pluritopic hermeneutics, centers and peripheries coexist in a constant struggle of power, domination, and resistance.<sup>28</sup>

Such a “coevolutionary model of history” is analogous to what Dussel denotes as a “planetary” as opposed to a eurocentric paradigm of modernity. Once eurocentrism is abandoned, we can understand the modern world as co-constituted by all the peoples who were participants, willing or otherwise, in the constitution of the modern world system, opening up the possibility of what Dussel terms “transmodernity”. From this perspective,

The “realization” of modernity no longer lies in the passage from its abstract potential to its “real,” European, embodiment. It lies today, rather, in a process that will transcend modernity as such, a trans-modernity, in which both modernity and its negated alterity (the victims) co-realize themselves in a process of mutual creative fertilization. Trans-modernity (as a project of political, economic, ecological, erotic, pedagogical, and religious liberation) is the co-realization of that which it is impossible for modernity to accomplish by itself: that is, of an *incorporative* solidarity, which I have called *analectic*, between center/periphery, man/woman, different races, different ethnic groups, different classes, civilization/nature, Western culture/Third world cultures, et cetera. For this to happen, however, the negated and victimized “other-face” of modernity – the colonial periphery, the Indian, the slave, the woman, the child, the subalternized popular cultures – must, in the first place, discover itself as innocent, as the “innocent victim” of a ritual sacrifice, who, in the process of discovering itself as innocent may now judge modernity as guilty of an originary, constitutive, and irrational violence.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995, p. 337n.

<sup>29</sup> Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, op. cit., 1993, p. 1976. If, as I have claimed, the postoccidental conception of “modernity”, as identifiable with “eurocentric coloniality”, is reductionist, this concept of a

Thus the transcendence of modernity, eurocentrically defined, implies at the most fundamental level the recognition of the denial, in the occidental metanarrative, of a co-evolution to the colonial “others”, “others” whose own historicity has been negated by the European discourse of chronological hierarchy and whose historical trajectories have been truncated and even aborted by colonial practices of discrimination and domination.

It is in this context that postoccidentalism views the current “globalization” stage of the world system, thereby providing a distinctive perspective on this phenomenon not found, perhaps, in quite the same way in other theorizations. After describing “las tres etapas de la modernidad” (see above), Mignolo then introduces the idea that “the *negation* of the negation of coevalness” (“*la negación de la negación de la contemporaneidad*”) – which corresponds to the acceptance of a co-evolution in time and space of European and non-European cultures – is aided and abetted by the present stage in the development of the modern world system, i.e., *globalization*. Globalization is regarded as the latest stage in the articulation of the world system.

La etapa actual de la globalización, dirigida por compañías transnacionales, está contribuyendo de manera involuntaria con la restitución del espacio y del lugar y con la multiplicación de las historias locales. En otras palabras, la etapa actual de la globalización y su énfasis en el mercado están contribuyendo a la negación de la negación de la contemporaneidad, un principio estratégico de las tres etapas previas de la globalización, bajo las banderas de la cristianización (por parte del imperio español), la misión civilizadora (por parte del imperio británico y la colonización francesa) y el desarrollo/modernización (por parte del imperialismo norteamericano).<sup>30</sup>

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“trans-modernity” seems to me utopian and visionary. From both points of view, “modernity” as a historical phenomenon is identified with “coloniality” and “eurocentricity”: whatever else it is, or has been, is rendered relatively insignificant by its deployment as a system of colonial domination, and by its disguising itself as something progressive and emancipatory. However, as I argue in the conclusion to this chapter, the postoccidental critique of occidentally defined historical time, taken as an analytically distinct element of the postoccidental critique of occidental modernity in general, is fundamentally valid and cannot be said to be either totalizing or reductionist, though it is beyond the scope of this investigation to provide a more detailed argument as to why I believe this to be the case.

<sup>30</sup> Mignolo, “Globalización, procesos civilizatorios y la reubicación de las lenguas,” op. cit., p. 57-58.

With this passage, the trajectory of this line of thought, presented above in the series of citations from Mignolo's writings, can be recapitulated as follows: once the initial "discovery" of the "New World" was accomplished, and the Iberian phase of modernity as the joint imposition of mercantilist/colonial policies and Christian ideology had begun, the exotic others began to be imagined as, not exotic and questionably human beings, but as human beings outside of history, "lost" and unredeemed in a time without history. Christianity, as a religion permeated with teleological temporality, gave rise to a colonial-religious imaginary which represented the beginning of the displacement of the other from *spatially distanced* to *temporally-historically behind*, since to be non-Christian was to be outside of the biblical eschatology of original sin/redemption, and therefore outside of "history" as imagined by that eschatology. Although the "denial of coevalness" did not reach its fully developed form until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Christian eschatology had been transformed into the secular doctrine of "progress" (later to become the discourse of "modernization/ development"), the process of temporal-historical hierarchization of European "self" and non-European "other" had already begun. The current stage of "globalization" marks the end of the myth of diachronic history, which reveals the eurocentric historical chronologies, embodied in occidental historical metanarratives, as discursive constructions rather than truly "historical" descriptions in any recognizably historiographic sense.

Las tres etapas de la globalización representadas por la expansión europea previa al mercado transnacional y mundial que estoy presuponiendo aquí, no deben ser vistas como si siguieran una cronología lineal hegeliana sino, más bien, en una coexistencia espacial de memoria...y como contradicciones diacrónicas. Paradójicamente, la última etapa de la globalización (compañías transnacionales y tecnoglobalismo) está creando las condiciones para pensar más de manera espacial que cronológica. La espacialización trae a un primer plano el hecho de que no hay gente del presente que esté viviendo en el pasado (como lo proponía el modelo hegeliano de la historia universal) sino que el presente es una variedad de círculos cronológicos y ritmos temporales. Así, la globalización económica está

facilitando la tarea intelectual de negar la negación de la contemporaneidad, de eliminar la misión civilizadora y de conceptualizar el proceso civilizador como uno en el cual la humanidad entera contribuyo y está contribuyendo.<sup>31</sup>

Seen from this perspective, globalization as a stage in the evolution of the modern world system, is a potentially emancipatory stage, since it restores the ontological primacy of contemporaneity, thereby dispelling the illusion that “hay gente del presente que esté viviendo en el pasado.” If all the worlds’ peoples are living in the same historical, co-evolutionary time, then we can no longer deny that this “modern” world in which we live is the co-constitution of all of those peoples, and a ranking of cultures in terms of their “location” along a historical-evolutionary continuum loses all meaning. What Dussel calls the “planetary paradigm” thus emerges as the current era’s possibility of redemptive grace brought forth by the travails of modernity’s history of eurocentric domination, despoliation and exploitation of non-European peoples.

### 2.3 Conclusion

In my presentation of the postoccidental critique of eurocentrism as a fundamental constituent of modernity, occidentally defined, I have found it necessary to bring together two strands of that critique: one which focuses on the European claim to *originating* modernity, with its invention of scientific rationality based on the supposedly unique European legacy of classical civilization; and the other, which focuses on the occidental imaginary in which Europeans are “ahead” of other cultures in historical time. I have presented them together, because they comprise the two sides of a Janus-faced conception of European exceptionalism with respect to other cultures. In a very real sense, they must be considered together, inasmuch as the European imaginary of a superior historical

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<sup>31</sup> Mignolo, op. cit., pp. 59-60

teleology (of being more “advanced” or “ahead” in historical time) is, from the postoccidental viewpoint, rooted in a European presumption of a unique claim to being the heir of classical wisdom – upon which modern European rationality is supposedly constructed, from the Renaissance on,<sup>32</sup> and thus to be charged with a uniquely “civilizing” mission, (the reality of whose barbarous results have been clearly documented).

However, in spite of what I see as the necessity of presenting these two aspects of the critique of eurocentricity as comprising two sides of the same Janus-face, I do not see them as based on the same logic. As I see it, the notion of being “ahead” in historical time, i.e., the denial of coevalness between all cultures, is clearly eurosupremacist and based on a myth, a myth which is incompatible with the very notion of time as a planetary historical trajectory. No one culture, as Mignolo forcefully argues, can be understood as historically “ahead” of any other culture. Coevalness is a given property of universal, planetary time and defies all attempts at the mythopoetic construction of “diachronic history”.

However, as I see it, the postoccidental critique of eurocentrism, in the process of exposing the myth of European cultural-historical superiority, seeks to deny to European evolution certain properties which, it seems to me, are genuinely endogenous to Europe and which, to a significant extent, account for European hegemony in the world system from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on. While Dussel is certainly correct that western Europe was in no sense either the only, or even the most immediate, heir to classical culture, it seems to me

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<sup>32</sup> However, as I have argued above in note 17, I do not see the claim of European exceptionalism in its development of scientific rationality as based on a historical claim to a unique classical legacy. Any reasonably accurate history of European intellectual development would have to stress both the continuities and discontinuities with classical knowledge in the evolution of European natural philosophy and natural science. If the latter depended exclusively, or even primarily, on a supposedly unique connection to classical wisdom, neither would have ever come into being! In this sense, I would separate the real (historically portentous) achievements of European culture at this critical juncture from its cultural-historical imaginaries about itself and its mission in the world. The former cannot in any sense be reduced to the latter, and doing so, as I see it, overestimates the importance of these eurocentric/colonialist discursive formations in the creation of the modern world.

counter-historical to deny that particular European thinkers (in defiance of Europe's medieval Christian heritage), were able to *transmute* certain aspects of the ancient epistemologies in such a way that these transmutations contributed to the impetus of European scientific thinking, and that that scientific thinking, in turn, revolutionized both Europe and Europe's relationship to the rest of the world. (See note 17.)

It seems to me obscurantist to totalize the entire trajectory of European thought as one *longue durée*, each of whose stages is reducible to a eurosupremacist imaginary which supposedly provides them with their inner logic. It was precisely because certain exceptionally gifted Europeans (whose gifts were *human* not *European*!) defied the very cultural and epistemological assumptions on which European Christendom and neo-Aristotelian scholasticism had been built that Europe (quite against the inclinations of most Europeans!) became the center of a prodigious reshaping of the relationship between human beings and nature, which in turn was critical in creating the conditions for the technological basis of capitalism and its worldwide expansion.

Those individuals, far from smugly accepting a European connection with antiquity, were iconoclasts who challenged the whole idea of basing scientific knowledge on ancient authority. Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake for his ideas, and Galileo had to "recant" what he knew to be true in order to avoid the same fate. This internal dialectic between collective authority and individual genius seems to me fundamental to what I continue to regard as occidental modernism, but those who were most responsible for it had no *ideology* about "modernity", per se. Rather, they created the revolutionary ideas that made a break with the past inevitable. It thus seems to me reductionistic to view European intellectual evolution in terms of an overweening preoccupation with ethnic superiority, or

to see in Iberian expansionism a sufficient condition for successive European hegemonies (see next Chapter).

In saying this, I am in no way denying or minimizing that aspect of the dynamic of European expansionism which was colonialist, racist, ethnocentric and genocidal. However, I do not believe it makes sense to speak of "modernity" as though it were reducible to the colonialist aspect of its articulation, without acknowledging the endogenously European aspects of the modernist dynamic which made the capitalist world system (the modern/colonial world system) a worldwide phenomenon. I also do not find convincing the attempt, in the postoccidental variant of critical social theory, to equate the occidental search for "exact" knowledge of, and power over, the natural world with a lust for colonial domination. That search, in its European form, may well have done incalculable damage to a more holistic form of relationship between human beings, and between human beings and the natural world, and the cultures based on that relationship, but it seems to me pointless to deny that modernity is, to a significant extent, the result of discoveries which made the natural world available to human understanding and control in an unprecedented way, and that these discoveries were not motivated by a desire for colonial domination of non-Europeans. Yet they were, in their own way, just as much a product of European culture as the Reconquest, the Inquisition or the Conquest.

I therefore find it problematic to imply an equation between "Occidentalism", in the sense employed by postoccidental critique, and European culture in the broadest sense. Since I do not find an attempt to distinguish between the two, in the postoccidental writings under consideration, I am led to question and problematize the culturalist understanding of modernity in postoccidental analysis. These, and other critical positions with respect to the postoccidental resignification of "modernity", are further developed in Chapter Three.

### 3.1. Preliminary Interrogatives

The postoccidental deconstruction and resignification of “modernity”, as I see it, is in part based on a totalizing of 500 years of European modernization, expansion and interaction with the Americas as one “longue durée” trajectory, whose structural and discursive stages are seen as connected in terms of the “overarching” concept of “Occidentalism”, and its articulation in the non-European peripheries as eurocentric coloniality. Thus Walter Mignolo, in a passage similar to that by Coronil quoted in the Introduction, makes the following comment about “Occidentalism”:

By “colonial differences” I mean, through my argument (and I should perhaps say “the colonial difference”), the classification of the planet in the modern/colonial imaginary, by enacting coloniality of power, an energy and a machinery to transform differences into values. If racism is the matrix that permeates every domain of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system, “Occidentalism” is the overarching metaphor around which colonial differences have been articulated and rearticulated through the changing hands in the history of capitalism...and the changing ideologies motivated by imperial conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

The implication of this passage is that “coloniality” (the “racism” that is “the matrix that permeates every domain of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system”) cannot be separated from “modernity” – because “modernity”, construed as the emergence of a capitalist world system, is dialectically bound up with its “lado oscuro” which is the colonization of non-European peoples of color according to a racist schema which “transforms differences into values” in a hierarchic way – and that this eurocentric coloniality has discursively linked all of the phases of the 500 year “longue durée” of capitalist modernity. Thus, the ideology, or imaginary, of “Occidentalism”, has been “articulated and rearticulated” by successive hegemonic European (subsequently North

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, op. Cit., p. 13.



American) powers in their imperialistic competition for control over the non-European world, beginning with the Americas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

This point has been made in both the Introduction and in Chapter One. However, what I wish to re-emphasize here is that this putative eurocentric ideology, which constructs hierarchies of value and puts that imaginary into practice through the subjugation and exploitation of non-European people of color (coloniality), is presented as the underlying logic, or grammar, of the modern world system (redefined, therefore, as a modern/*colonial* world system), *from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day*, when it has begun to break down under the influences of globalization and the decolonialization of occidental epistemology.

For Dussel, the key to understanding “modernity” as a eurocentric-colonial reality is to understand that

It is a question of uncovering the origin of what I call “the myth of modernity” itself. Modernity includes a rational “concept” of emancipation that we affirm and subsume. But, at the same time, it develops an irrational myth, a justification for genocidal violence. The postmodernists criticize modern reason as a reason of terror; we criticize modern reason because of the irrational myth that it conceals.<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with the postoccidental tendency to distinguish its deconstructions from “postmodernist” critiques of modernity made from *within* the trajectory of European modernism, the postoccidental position, here, seems to be that colonialized peoples did not need to wait for the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or the analyses of European critical social theory and postmodernism, to know that there was a “dark” side to occidental reason.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Enrique Dussel, 1993, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

<sup>3</sup> I am thinking of both the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and various postmodernists critiques along similar lines. This “occidental” critique of occidental reason can perhaps be summed up by the following passage in *The Condition of Postmodernity* by David Harvey, Cambridge (Massachusetts), Blackwell Publishers, 1989, p. 13: “The twentieth century – with its death camps and death squads, its militarism and two world wars, its threat of nuclear annihilation and its experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – has certainly shattered this optimism [based on Enlightenment doctrines of equality, liberty, faith in human intelligence (once allowed the benefits of education), and universal reason]. Worse still, the suspicion lurks that the Enlightenment project was doomed to turn against itself and transform the quest for human emancipation into a system of universal oppression in the name of human liberation. This was the daring

That “dark” side has been their experience of Occidentalism from their first encounter with Europeans. The critical-theoretical analysis of the transformation of Enlightenment reason into the oppressive instrumental rationality of industrial capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is preempted, in this analysis, by the linking of occidental reason to the instrumentalization of Amerindians and other people of color in the Americas from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on.<sup>4</sup> Occidental reason, in spite of the “rational ‘concept’ of emancipation” included in it (emerging with the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment and the French Revolution, but with roots in the humanist Renaissance of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the philosophical and scientific revolutions of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries), is irremediably connected to colonialization and subalternization of non-Europeans in the Americas as its “dark” or “irrational” side.

Fernando Coronil puts this idea in the following way:

The criticism of the locus of modernity from its margin creates conditions for an inherently unsettling critique of modernity itself. Undoing the periphery’s depiction as the incarnation of barbarous backwardness demystifies as well Europe’s self-representation as the embodiment of universal reason and historical progress.

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thesis advanced by Horkheimer and Adorno in their *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972). Writing in the shadow of Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia, they argued that the logic that hides behind Enlightenment rationality is a logic of domination and oppression. The lust to dominate nature entailed the domination of human beings, and that could only lead, in the end, to a ‘nightmare condition of self-domination’ [R. Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985]. The revolt of nature, which they posited as the only way out of the impasse, had then to be conceived of as a revolt of human nature against the oppressive power of purely instrumental reason over culture and personality.”

<sup>4</sup> A good example of the postoccidental tendency to view “instrumental reason” in the Weberian sense as a *colonial legacy* is the following passage by Santiago Castro-Gómez: “La persistente negación de este vínculo entre modernidad y colonialismo por parte de las ciencias sociales ha sido, en realidad, uno de los signos más claros de su limitación conceptual. Impregnadas desde sus orígenes por un imaginario eurocéntrico, las ciencias sociales proyectaron la idea de una Europa *ascéptica y autogenerada*, formada históricamente sin contacto alguno con otras culturas. La racionalización – en sentido weberiano – habría sido el resultado de un despliegue de *cualidades inherentes* a las sociedades occidentales (el “tránsito” de la tradición a la modernidad), y no de la interacción colonial de Europa en América, Asia y África a partir de 1492. Desde este punto de vista, la experiencia del colonialismo resultaría completamente irrelevante para entender el fenómeno de la modernidad y el surgimiento de las ciencias sociales. Lo cual significa que para los africanos, asiáticos y latinoamericanos el colonialismo no significó primariamente destrucción y expoliación sino, ante todo, el comienzo del tortuoso pero inevitable camino hacia el desarrollo y la modernización. Este es el imaginario colonial que ha sido reproducido tradicionalmente por las ciencias sociales y la filosofía en ambos lados del Atlántico.” Santiago Castro-Gómez, 1998b, op. cit. p. 170.

Far from the blinding light of Europe's Enlightenment, among peoples who wear the scars of modern violence as a second skin, it becomes difficult to clear from sight or to displace onto foreign Others the barbarous underside of modern civilization.<sup>5</sup>

This critique of Enlightenment reason tends to view it, therefore, as a historical moment in a unified trajectory, from Christian evangelization to modernization theory and third world "developmentalism", i.e., as a series of double discourses in which the "higher" values of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment are rendered, if not consistent, at least compatible with supremacist discourses of hierarchical domination based on racial and ethnic difference, and justified by the idea of a "civilizing" European mission.

In Latin America, from Argentina to Mexico, the incessant insistence upon the need to protect imported civilization from local primitivity reveals both the limits of Europe's civilizing mission and the extent to which its rationality has become part of Latin America's self-fashioning. In societies formed by the violence of a culture of conquest, the state's appearance as civilization's agent can hardly conceal the violence that sustains its power.<sup>6</sup>

Implicit in this way of describing "Europe's civilizing mission" is the notion that the penetration of European modernist influences into Latin America, (including the presence of Enlightenment and French Revolutionary ideals in the era of Latin American independence movements and nation-state building), has been unified throughout all of its phases by a logic of "othering" and conquest, and that this expansionist-modernist project is inherently colonialist, racist and violent, even when it has presented itself in the guise of "modern reason", "Enlightenment", the doctrine of universal human rights, etc. Again, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School is seen to discover, as a consequence of the barbarism of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, *what has always been the reality of "modernity" from the standpoint of the "colonial difference"*:

Writing in the midst of a Europe engulfed by its own savagery, Walter Benjamin grasped the horror before him with the assertion that 'there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism' [Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, New York,

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<sup>5</sup> Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State*, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

Schocken Books, 1969, p. 256]. Reading Latin American history as a double-sided document reveals *the unity of reason and violence* that lies at the root of its formation as Europe's periphery. By historicizing the specific forms in which metropolitan civilization has been the mother of colonial barbarism, we can recast our understanding of centers and peripheries alike.<sup>7</sup>

Thus Walter Mignolo, by studying the "darker side of the Renaissance" is in part establishing the historical antecedents to the "dark" side of Enlightenment reason which, along with Dussel, he sees as the *heir* to the 16<sup>th</sup> century European colonialist attempt to justify the dehumanization and instrumentalization of the non-European "other" in the

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-75, emphasis added. The specific critique of reason-as-civilization referred to here needs to be distinguished from the critique of the later, more properly 19<sup>th</sup> century, romanticization of culture, which reaches its apogee in Hegel, although postoccidentalist tend to see the discourse of "civilization" and the Hegelian discourse of Euro-Germanic superiority as indistinguishably "eurocentric". I tried to deal with this distinction in the genealogy of "occidental reason" in note 28 on Castro-Gómez in the Introduction. The following citation perhaps clarifies it further: "Though the concept of civilisation was used to legitimise oppression and exploitation [in the colonies of Africa, Asia and the New World], the values which it embodied were conceived of as universal and in principle available to all. The commercial societies which were developing in Western Europe [toward the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century] were, for the time being, the privileged bearers of these values: it was this which legitimised their encroachment on those parts of the world which had not yet attained the state of civilisation. But the rationale for this encroachment was that Western Europe represented these countries' own future. In this sense, the concept of civilisation differed from that of 'culture' (another invention of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries): culture refers to values which are in principle limited to a particular group or country. Civilisation was, like reason, a characteristic Enlightenment value; culture, a product of romanticism, foreshadowed more accurately the nationalistic values which were to become so prominent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." Ross Poole, *Morality and Modernity*, London, Routledge, 1991, p. 23. Pablo Andrade has pointed out to me that critical theory has a critique of this romanticist-culturalist strain in 19<sup>th</sup> century modernist discourse, distinct from its critique of Enlightenment reason, as leading to the "lado oscuro" of the irrationalist mythification of culture and that, despite the postoccidentalist critique of Hegelian cultural ethnocentrism and the "irrational myth" of modernity concealed by Enlightenment reason (which is really a conflation of the two critiques into one: JS), postoccidentalism is itself heir to this romanticist strain of modernist thinking in, according to Andrade, "la tendencia de los 'posoccidentales' a romantizar lo subalterno y lo colonizado". (From comments on my thesis by Pablo Andrade, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar.) I find this a tantalizing line of inquiry, but one which the scope of my thesis and the limitations of my knowledge have prevented me from following up, although the following citation from Mignolo perhaps illustrates this point: "...[L]a complicidad entre la misión civilizadora articulada en el discurso colonial y el (los) proceso(s) de civilización articulado(s) como objeto de estudio de las ciencias humanas, en complicidad con la ideología de la misión civilizadora: esto es, una configuración del conocimiento cuyo poder consistía en negarles posibilidades epistemológicas a los bárbaros. Las culturas de conocimiento académico eran exactamente lo que la gente de fuera de Europa no tenía (como los aztecas y los Incas) o, si llegaba a tenerlas (como la China, la India y el mundo islámico), se convertía en objeto de estudio (un ejemplo es el surgimiento del 'orientalismo')....[L]a absorción de los principios 'civilizadores' dentro de la 'civilización de la barbarie' [es] una 'fagocitosis' de la civilización hecha por los bárbaros....más que la venía del bárbaro y su entrada en la civilización." "Globalización, procesos civilisatorios y la reubicación de lenguas y culturas", in *Pensar (en) los intersticios*, op. cit., pp. 68-69. It could perhaps be said that there is an element of Rousseauian romanticism in this dualization between European "civilization" as an "academic" colonial discourse removed from the immediacy of life and the "non-academic" epistemologies of those reified and stigmatized as "barbarian", whose "uncivilized" (in eurocentric terms) forms of experience and knowledge are seen as pure and uncorrupted.

name of "Christian civilization." The 18<sup>th</sup> century idea of "reason" as the defining essence of the human is thus transmuted into a justification of eurocentric coloniality, by means of the exclusion of non-European people of color from the category of "rational" beings, whose pre-rational state requires the tutelage of "*gente de razon*" (Europeans) for its amelioration (the idea of the "civilizing" European mission vis-à-vis non-European "barbarism", shared by metropolitan Europeans and Creole Euro-Americans).<sup>8</sup> Seen from this point of view, a non-instrumental ethics of autonomy by an Enlightenment ethicist such as Kant, in which it is morally unacceptable to treat other human (i.e., rational) beings as "mere means", is reduced to an ideological smokescreen for the capitalist-colonialist

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<sup>8</sup> However, as just pointed out in the previous note, the logic of this "civilizing mission" is on some level universalist, even if its application in the colonial context is culturalist-particularist, thereby rendering it ethnocentric even while appealing to "universalist values". What are those values? Abstracted from its endogenous European context, the notion of modernity as "civilization" can easily be reduced to a racist, ethnocentric doctrine. But as Poole, quoted above, points out, the value system of metropolitanism/urbaneness that came into prominence with the Enlightenment and the emergence of commercial society had its own logic that, as I see it, cannot be reduced to colonial eurocentricity. As Poole points out, certain "eighteenth century theorists...often appeal to considerations which are incompatible with the main [utilitarian] thrust of their accounts of commercial society. Thus, Adam Smith and Hume both fell back on assumptions of virtue or benevolence which are inconsistent with the motivations they assumed to hold in the main business of modern life. But there is also a dimension to their thought which is central to their understanding of commercial society and which goes well beyond the utilitarianism with which so many of them have been retrospectively credited. Commercial society was justified, not just because of the happiness it produced, but because of the way of life that it made possible. Commercial society was also 'civilised' society: it enabled the arts and sciences to flourish and provided the conditions in which humans could interact in an urbane, polished and peaceful way, respecting and even learning from the difference between them. The word 'civilisation' was coined to designate this aspect of modern social life, both as process and achievement." Moreover, "commercial society, and the civilised way of life it brought with it, was the result of a historical development." Ross Poole, op. cit., pp. 21-22. That this notion of "civilization", abstracted from its European context, was imposed in an exclusionary way, as an elitist discourse and practice, on colonized subaltern peoples, so as to marginalize and depreciate them, is not in dispute here. However, it is reductionist, as I see it, to argue that the colonial articulation of this social imaginary, however mistaken it may have been in the gap between its universalist pretensions and its exclusionary application, establishes it as a colonialist discourse in its fundamental logic. To claim this is, as I am trying to argue in this chapter, to deny to this concept of "modernity" its endogenously European elements and its existence as a cultural phenomenon not only distinguishable from its colonial articulation, but also from capitalism as a system of "endless accumulation". Moreover, I take it that the idea of new liberal forms of "sociability" inherent in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century European modernist imaginary is what Francois-Xavier Guerra sees as one of the emancipatory elements from the Enlightenment and French Revolution that had an impact on Latin America at the beginning of the independence movement in elite circles and contributed to the dissemination of liberal democratic ideology, (Francois-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias: Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas*, op. cit.). This ideology, in turn, did offer emancipatory horizons for subaltern movements. See note 23, below, on Florencia Mallon's *Peasant and Nation*.

instrumentalization of the non-European other, to the extent that a racist imaginary excludes that non-European other from the category of “rational being.”

Of course, as we have just seen from the passage quoted from Dussel, where there is a dark side there must also be a light side (“modernity includes a rational ‘concept’ of emancipation that we affirm and subsume”). This recognition, by Dussel, by Mignolo, by Quijano, and other postoccidental writers, that “modern reason”, in its European manifestation, cannot be summarily dismissed as nothing more than a collusion with colonialist discourses, and that it includes an emancipatory dimension produced, in part, by endogenous European intellectual currents (but also in dialectical interaction with anticolonialist movements in the periphery<sup>9</sup>) introduces an element of ambiguity into the postoccidental attempt to reduce “modernity” to a discourse of eurocentric coloniality.

If “modernity” simply *is* a colonial discourse of racist domination, what becomes of that aspect of modern reason associated with universal human rights of man, democracy, humanism, the ethics of autonomy, egalitarianism, etc.? Is the European metanarrative of emancipation and progress, based on the discovery of “unaided reason” in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, a pretension, due to the “irrational myth that it conceals”, (Dussel), or worse, a collusion, one-half of a dialectical marriage which includes its “lado oscuro” of racist, colonialist violence and conquest – or does that “irrational myth” perhaps have nothing essentially to *do* with humanism, scientific rationality or Enlightenment reason? Perhaps that myth, rather than being the “lado oscuro” of Enlightenment reason, has its origin instead in religious-racist colonial discourses of an earlier time, which the subsequent

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<sup>9</sup> See note 23, below.

emergence of “reason”, as a distinct form of thinking and valuing independent of religious dogma and authority, was unable to expunge.<sup>10</sup>

In saying this I do not mean to suggest that subsequent “hegemonic” European powers and regimens did not find new ways to “other”, “hierarchize” and subalternize the non-European (as just noted in the previous footnote), nor do I mean to deny that colonialism as a *practice* was a violation, in every sense, of the modernist ideals that the Enlightenment espoused. However, it seems to me that Wallerstein is not simply ignoring the “colonial difference” when he sees the ideas of the European Enlightenment, as embodied in the French Revolution, as the source of an anti-systemic ideology that has been historically in tension with the oppressive and exploitative aspects of capitalism as an economic system, in both the centers and the peripheries of the world system, and that the articulation of this ideology in the Americas has been, and continues to be, a significant aspect of “modernity”, distinguishable from modernity as eurocentric coloniality, and in part responsible for legitimately “progressive” aspects of Latin American social theory and praxis.<sup>11</sup>

The criticism of the present chapter is limited in its objective. I am not concerned to question the postcolonial cultural criticism of modernity in postoccidentalism nor do I

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<sup>10</sup> The failure of the Catholic reformist humanism promulgated by Erasmus, and highly influential in most parts of western Europe, to spread to the Iberian peninsula can perhaps be understood as the consequence of the fanatical, anti-“infidel” (anti-Moorish, anti-Semitic), inquisitorial Christianity prevailing in Spain. This is not to deny that colonial discourses and practices also flourished subsequently under less dogmatically religious regimes than that of 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century Spain, but it is to question whether such “regimes of truth” can be subsumed, without contradiction, under the category of “reason” as defined in Enlightenment terms. The exclusion of non-European people of color from the category of “rational beings”, according to this logic, was a racist misuse of a concept which in and of itself is not racist and which, on the contrary, provides the formal universality on the basis of which all forms of racism must ultimately be viewed as juridically and ethically unacceptable. Human rights doctrines, in this sense, would seem to depend on something like this principle, although now supplemented by culturalist notions of the right to difference, the right to ethnic group identity.

<sup>11</sup> I am defending here (along with Wallerstein) the idea of anti-systemic (in the sense of anti-capitalist) elements in Enlightenment and French revolutionary ideology, to which Marx, among others, was heir. These elements, I am arguing, are distinctly *modern*, yet are not reducible to eurocentric coloniality as the “patrón de poder” of capitalism in the periphery, and indeed were in part the basis of anti-colonial struggles. See note 21, below.

claim to shed any new light in the debate over the ethics of modernity, or postoccidentalism's contribution to that debate. I am concerned, rather, to problematize the postoccidental understanding of modernity from the limited perspective of what I see as its totalizing and reductionist equation of modernity with eurocentric coloniality, with respect to certain political and socio-economic aspects of Latin American (as well as European) social evolution which do not seem to me to correspond to that equation.

### **3.2 A deconstruction of modernity-as-eurocentric coloniality**

In the following two sub-sections I look at several different views of "modernity" in the articulation of European-Latin American relationships which, as I see it, challenge what I regard as the totalizing-reductionist logic of postoccidental deconstruction and resignification at its more theoretical or more generalizing level.

The first comes from one of the foundational figures of the postoccidental tendency, Aníbal Quijano, who seems to have looked at Latin American modernity in different ways at different stages of his intellectual evolution. If his concept of "coloniality" was to have decisive significance for postoccidental deconstructionism, he nevertheless has enunciated viewpoints which seem to me to be significantly at odds with the use to which that concept has been put in postoccidental analysis, at least in my reading of the text under discussion.

#### ***3.2.1 Aníbal Quijano's analysis of the tension between instrumental and emancipatory reason in the evolution and articulation of modernity in Latin America***

In this section I examine in some detail an analysis by Aníbal Quijano, in what appears to be a "pre-postoccidentalist" essay, of the meaning of "modernity" in the Latin American context, because it seems to me to offer a different view of the relationship between European and Latin American social-economic-political development than that which I



have attributed to the postoccidentalist equation of "modernity" with eurocentric coloniality, and because it seems to me to be an implicit questioning of what I see as the totalizing and reductionist tendencies of the latter.

Quijano seems to have been consistently concerned with the cultural dimension of social-historical evolution, and in this essay he is trying to make connections between structural-historical and cultural aspects of the emergence of "modernity" as both a European and Latin American phenomenon.

What is interesting, from the standpoint of the present criticism, is that he appears to base his analysis on a historical view of the relationship between "endogenous" and "exogenous" factors in the creation of Latin American modernity, as analytically and historically distinguishable. Moreover, in the course of this analysis, Quijano also makes clear distinctions between various forms of occidental rationality, based on distinct periodizations, which, in certain postoccidental analyses, tend to be conflated into a totalized view of occidental reason. Perhaps Quijano is articulating, in this essay, an earlier, "anti-colonialist" (as distinct from "postcolonialist") point of view, but in any case it offers, as I see it, a different viewpoint on Latin American modernity to that of postoccidentalism, by a theorist who contributed the key notion of "coloniality" to postoccidental critique.

While I do not completely agree with his evaluation of Anglo-Saxon versus Mediterranean/ Latin "reason", what seems to me historically plausible about his account is its understanding of the relationship between the various phases in the evolution of occidental reason in relation to social and economic developments, and how those phases were articulated in Latin America. He published this essay, entitled "Modernity, identity,

and utopia in Latin America",<sup>12</sup> in 1993, some four or five years before the theory of "colonialidad del poder" first appeared in print, and may have come to repudiate (or seriously modify) this position. But from my point of view, it seems cogent and credible.

Quijano begins the section of the essay under investigation by viewing "modernity" as a cultural expression of a certain structural stage in the evolution of world capitalism.

If modernity, as a movement of social intersubjectivity, could occur at the same time in Europe and Latin America, this was due not only to the communication existing between both worlds, but also to the fact that they were going through the same sociohistorical process: the apogee of the mercantilism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear, from the way he introduces the subject of modernity, that he sees its European and Latin American expressions as interconnected by the fact that they are caught up in a common "socio-historical process", but not necessarily co-constituted as a unitary or dialectical reality (and certainly not dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century early mercantilist phase of the capitalist world system). Indeed, as his analysis proceeds, it is clear that his view of the articulation of modernity in Europe and Latin America, respectively, is that of two distinct manifestations of the "modern world" which, whatever they may have had in common, cannot be understood within the context of a unified phenomenological field dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. That is, in his analysis, "modernity" is not a unitary phenomenon with a 500-year trajectory, even if its different articulations and manifestations have common roots.

Quijano continues as follows:

The problem with Latin America, however, was that just when its modernity seemed to enter the phase of the demarcation of its specificity and maturity with respect to Europe, when it began to define itself as a new social and cultural possibility, it fell victim to its colonial relationship to Europe and was subjected to a literally Kafkaesque "metamorphosis." While in Europe, mercantilism started to transform itself into industrial capitalism, in Latin America, especially from the last third of the [18<sup>th</sup>] century on, the parallel transformation was halted, and the economy began to stagnate due to the double effect of the continued restrictions imposed by the political economy of the Iberian

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<sup>12</sup> In *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*, op. cit., pp. 140-161.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.144.

metropolis and the displacement of power in favor of England. So, while in Europe modernity was part of a radical mutation of society, feeding off the changes prepared by the emergence of capitalism, in Latin America, from the end of the eighteenth century on, modernity was linked to an adverse social context, in which the decline of the economy and the breakdown of the mercantilist system permitted the social sectors most antagonistic to it to occupy the leading positions in the elaboration of Latin America's independence from Europe.<sup>14</sup>

Several points are worth making about this part of Quijano's analysis:

(1) "Colonialism" is viewed as having entered a new and more profound stage in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (beginning in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century), when the Spanish monarchy, under the Bourbons, deepened its commitment to mercantilist policies and to extracting a surplus from the American "colonies." It is not summarily equated with the *longue durée* initiated with 16<sup>th</sup> century Iberian expansion toward the Americas (though this early imperial phase is implicitly the basis for the later, more classically "colonialist" form of metropolitan exploitation of the periphery, in which the Creole elites are themselves increasingly marginalized along with those they exploit, in the wake of the breaking of the "colonial pact"). What Quijano seems to be implying, is that the kind of modernity that was emerging in northern Europe, tied to newer forms of capitalism based on the commercial and industrial developments in Holland and in England, was effectively denied the Spanish colonies by the failure of Spain to industrialize<sup>15</sup>, on the one hand, and the taking control of the independence movements by political elements whose economic policy was one of agrarian-based autarchy, cast in opposition to a failed (or at least failing) metropolitan mercantile policy, on the other. Thus, Iberian "colonialism" is here implicitly distinguished from the kind of core-periphery relationship in the process of being established by the new hegemonic economic powers (in particular, England). While this does not in itself stand in

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>15</sup> See the discussion of John Lynch's "The origins of Latin American independence" in the next section, below.

contradiction to the notion of “colonialidad del poder” as a socio-cultural schema governing the “longue durée” of capitalist modernity in the peripheries from its earliest, Iberian-mercantilist phase to the present, it does, as I see it, problematize the notion of that longue durée as a “modern/colonial system” construed in monolithic terms, according to a self-same “occidental” logic of cultural “othering” throughout the 500 year trajectory.

(2) For Quijano, this clash between Iberian forms of colonial control and the newly emerging hegemony of industrial-commercial capitalism in the world economy implies that a separation occurred in Latin America between modernity as a cultural phenomenon (a set of values and attitudes) and modernity as a transformation of material and social relations.

In this way, the same modernity that remade in Europe not only the sphere of intersubjective relations but also, increasingly, the material, social relations themselves, becoming, as a result, the mode of everyday life in society, in Latin America remained confined to the intersubjective sphere, blocked from its possibilities of entering the materiality of society, and even there it was repressed, persecuted, forced to seek refuge in the practice of enlightened minorities....<sup>16</sup>

Quijano's point of view seems to be that the failure of the Latin American republics, to a large extent explained by the social and economic evolution of the Iberian metropolises, to bring about a socio-economic modernization based on the new industrialism, meant that Latin America was unable to create a viable form of modernity in which *modern forms of production* could be integrated with specifically *Latin American cultural and political values*. Economically backward (in the sense of stagnant, non-dynamic), Latin America therefore fell prey to British forms of modernization, which were in the process of becoming hegemonic in Europe as well, and which were overwhelmingly characterized by an *instrumental* understanding of rationality – the other side (“el lado oscuro”, but in a different sense), as Quijano sees it, of Enlightenment reason. The subsequent dynamism of certain national Latin American export economies was thus generated in large part by

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

exogenous forces intent on establishing a neo-colonial hegemony based on commercial-industrial capitalism and the technification of occidental rationality.

This 'metamorphosis' of modernity in Latin America is not a phenomenon disconnected from the European history of that movement. It resulted, to a decisive degree, from Latin America's colonial relationship to Europe, and its consolidation and prolonged duration (which has still not completely ended) were, in turn, associated with the fact that in Europe, domination could impose, in its own service, the almost complete instrumentalization of reason against liberation.

From its very beginnings, the European Enlightenment contained an unbridgeable split between tendencies that saw reason as the historical promise of the liberation of humanity from its own ghosts, from social injustice and the prisons of power, and, on the other hand, tendencies that saw rationality in instrumental terms, as a mechanism of power, of domination. The first tendencies were particularly disseminated in Mediterranean and Latin Europe; the second in Nordic Europe and especially in what today is Great Britain. The split between the two became clearer and sharper in the course of the eighteenth century; it was involved in the conflict between England and Spain and, later, between England and France over the course of the French Revolution and control of the Americas, and became definitive with the imposition of English hegemony over Europe and, subsequently, over most of the rest of the world in the nineteenth century.

The imposition of English hegemony, linked as it was to the spectacular expansion of British industrial capitalism, consolidated the hegemony of the tendencies in the movement of the Enlightenment that conceived of reason primarily in instrumental terms.<sup>17</sup>

(3) While I find Quijano's distinction between "Mediterranean" forms of reason (characterized as emancipatory and humanistic) and "Anglo-Saxon" forms of reason (viewed as dominating and materialistic) in the above passage tendentious and exaggeratedly dualistic,<sup>18</sup> I am not concerned here with the validity of these characterizations. What is more important, from the standpoint of the present critique, is that Quijano clearly enunciates the view that occidental (including Enlightenment) reason is multivalent and thus irreducible to a eurocentric rationalization of colonialism, as seems

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>18</sup> A kind of neo-Arielism, which is similar, in some respects, to the approach taken by Bolívar Echeverría in *La modernidad del barroco*, México, Ediciones Era, 1998, whose neo-Marxism (see *Las ilusiones de la modernidad*, segunda edición, Quito, Editorial Tramasocial, 2001) seems to be based on a culturalist critique of the Marxist distinction between exchange value and use value, in which the latter is viewed as prioritized by a less materialist Latin American form of (baroque) modernity. Echeverría's analysis has great merit, but can be criticized, along with Enrique José Rodó's *Ariel*, for seeing the difference between Anglo-Saxon and Latin-Mediterranean forms of modernity in excessively dualistic terms. (It seems difficult to place an "Anglo-Saxon" writer like Walt Whitman, or the cultural point of view he expresses, within this scheme, for example.)

clear by his distinguishing between two forms of modern reason, one emancipatory, the other lending itself to various forms of domination.<sup>19</sup> Finally, he makes clear cultural-historical-structural distinctions between Iberian, French and Anglo-Saxon strands of European modernity and between European modernity and Latin American modernity. All of this suggests a polisemia and historical diversity in the concepts of “modernity” and “reason” that seems difficult to reconcile with the postoccidental view of modernity as answering to one, overarching eurocentric colonialist logic, connected discursively throughout all of its successive incarnations.

(4) Moreover, his viewpoint here more or less coincides with Wallerstein’s, that the emancipatory aspects in the French Revolution (as a political embodiment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment), marked a decisive moment in the evolution of modernity as including anti-systemic movements and ideologies in tension with the structural goals of the capitalist world system (even while being a bourgeois revolution in the final analysis), and which was of transcendental importance for the destiny of Latin America. According to Mignolo’s criticism of Wallerstein, Quijano could, in theory, also be accused here of ignoring the “colonial difference.” However, what I see in Quijano’s analysis is an alternative way of viewing the “colonial difference” from that which Mignolo (and perhaps Quijano himself, subsequently) articulate(s). For Quijano, at least at the time of writing this essay, the “colonial difference” would seem to refer to Latin America’s being held hostage to Bourbon Spanish mercantilist colonialism, long after this articulation of

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<sup>19</sup> This view of a duality in Enlightenment thought is related to the Habermasian notion of modernity as an “incomplete project”, and reflects a partial rejection of the early Frankfurt School writers’ view of Enlightenment reason as dialectically bound to its darker, more irrational expression, due to its emphasis on the control over nature. A postoccidental writer such as Castro-Gómez (along with most postmodernist criticism) explicitly rejects the Habermasian idea of modernity as an incomplete project. However, as we have seen, Dussel admits that modernity “includes a rational ‘concept’ of emancipation which we affirm and subsume.” (See note 2 to this chapter.) His “transmodernity” can thus perhaps be seen as a completion of modernity, whose emancipatory dimension has been truncated by its eurocentricity.

capitalism had ceased to be hegemonic in the world capitalist system, forcing the more politically progressive elite sectors (in potential solidarity with popular sectors)<sup>20</sup> into the shadow of what was to become the hegemonic 19<sup>th</sup> century landed oligarchy. The modernization produced by the *internal* political hegemony of this landed oligarchy thus tended to develop as dependent, instrumentalized yet labor intensive, agricultural capitalism (with its corresponding form of social-political organization), since it was industrialized (instrumentally rational) England which now was now the hegemon (and chief trading partner) for Latin America and the rest of the colonial world.

(5) One could infer that Quijano's analysis here implies an understanding of the intensified subalternization of culturally non-European peoples at this time, under the yoke

<sup>20</sup> According to this point of view, reflected for example by historian Jean Piel, the Creole class, in general, in both the more conservative landowning and the more liberal urban sectors, reacted to structural pressures – both global/economic and national/social – by choosing either to entrench themselves or to avoid difficult moral-political choices that would have been costly in the short run but would have been closer in spirit and reality to the new forms of modernity articulated by liberal-bourgeois revolutions in Europe and by the independence movements in Latin America. Piel explains this double discourse, as it played itself out in the case of Andean and Guatemalan Creole-Indian relations, in the following terms: “Dada la herencia ideológica organicista de la Colonia, tratar en igualdad a los indígenas implicaría una doble revolución cultural: en las elites, para que renuncien a las justificaciones inigualitarias del orden social; en las masas (particularmente indígenas), para que renuncien a las garantías ofrecidas por el antiguo régimen a través de los privilegios corporativistas (“órdenes”, “comunidades”, “corporaciones”, “cartas”). Pero, para que tal revolución cultural liberal se imponga, se necesita que el movimiento de la economía y de la sociedad reales vaya acompañado de semejante transformación radical de las mentalidades.” But this reference to economic and social factors pertains to the *absence* of precisely those structural factors which the stranglehold of Bourbon colonialism ensured. Piel continues: “No es el caso durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX, no solamente porque, coyunturalmente, la economía latinoamericana y mundial es depresiva, sino porque dentro de la división internacional del trabajo entonces vigente la única ‘ventaja comparativa’ de las nuevas naciones indoamericanas bajo control criollo y europeo es que disponen de una mano de obra barata, precapitalista y precontractualista: la reserva indígena.” Jean Piel, “¿Naciones indoamericana o patrias del criollo? El caso de Guatemala y los países Andínoes en el siglo XIX”, en Antonio Escobar, edit., *Indio, nación y comunidad en el México del Siglo XIX*, México, Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos, 1992, p. 23. That “colonialidad del poder” played a major part in the re-colonization of the Indoamerican populations in question is not in debate here. But equally important was the structural-historical “dependency” that became fixed in this historical moment and which reinforced colonial social relations. Thus, structure and agency mutually contributed to the perpetuation of coloniality. The point being emphasized is that, from Piel's point of view, the new social imaginariy connected with the idea of liberal democracy was, under these circumstances, an emancipatory ideology manqué, an idea that *could* have been an engine for social change but was unable to overcome structural and social obstacles left in the wake of reactionary Spanish policies and their strengthening of the most conservative elements in Latin American society. It was an ideology lacking a historical-social-material base. In spite of this, as I will note below (see next footnote) in a citation from Florencia Mallon's *Peasant and Nation*, democratic (republican) liberal ideology played an important part in *subaltern-led* emancipatory movements later in the century.

of a re-empowered rural oligarchy, as, at least in part, a consequence of the failure of Latin American societies to modernize economically, and thus be in a position to materialize, in social and productive relations, the emancipatory ideals of 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment rationalism and the French Revolution. In place of the postoccidentalist totalization of eurocentric coloniality as the fundamental and unitary schema of “modernity”, as I see it, Quijano presents us with a more empirically historical, more plural analysis of “modernity” as a social-historical force with a European provenance, but with a specifically Latin American articulation, and which could have been a more significant engine of social transformation at both elite and subaltern levels, had it not been aborted by the socially reactionary and economically pre-industrial nature of Latin American society.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> As Florencia Mallon sees it, the failure of these elite sectors, due to both cultural and structural factors, to realize the more emancipatory and egalitarian aspects of liberal democratic ideology, created a political leadership vacuum which, in certain instances (most notably in post War of the Pacific Peru and mid-century Mexico’s liberal reform movement and civil war and resistance to French occupation), was filled by subaltern-led nationalist movements shaped, in part, by the more emancipatory ideals of liberal-democratic ideology. This historical perspective further underscores the idea of a *synergy* of sorts between European Enlightenment ideology and subaltern struggles for emancipation and a greater role in the shaping of national identity. Where Coronil (see above) sees the state, at least in general terms, as “civilization’s agent [which] can hardly conceal the violence that sustains its power” (though his analysis of state formation in Venezuela reveals the importance of the state as a modality in the articulation of subaltern social struggles), Mallon sees the state, in spite of the class asymmetries which it ultimately embodied, in somewhat more emancipatory terms and in the context of the interplay of democratic ideology, modern capitalism, and colonialist legacies: “In the story which I wish to tell, the democratic revolution is the very process of tying together the triple knot of democracy, nationalism, and colonialism. Within this narrative the *contradictory universality* of capitalist, nationalist, and democratic discourses – of the ‘new’ ideas of equality, nationality, and free market that supposedly applied to all – makes a great deal more sense. From the very beginning, the historical combination of democracy and nationalism with colonialism created a basic contradiction with national-democratic discourse. On the one hand, the universal promise of the discourse identified the potential autonomy, dignity, and equality of all peoples, and people, in the world. In practice, on the other hand, entire groups of people were barred from access to citizenship and liberty according to Eurocentric, class-, and gender-exclusionary criteria.

“*This contradiction between promise and practice* became a central tension in the historically dynamic construction of national-democratic discourses and movements, providing the space for struggles over their practice and meaning.... When subalterns engaged in conflict over power and meaning, they helped define the contours of what was possible in the making of nation-states....

“The state, in this context, can best be understood as a series of decentralized sites of struggle through which hegemony is both contested and reproduced. State institutions are locations or spaces where conflicts over power are constantly being resolved and hierarchically reordered. *Since these conflicts are never equal for all groups, in the long run they tend to reorder, reproduce, and represent relations as inequality and domination. Yet at the same time, because conflict is at the very core of the state, subaltern struggles are woven throughout the fabric of state institutions.*” Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of*



Quijano concludes this section of his essay with another distinction that is important for the present investigation, that between “modernity” and “modernization”, which he links to Mediterranean (emancipatory) reason and Anglo-Saxon (dominant, hegemonic) reason respectively, a distinction which, in practice as well as in theory, as he sees it, has had fateful consequences for the way in which modernity has been articulated in Latin America:

The association between reason and liberation was occluded. Henceforth, modernity would be seen almost exclusively through the crooked mirror of domination. The age of “modernization,” instead of modernity, had begun: that is, the transformation of the world, of society, according to the requirements of domination and control, specifically, of the domination of capital, stripped of any purpose other than accumulation ....

For Latin America, this inflection of the history of modernity was more than decisive – it was catastrophic. The victory of the instrumentalization of reason in the service of domination was also a profound defeat for Latin America, which, because of its colonial situation, had associated modern rationality more than anything else with liberation. Latin America would not again encounter modernity except under the guise of “modernization.”<sup>22</sup>

Again, while I find his way of framing the distinction culturally stereotypical, what is important from the present standpoint is that “modernity” – as a set of structural factors, cultural and social values, behaviors and attitudes – is not reducible to a structure of colonial domination or a set of discourses in which eurocentrism is the dominant element. Indeed, the postoccidental critique of modernity as eurocentric coloniality seems irrelevant

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*Postcolonial Mexico and Peru*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, pp. 9-10, emphases added. Mallon, like postoccidentalism, critiques the notion of modernity construed eurocentrically in terms of “Western exceptionalism” in which the colonial periphery is obliterated as a site of the co-constitution of modern ideology and institutions. “Competition among European powers for broader markets and colonies, increased warfare, and the need to manage colonial struggles of various kinds fostered the development of the state. The concept of freedom was partially recast in dialectic with the concepts and relationships of ‘New World’ slavery. The idea of nation, as an ‘imagined community’, grew in relation to its opposite: colony.” Ibid., p. 8. Thus, too, like Benedict Anderson, she emphasizes the fact that the imaginary of liberal democratic nation-states was born in the colonies, not in Europe. All of this notwithstanding, I see her thesis as pointing to the importance of the conjunctural revolution in material relations and ideology, occurring toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in *both* Europe and the American colonies, in redefining the meaning of modernity and in reinforcing what Wallerstein sees as one of the essential contributions of the French Revolution, i.e., the normatization of revolutionary change as a value. These modernist discourses, it seems to me, are neither reducible to eurocentric coloniality nor to the notion of an ideologically monolithic “modern/colonial world system.” They represent radical discontinuities in the articulation of the “modern/colonial world system”, and have both European and American origins. Moreover, as one of the italicized passages quoted above implies, acknowledging the gap between a universalist occidental discourse and Creole practice (“the contradiction between promise and practice”) is not the same as attributing a “lado oscuro”, a hidden eurocentricity/coloniality, to the discourse itself.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-146.

to the viewpoint Quijano is presenting. Modernity is reducible neither to “coloniality” nor to “eurocentrism” in his account, and cannot be totalized as a world/colonial system with one “longue durée” trajectory, in either structural or discursive terms, nor can occidental reason be reduced to a logic of instrumentalization of colonial “others”.

Moreover, this analysis of the splitting off of emancipatory and instrumental reason, of “modernity” and “modernization”, is useful in problematizing the postoccidental conflation of “development” with “modernization”, in its deconstruction of dependency analysis and the *dependentista* use of “center” and “periphery” discussed in Chapter One. The distinctions Quijano is making were, as I see it, the kinds of distinctions that were basic to the Latin American school of development (including dependency theory, especially as it sought to go beyond Cepalist structuralism). Postwar Latin American developmentalism, from this point of view, can be seen as an attempt to reincorporate the emancipatory and politically progressive aspects of “modernity” into a process of national development, to “industrialize” along social-democratic and egalitarian lines, and by doing so, to undo the “Kafkaesque metamorphosis” that Quijano alludes to as having taken place at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Latin America. The postoccidental tendency to conflate “development” and “modernization”, and to view the former as an “occidental hegemonic discourse”, seems unable to appreciate the emancipatory dimension of the “modernity” envisioned by Latin American developmentalism in the 1960s and 1970s.

### 3.2.2 *The totalizing logic of the notion of modernity-as-coloniality as a longue durée versus the idea of radical historical discontinuities in the trajectory of modernity*

In this section the relationship between the “longue durée” of the capitalist world system – extending from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to at least the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – and the

“regime of truth” known as *coloniality*, is problematized as answering to a totalizing logic which obscures certain aspects of modernity as a phenomenon without which, as I see it, the *concept* of “modernity” is rendered counter-empirical and counter-intuitive.

From the postoccidental point of view, the structural changes that occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, referred to in Chapter One above, are inseparable from the metanarrative and the imaginary of eurocentrism (the imaginary of occidental superiority) that began to take shape at that same moment. “Modernity” is as much the latter as the former, if not more so. Thus, while there were very important structural changes that were to occur later (e.g., the shift from mercantilism to commodity exchange, the industrial revolution(s) of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, changes in the hegemonic center of the world system, etc.), from the poststructuralist/postcolonial point of view of postoccidentalism, such structural changes did not change the basic meaning of the occidentalist “metanarrative” accompanying European capitalist expansion, but rather re-articulated it in new discursive forms of eurocentric coloniality.

The changes, in other words, in the specific discursive formations through which that metanarrative was expressed (Christian evangelization, the “mission of civilization”, “progress”, “modernization”, “development”), are seen not so much as *transformations*, but rather as *transmogrifications* or *transubstantiations* – to use an alchemical metaphor – in the specific forms through which eurocentric coloniality is expressed, while retaining the “essence”, as it were, of eurocentric coloniality as a cultural-historical imaginary. Each re-articulation adds another element to the “overarching” imaginary which is “Occidentalism”. Thus, while postoccidentalism, in line with cultural studies, is at pains not to essentialize subaltern or ethnic identities, it does not hesitate to subsume all manifestations of European knowledge and practice under the notion of “Occidentalism” which, if not an “essence”, is

at least presumed<sup>23</sup> to be an imaginary at work in every stage of the articulation of European hegemony in the world and the ideological justification for “coloniality” as the discourse and practice of exercising dominion over non-European peoples.

In this sense, “Occidentalism” refers to a *discursive trajectory* under which all of these subsequent structural changes can be subsumed as their “overarching” ideology, as it were, within the “continuity” of the *longue durée* of capitalist modernity. As we have seen, this trajectory is understood as based upon a euro-supremacist imaginary that gives form and direction to all of its “internal” (supposedly “endogenous”) discursive changes, such that European cultural transformations are seen as responding to the articulation of European hegemony in the modern/colonial world system. I re-quote from Dussel:

España, como primera nación “moderna” ...abre la primera etapa “Moderna”: el mercantilismo mundial. Las minas de Potosí y Zacatecas (descubiertas en 1545-1546) permiten acumular riqueza monetaria suficiente para vencer a los Turcos en Lepanto veinticinco años después de dicho hallazgo (1571). El Atlántico suplanta al Mediterráneo. Para nosotros, la ‘centralidad’ de la Europa latina en la Historia Mundial es la *determinación fundamental de la Modernidad*. Las demás determinaciones se van dando en toma a ella (la subjetividad constituyente, la propiedad privada, la libertad del contrato, etc.) El siglo XVII (p.e. Descartes, etc.) son ya el fruto de un siglo y medio de ‘Modernidad’: son efecto y no punto de partida. Holanda (que se emancipa de España en 1610), Inglaterra y Francia continuarán el camino abierto.<sup>24</sup>

What is important, from the postoccidental view of “modernity”, even more than the *structural* change represented by the 16th century “Iberian phase” of capitalist expansion and its role in the European shift from a local feudalism to capitalism as a world-economy,

<sup>23</sup> The word “presumed” here is not meant to suggest that “Occidentalism” functions as a kind of a priori category for postoccidental thought, in the sense of “prior to” the appearance of concrete empirical evidence. However, it *is* meant to suggest that the notion of “Occidentalism” does function as a paradigm through which a large body of socio-historical facts are seen as finding their proper explanatory framework. Thus, “Occidentalism”, though it may have its origin in the perception of the morally unacceptable colonial subalternization of the “other” and her/his forms of knowledge and social practice, ends up assuming the status of an epistemological category or “near theory” whose overarching character seems intended to render other forms of interpretation of the center-periphery colonial encounter trivial or irrelevant. Thus, what could be viewed as *one aspect* of the discursive formations attending the deployment of European power in the non-European periphery of the Americas, is viewed in postoccidental theory as *the* imaginary behind all successive geopolitical articulations of the modern world system.

<sup>24</sup> Dussel, 2000, op. cit., p. 46.

is its initiation of a certain imaginary, and a certain eurocentric metanarrative according to which all *future* (outward) shifts in European economic hegemony or (inward) shifts in cultural orientation can be understood, be they the shift from Iberian to Dutch to British economic hegemony, the appearance of Cartesian rationalism with the emergence of French colonial expansionism, Anglo-American scientific and technological revolutions, etc. From this standpoint, structural and cultural developments are fused together into one “occidental” or eurocentric trajectory. It is as though “modernity” is fixed, even frozen, (in the sense of “essentialized”) in this first act of European colonization and the creation of the eurocentric imaginary which gives it its impetus, its original expansionary-missionary force, such that this initial physical and symbolic expansionism imparts to all of its further (later) structural changes or cultural and epistemological articulations an ineluctably colonial character. Such an interpretation of postoccidental theory perhaps helps to explain how it is able to make a direct connection between the mercantilist accumulation of wealth through the expropriation of American mineral resources and the exploitation of indigenous or African labor, on the one hand and, for example, Cartesian metaphysics, the institutionalisation of private property, etc., on the other.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> An example of a specific attempt to connect Cartesian metaphysics to “Occidentalism” as an overarching imaginary of control and dominion over nature and thus, *mutatis mutandis*, over non-European subalterns (viewed as “nature” or the bodily instrument of Occidental schemes of domination), is seen in the following excerpt from an essay by Edgardo Lander, entitled “Ciencias sociales: saberes coloniales y eurocéntricos”. In a subsection of his essay entitled “Las múltiples separaciones de Occidente”, Lander comments, after looking at “occidental” religion (which he equates with Judeo-Christianity, ignoring its common roots with Islam), as unique in its instrumentalization of nature for the benefit of humankind: “Es sin embargo a partir de la Ilustración y con el desarrollo posterior de las ciencias modernas cuando se sistematizan y se multiplican estas separaciones. Un hito histórico significativo en estos sucesivos procesos de separación lo constituye la ruptura ontológica entre cuerpo y mente, entre la razón y el mundo, tal como ésta es formulada en la obra de Descartes.” In *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*, op. cit., p. 15. Lander goes on to quote from Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, “Introduction: Rationality and the World”, in Frédérique Apffel-Marglin y Stephen A. Marglin, *Decolonizing Knowledge. From Development to Dialogue*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, as follows: “La ruptura ontológica entre la razón y el mundo quiere decir que el mundo ya no es un orden significativo, está expresamente muerto. La comprensión del mundo ya no es un asunto de estar en sintonía con el cosmos, como lo era los pensadores clásicos....El mundo se convirtió en lo que es para los

I find this determination of modernity in its Iberian-colonial expression an *over-*determination which conceals as much as it reveals about the nature of the “trajectory” which is modernity. It seems to me problematic, for example, to insist on the primacy of Iberia, as the avatar of modernity, or on coloniality as its foundation, as its epistemological and axiological basis. Even if the ongoing development of occidental forms of rationality (its technification, instrumentalization, etc.) increased the capacity of Europe to dominate and exploit, this does not in itself constitute a conclusive argument that the dynamic of this development had a colonialist mentality at its core, or that from the original Iberian

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ciudadanos el mundo moderno, un mecanismo desespiritualizado que puede ser captado por los conceptos y representaciones construidos por la razón. Esta total separación entre mente y cuerpo dejó al mundo y al cuerpo vacío de significado y subjetivizó radicalmente a la mente. Esta subjetivación de la mente, esta radical separación entre mente y mundo, colocó a los seres humanos en una posición externa al cuerpo y al mundo, con una postura instrumental hacia ellos.” Op. cit., p. 15 (pp. 3-4 in text cited). After going on to cite Weber’s contributions to this genealogy of dualistic, de-spiritualizing occidental rationality, Lander feels justified in making the connection with colonialism, as follows: “En la autoconciencia europea de la modernidad, estas sucesivas separaciones se articulan con aquéllas que sirven de fundamento al contraste esencial que se establece a partir de la conformación colonial del mundo entre occidental o europeo (concebido como lo *moderno*, lo *avanzado*) y los ‘Otros’, el resto de los pueblos y culturas del planeta.” Moreover, this genealogy from Judeo-Christian religion to Cartesian ontology can now be further connected to *Iberian* colonial expansion toward the Americas as its Archimedean point, so to speak: “La conquista ibérica del continente americano es el momento fundante de los dos procesos que articuladamente conforman la historia posterior: la *modernidad* y la *organización colonial del mundo*.” Lander goes on to speak of the “constitución colonial de los saberes, de los lenguajes, de la memoria y del imaginario” which culminates in “una gran narrativa universal. En esta narrativa, Europa es – o ha sido siempre – simultáneamente el centro geográfico y la culminación del movimiento temporal.” Ibid., p. 16. In developing this genealogy (which is certainly not without merit and foundation, on some level), Lander has effectively reduced and totalized modernity as a eurocentric-imaginative construction which provides the logic for colonial relations of power and has divorced 17<sup>th</sup> century rationalism from any connection with Greek rationalism (which is viewed as “holistic” as opposed to the “dualism” of Cartesian metaphysics). There is something facile, as I see it, about the attempt to draw direct connections (which are at best analogical) between 17<sup>th</sup> century occidental scientific epistemologies/metaphysics and their putative social consequences, without taking into consideration the intermediation of the powerfully transformative *effects*, cognitively and materially speaking, of scientific rationality in human beings’ relation to nature and one another. The idea that a direct connection can be drawn between Cartesian or subsequent forms of scientific-rationalist metaphysics, on the one hand, and colonial relations of power, on the other, without looking at the changes in cognition, materiality and forms of production to which that rationality has partly given rise (which really *do* have much to do with colonialism and occidental hegemony), seems to me to miss the point, as I argue below in looking at ideas of Manuel Castells. Moreover, the attempt to quantify the natural world is not the same as depriving it of all signification. On the contrary, it is a powerful form of resignification which, while perhaps depriving human beings of a simpler, more affective and more holistic sense of integration with the cosmos, led to a prodigious expansion of the human understanding of that cosmos and to profound paradigmatic shifts in both elite and popular conceptions of earth and the universe. These historical revolutions in thought, in my opinion, cannot be reduced to a lust for control for its own sake or to a manual for colonizing non-European humanity.

hegemony in the world system one can infer, in a quasi-deductive way, the emergence of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century rationalism, natural science, etc. Such an approach seems to deny to occidental evolution the very autonomy and novel agency that occidentalism's colonialist imaginary would deny to the evolution of non-European cultures.<sup>26</sup>

In the enormous importance that postoccidentalism attributes to the Iberian stage of the modern world, it explicitly (and with good reason) counters the tendency to view "modernity" as a phenomenon more narrowly associated with British industrialism and commercial hegemony, or with French revolutionary ideology as a product of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment (as two modalities – instrumental and emancipatory – of Enlightenment reason, as in Quijano's point of view presented in the previous section). However, in this emphasis on the Iberian stage of modernity, there seems to be an attempt to totalize successive modernist stages as little more than re-articulations of the logic of Iberian imperialism, the latter, in turn, constituting the essential logic of the "modern/colonial world system" as a 500 year *longue durée*.

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Fernando Coronil's penetrating criticism of Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* in his book review article "Discovering America Again: The Politics of Selfhood in the Age of Post-Colonial Empires", *Proposito* Vol. XIV, N° 36-38, pp. 315-331, Department of Romance Languages, University of Michigan: "As a result of [Todorov's] structuralist methodology and manipulative use of historical evidence, Mesoamericans appear as marionettes of their culture. Their reduction to passive enactors of a single pre-constituted code denies them selfhood and reproduces a view of them as 'others.' Paradoxical as it might seem, this image of Mesoamericans is essential for Todorov's presentation of the conquest as a semiotic battle between active, creative Spaniards and reactive, reiterative Mesoamericans. By definition, the winners were those capable of responding creatively to this unprecedented encounter. As he tells it, this history teaches us that Spaniards alone were individuals capable of self-reflection – that is, truly 'selves.' " Is it going too far to suggest that, in its zeal to recover the agency of the subaltern from her/his objectification by colonial discourse, that postoccidental deconstruction-reconstruction ends up stereotyping the agency of Europeans in somewhat the way Coronil sees Todorov as doing vis-à-vis Mesoamericans? To be sure, Mignolo and others, for example, write about the views of Las Casas as challenging the colonialist imaginary on some level, but even Las Casas seems to emerge in those contexts as one more Christian missionary, albeit well-intentioned. But does this also mean that Garcilosa the Inca is just one more Indian, however much his genius and humanity transcended the colonial stereotypes? Aren't Las Casas and Garcilosa, each "transculturated" from his respective homeland to the homeland of the other, two human beings in an encounter in which each one's agency seeks to break free from the common structure of domination which would crush them and their humanity? Does the fact that *x* comes from the conqueror's side of the equation mean that *x* is less capable of *not* "enacting" the conqueror than *y*, who comes from the conquered side of the equation, is capable of *not* "enacting" the conquered?

With his notion of “modernity” and “coloniality” as two sides of the same dialectical coin, Walter Mignolo articulates Quijano’s notion of coloniality as implying that “coloniality of power underlines the geo-economic world system and “manages the colonial difference”. That distinction allows Quijano<sup>27</sup>, as Mignolo sees it, “to link capitalism, through coloniality, to labor and race (and not only class) as well as to knowledge.”<sup>28</sup> Mignolo goes on to quote Quijano as follows:

La colonialidad del poder y la dependencia histórico-estructural, implican ambas la hegemonía del eurocentrismo como perspectiva de conocimiento...En el contexto de la colonialidad del poder, las poblaciones dominadas de todas las nuevas identidades fueron también sometidas a la hegemonía del eurocentrismo como manera de conocer, sobre todo en la medida que algunos de sus sectores pudieron aprender la letra de los dominadores.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, analogous to the function that dialectical materialism performs in the Marxist analysis of the history of productive relations in tying together all successive stages of European history, “eurocentric coloniality”, standing Marxist materialism on its head, is now the discursive-imaginary formation that “underlies” all successive “geo-economic” changes in the capitalist world system.

Mignolo follows these comments with a condensed review of the social theory (including dependency theory) that led up to the formulation of the theory of modernity-as-coloniality, and of the social history of Latin America from its colonial, to its post-colonial, to its neo-colonial stage (under first British, then subsequently North American,

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<sup>27</sup> It should perhaps be noted here that I am talking about the Quijano of “colonialidad del poder” authorship, and not about Quijano as author of the essay discussed in the previous section. I do not claim to have a clear idea of the relationship between these two authorships. (See next note.)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-54. As the analysis of Quijano’s earlier views in the previous section perhaps suggests, Quijano may have changed his view, articulated in that earlier essay, of the periodization of “colonialism” with reference to Latin America, as well as the weight he gave in that earlier essay to historical materialism as the way to understand capitalism. The idea of “coloniality”, of the cultural/colonial/racial dimension of capitalism seems to have supplanted his earlier analyses, (developed along more occidental social scientific/neo-Marxist lines), of the evolution of capitalist modernity. As should be obvious by now, I am more convinced by his earlier analysis, at least as regards the problem of “modernity.”

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 54. The citation is from Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en América Latina”, *Anuario Mariateguiano* 9, no. 9: 113-21, 1997, p. 117.



hegemony), including the internal colonization and “civilizing” mission carried out by 19<sup>th</sup> century Creole elites. Throughout this discussion, the various phases of modernity are described as a kind of seamless web of geopolitical/geoeconomic/geocultural articulation emanating from the eurocentric imaginary and the “colonial difference”, to which Wallerstein, in his pre-postoccidentalist phase, was apparently blind.

In other words, the basic thesis of the Iberian constitution of the modern world is re-argued here on what Mignolo calls “historicostructural” grounds, but which I would argue is not historicostructural at all, but rather a poststructuralist totalization resulting in the *reduction* of a range of historical phenomena to a single logic, analogous to the Marxist notion that “all history is the history of class struggles”.

This reductionism is something of a *reductio ad absurdum*, when looked at from other points of view. If Occidentalism itself is a reductionist “ideology” that would “reduce” everything non-occidental to categories such as “backward”, “primitive”, “barbaric”, “underdeveloped”, “uncivilized”, etc., this essentialization of “modernity” as Iberian-colonial seems to me equally reductionist in its own way. It has the effect of forcing us to view all subsequent changes within the trajectory of “modernity” and “modernization” through one reducing lens.

Let me illustrate what I mean by quoting a passage from Manuel Castells’ *La sociedad red* in which he looks at the modern trajectory in quite different terms:

...[H]ubo “revoluciones” en el sentido de que la aparición repentina e inesperada de unas aplicaciones tecnológicas transformó los procesos de producción y distribución, creó un aluvión de nuevos productos y cambió decisivamente la ubicación de la riqueza y el poder en un planeta que de repente quedó al alcance de aquellos países y elites capaces de dominar el nuevo sistema tecnológico. El lado oscuro de esta aventura tecnológica es que estuvo inextricablemente unida a las ambiciones imperialistas y a los conflictos interimperialistas.

No obstante, ésta es precisamente *una confirmación del carácter revolucionario de las nuevas tecnologías industriales*. El ascenso histórico del denominado Occidente, limitado

de hecha a Gran Bretaña y un puñado de naciones de Europa Occidental, así como a su prole norteamericana, está ligado sobre todo a la superioridad tecnológica lograda durante las dos revoluciones industriales. *Nada de la historia cultural, científica, política o militar del mundo previo a la revolución industrial explicaría la indisputable supremacía "occidental"* (anglosajona/alemana, con un toque francés) entre 1750 y 1950. China fue una cultura muy superior durante la mayor parte de la historia anterior al Renacimiento; la civilización musulmana (tomándose la libertad de utilizar este término) dominó buena parte del Mediterráneo y ejerció una influencia significativa en África durante toda la Edad Moderna; Asia y África permanecieron en general organizadas en torno a centros culturales y políticos autónomos; Rusia gobernó en un aislamiento espléndido sobre una vasta extensión a lo largo de Europa Oriental y Asia; y *el Imperio Español, la cultura europea rezagada de la Revolución industrial, fue la principal potencia mundial durante más de dos siglos desde 1492. La tecnología, como expresión de condiciones sociales específicas, introdujo una nueva trayectoria histórica en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII.*

Esta trayectoria se originó en Gran Bretaña, aunque se pueden seguir los rastros de sus raíces intelectuales por toda Europa, hasta el espíritu de descubrimiento del Renacimiento.<sup>30</sup>

From Castells' point of view, the information revolution (which is the central protagonist of his book) is heir to these earlier industrial revolutions, is at the core of the current global economy and was produced, in part, by the search for alternative forms of capital accumulation in the wake of the crisis of "Fordist" production in the 1970s. He acknowledges the profound social, cultural and institutional changes that this technological revolution and change in the mode of capital accumulation are provoking, but there are fundamental differences between his view of the process through which this stage has come into being and that of postoccidental theory, even while there are certain points of agreement. The key to the divergence between Castells' point of view and that of postoccidentalsim is what he sees as the common elements between the current informational revolution and the earlier technological-economic revolutions through which, in his opinion, (northern) European and North American hegemony came about.

In the first place, it should be noted that Castells, using the same kind of terminology that both Mignolo and Dussel use, acknowledges "el lado oscuro" of modernity, albeit he does not use the term modernity as such (but, rather, "aventura tecnológica", which for him

<sup>30</sup> Manuel Castells, *La sociedad red*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1996, pp. 62, 63, emphases added.

is closely bound up with “modernity” and “modernization”). That is, he clearly acknowledges the connection between occidental technological superiority and “imperialism”, between modernization in the metropolitan centers and the ability to dominate the colonial peripheries, with all of the devastating impacts on those peripheries that this process brings about. But this “lado oscuro” is not some dialectical negation of the “Other” intrinsic to occidental rationality, but rather the historical consequence of the particular form of scientific epistemology, technology, and economic dynamism developed in the West, which does not establish occidental culture as “superior” in an evaluative sense, but which does provide it with the instruments and incentives to dominate less technological societies.

It should also be noted that he is referring to stages of technological modernization (he does not equate technological modernization with “occidentalization”, since he does not view the former as articulating a totalizing cultural logic, i.e. “Occidentalism”) that correspond to the northern European, rather than the Iberian, hegemonic phase in the capitalist world system. Nevertheless, he clearly sees the connection between the economic power centered in Europe and its being inextricably connected (“*inextricablemente unida*”) to imperialism. (However, in this context “imperialism” seems to have a more specific historical meaning, more in line with the Marxist and neo-Marxist equation of “imperialism” with the expansion of European industrial capitalism under British and North American hegemony in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.)

He is also in agreement with postoccidental theory in his rejection of any supposed *cultural* superiority enjoyed by Europe over other parts of the world, and indeed highlights the cultural and even geopolitical *superiority* of some of the same traditions that postoccidental analysis faults euro-supremacist historiography for belittling. In this sense, it

would be unfair to call his account “eurocentric.” (Northern) European/ North American hegemony has resulted from the singular difference – which may have had cultural aspects, but which is ultimately a difference which *subordinates* culture, in its wider sense, to scientific and technological reason – of its systematic development of scientific rationality, the drive to understand, control and transform the physical and biological world. Castells understands this “occidental difference”, it seems to me, as *linked* to capitalism and the ever-increasing productivity which its drive for accumulation and profit require, but does not view it as *reducible* to the logic either of capitalism or of colonial domination. It is a fundamental *human* phenomenon, and without it, capitalism would not have achieved the hegemony over other forms of social organization which Wallerstein, for example, singles out as a unique aspect of the modern world system.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the *modernity* associated with capitalism as a world system is, in a fundamental way, a function of the *technological* change which capitalism has helped to foment but whose basis lies in an intellectual evolution which is not reducible to the drive for endless accumulation of capital or colonial domination.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the aspects of “*modernity*” which are cultural, and go beyond the aspect of technological modernity (which is really what we mean by “*modernization*”),

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<sup>31</sup> It is also true to say, of course, along with Marx, that the dynamic, restless search for profit and for the creation of new use values that can be commodified (turned into exchange value) has a “retroalimentary” effect on scientific and technological development, especially with the continued modernization of capitalism as a world system. But it is well to remember that the key figures in the early stages of the scientific revolution, Johannes Kepler, for example, were as apt to be neo-Pythagorean sun-worshippers, operating with a distinctly non-modernist cultural orientation, than “modern” scientists as we now understand the term, with their increasing dependence on corporate and government capital and the economic dimension that such dependence implies.

<sup>32</sup> This tension continues to be manifest in the ongoing struggle over funding for “basic” versus “applied” research, in which apologists for the former are often constrained to argue that it is basic research that yields the fundamental insights on which “practical”, technological breakthroughs are based. This is a bit like the argument that we should protect untamed nature because of the useful products it may yield in the future. The fundamental conflict, under the logic of capitalism, between human use value and exchange value is clear here, as elsewhere, suggesting that capitalist “progress” proceeds at the expense of human and natural needs. Nevertheless, capitalism’s force as a great engine for innovation cannot be denied, and was the source of much of the Marxist admiration for capitalism as a system of production, in spite of the Marxist criticism of the commodification of value and human labor under capitalism.

have been basically *responses* to the domination of scientific and technological rationality over “culture” (as understood prior to the fully technological age). This is clear in the evolution, for example, of 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism and postmodernism and, one could argue, postcolonialism (including postoccidentalism).

Where postoccidentalism sees historical continuity, Castells sees *discontinuity* (as his focus on the Industrial *Revolution(s)* makes plain): from his point of view, there is no way to account for a modern world dominated by Europeans based upon 16<sup>th</sup> century Iberian mercantilism. Thus, he would presumably be highly sceptical of Dussel’s point of view which sees the industrial revolution (which, for Castells, is really two separate technological revolutions<sup>33</sup>) and British economic supremacy as (at least indirectly) produced by, and continuous with, the Iberian colonization of the Americas.

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<sup>33</sup> Castells precedes the passage just quoted with the following description of the two phases of industrial revolution: “Los historiadores han mostrado que hubo al menos dos revoluciones industriales: la primera comenzó en el último tercio del siglo XVIII, se caracterizó por nuevas tecnologías como la máquina de vapor, la hiladora de varios husos, el proceso Cort en metalurgia y, en un sentido más general, por la sustitución de las herramientas por las máquinas; la segunda, unos cien años después, ofreció el desarrollo de la electricidad, el motor de combustión interna, la química basada en la ciencia, la fundición de acero eficiente y el comienzo de las tecnologías de la comunicación, con la difusión del telégrafo y la invención del teléfono. Entre las dos existen continuidades fundamentales, así como algunas diferencias críticas, la principal de las cuales es la importancia decisiva del conocimiento científico para producir y dirigir el desarrollo tecnológico desde 1850. Precisamente debido a sus diferencias, los rasgos comunes a ambas pueden ofrecer una percepción preciosa para comprender la lógica de las revoluciones tecnológicas.

“Ante todo, en ambos casos, como testigos de lo que Mokyr describe como un periodo de ‘cambio tecnológico acelerado y sin precedentes’ según los parámetros históricos. (Mokyr, 1990, pág. 82.) Un conjunto de macroinvenciones prepararon el terreno para el florecimiento de las microinvenciones en el campo de la agricultura, la industria y las comunicaciones. *En la base material de la especie humana se introdujo de manera irreversible una discontinuidad histórica fundamental, en un proceso de trayectoria dependiente....*” Ibid., p. 61, emphasis added. It is this “material base” that seems irreducible to cultural discourse analysis and which, Castells is suggesting, must be considered fundamental to occidental (particularly northern European and later North American) hegemony. From this point of view, the “longue durée” of the “modern world system” appears interrupted by conjunctural, revolutionary discontinuities which cannot be ignored in any attempt to define what we mean by “modernity”. At the very least, we can question how pre-industrial “modernity” is related to industrial “modernity”, just as, now, we are forced to question (Harvey, Jameson, et. al.) how industrial “modernity” is related to post-industrial “post-modernity” (including the reasons why it no longer seems adequate to many theorists, at least, to conceptualize the present phase as another phase of “modernity”). The societies and cultures which have been “forced”, as it were, to be a part of this entire trajectory, as colonial peripheries, are hardly irrelevant or exterior to it. With this part of postoccidental theory one can readily agree. However, it seems counter-empirical and even counter-intuitive to leave out of an attempt to define and describe what “modernity” is, the kind of analysis that Castells is

This view of Dussel's just mentioned appears in the continuation of a passage quoted above (in which, as we have seen, Dussel connects "la primera etapa 'Moderna': el mercantilismo mundial" initiated by Iberian expansion towards the Americas with the emergence of Cartesian rationality and of Holland, France and England as hegemonic powers). Dussel continues as follows:

La segunda etapa de la 'Modernidad', la de la revolución industrial del siglo XVIII y de la Ilustración, profundizan y amplían el horizonte ya comenzado a fines del siglo XV. Inglaterra reemplaza a España como potencia hegemónica hasta el 1945, y tiene el comando de la Europa moderna, de la Historia mundial (en especial desde el surgimiento del Imperialismo en torno a 1870).

Esta *Europa Moderna*, desde 1492, "centro" de la Historia Mundial, constituye, por primera vez en la historia, a todas las otras culturas como su "periferia".<sup>34</sup>

In Chapter Two I looked at this last point (that Europe constitutes itself as the "center" of World History with the Iberian Conquest) in greater depth in relation to the occidental view of historical time, and found it helpful as a way of understanding how the eurocentric imaginary of being "more advanced" than other cultures may have been constructed. Here, however, I am interested in pointing out that, for Dussel, there is a continuous trajectory (construed, it would appear, in a kind of causal-dialectical way) between Iberian mercantilism and British industrial hegemony, beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and extending to the close of the Second World War, based on a culturally "occidentalist" or "eurocentric" logic. Castells would be sceptical, it seems to me, of the idea that this "second stage of modernity" simply deepened and broadened "el horizonte ya comenzado a fines del siglo XV", or that it could be accounted for in terms of a cultural imaginary, in the sense of an imagined cultural superiority or centrality in world history.

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bringing to the fore here, or to imply that what he is describing is somehow directly the product of the colonial aspect of world capitalism. Such a point of view seems obscurantist.

<sup>34</sup> Enrique Dussel, 2000, op. cit., p. 46.

Indeed, in a way Dussel begs the question, in his sparse and linear account, of *why* these changes in hegemony occurred, and thereby seems to underestimate the importance and uniqueness of the two industrial revolutions – as well as the scientific revolutions which preceded them – which, from Castells point of view, basically transform the world in a totally new way, absolutely without precedent in the “first stage of Modernity”, Iberian mercantilism. Dussel’s focus on the continuity of a eurocentric imaginary and of a kind of self-perpetuating colonial capitalism, as the engines, so to speak, of the evolution of the modern world, fails to take into account the technological/economic revolutions in productivity and the organization of labor which herald the modern world as we know it. From this point of view, culture is more a dependent than an independent variable in accounting for the emergence of “modernity”, even as a cultural phenomenon.

Moreover, owing to Castell’s emphasis on the *technological* aspect of the modern world economic system (a system he sees as transcended in the current informational *global* economy, which, however, is also produced, in large part, by a technological revolution<sup>35</sup>),

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<sup>35</sup> These two issues are dealt with in the following two passages. First, the issue of the *world* economic system being replaced by a *global* system: “La economía informacional es global. Una economía global es una realidad nueva para la historia, distinta de una economía mundial. Una economía mundial, es decir, una economía en la que la acumulación de capital ocurre en todo el mundo, ha existido en Occidente al menos desde el siglo XVI, como nos enseñaron Fernand Braudel e Immanuel Wallerstein. Una **economía global es algo diferente. Es una economía con la capacidad de funcionar como una unidad en tiempo real a escala planetaria.** Aunque el modo capitalista de producción se caracteriza por su expansión incesante, tratando siempre de superar los límites de tiempo y espacio, sólo a finales del siglo XX la economía mundial fue capaz de hacerse verdaderamente global en virtud de la nueva infraestructura proporcionada por las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación. Esta globalidad incumbe a todos los procesos y elementos del sistema económico....Los flujos de capital se vuelven globales y cada vez más autónomos frente a la actuación real de las economías.” Ibid., pp. 119-120. The second issue, that concerning the continuity-in-discontinuity between global informational capitalism and industrial capitalism, has to do with their common links to technological revolutions: “La economía informacional es un sistema socioeconómico distintivo en relación con la economía industrial, pero no debido a que se difieran en la fuente para aumentar su productividad. En ambos casos, el conocimiento y el procesamiento de la información son elementos cruciales del crecimiento económico, como puede ilustrarse con la historia de la industria química, basada en la ciencia o por la revolución de la gestión que creó el fordismo. **Lo que es distintivo es la realización final del potencial de productividad contenido en la economía industrial madura debido al cambio hacia un paradigma tecnológico basado en las tecnologías de la información.** El nuevo paradigma tecnológico cambió primero el alcance y la dinámica de la economía industrial, creando una economía global y

he is inclined to see its roots not in Iberian overseas expansion, but in the intellectual discoveries that began in the European Renaissance and continued with the scientific revolutions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

His conclusion, therefore, that a “new historical trajectory” is introduced into the world in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the English Industrial Revolution, with roots in a Renaissance common to all of western Europe, implies a continuity between those 18<sup>th</sup> century developments and the present stage of globalization and, implicitly, a *discontinuity* between 16<sup>th</sup> century Iberian mercantilism and the present, that is frankly incompatible with the periodizations of postoccidental analysis, as well as a reaffirmation, in contradistinction to postoccidentalism, of at least a *technological* modernity (which he sees as at the core of the “modern” hegemony of northern Europe), that is basically *endogenous* to Europe. For Castells, there is a direct link between 18<sup>th</sup> century capitalist industrialism and 20<sup>th</sup> century

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fomentando una nueva ola de competencia entre los agentes económicos existentes, así como entre éstos y una legión de recién llegados.” Ibid., p. 118. Boldface in the original. Thus “globalization”, as a new stage of capitalist accumulation, is based on a technological revolution as were the previous industrial stages. And it may mark the end, as well, of the “longue durée” of the world capitalist system, and thus of the “modern/colonial world system” in the sense of postoccidentalism. Indeed, this is what Mignolo suggests in a passage quoted in Chapter Two, below, cited in note 30. The “imaginary” of eurocentrism and of Occidentalism is breaking down, (along with the corollary to the modern world system, which is the interstate political system), and with it the logic of “center” and “periphery”, of “developed” and “undeveloped”, of “modern” and “unmodern” – if we understand these binarisms as articulated geopolitically and geoculturally. However, as Castells is at pains to point out, (and with this postoccidental analysis would agree), the asymmetries of wealth and power between “former” cores and peripheries are, if anything, more pronounced than ever before. This is, perhaps, one of the aspects of the “postmodern condition” – that the disparity of wealth and opportunity in the world now devolves onto factors that are less and less geographically determinate, owing to the “deterritorialization” of global capitalism. However, from Castells point of view, this latest disparity between rich and poor has much to do with the previous disparities in the articulation of modern technology and modern forms of production. This, in turn, may well be (and undoubtedly is) a reflection of the colonial trajectory. From Castells point of view, however, it would seem to be obscurantist to assert that the trajectories of the industrialized world and that of the colonial peripheries can be understood as articulated by a monolithic “modern/colonial world system”, such that past and present disparities are comprehensible in terms of the occidental colonial project, without taking into account the fissures, the discontinuities, the disparities, in that system brought about by endogenously European scientific and technological revolutions. The factors of occidental technology and enhanced productivity are not reducible to the phenomenon of coloniality and yet they explain much of the disparity between center and periphery, as Cepalistas and dependentistas emphasized. So we are back to where we started in the debate over what “modernity” truly “is”, in which we can even question whether we are talking about the same reality when we use the word!



capitalist informationalism. Both represent revolutionary breaks with the level of human productivity that preceded them, owing to technological transformations. And both are linked to profound social and cultural changes which have much to do with the definition of the “modern world” as we know and experience it.

Castells follows up his analysis of the continuity-in-discontinuity between industrial and informational capitalism, based on their common links to technological revolution (see notes 34 and 35) by referring to that aspect of modernity, highlighted by the modernist discourse of Schumpeter (though Schumpeter is not referred to directly, here) on the importance the latter attributes to *entrepreneurialism* in the creation of the modern world, i.e., its aspect of “*creative destruction*”, referring to the most recent phase of technological modernization (informationalism), but in terms that could equally be related to prior revolutionary transitions in the articulation of the capitalist world system:

Esta nueva competencia, desempeñada por las empresas pero condicionada por el Estado, llevó a cambios tecnológicos considerables en procesos y productos que hicieron más productivos a algunas empresas, algunos sectores y algunas regiones. No obstante, al mismo tiempo hubo una *destrucción creativa* en grandes segmentos de la economía, afectando también en forma desproporcionada a determinadas empresas, sectores, regiones y países. El resultado neto en el primer estadio de la revolución informacional tuvo así sus pros y sus contras para el progreso económico. Además, la generalización de la producción y gestión basadas en el conocimiento a todo el ámbito de los procesos económicos a escala global requiere unas transformaciones sociales, culturales e institucionales fundamentales que, si se tiene en cuenta el registro histórico de otras revoluciones tecnológicas, llevará algún tiempo.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Castells, op. cit., p. 118. emphasis added. David Harvey develops an interesting genealogy of modernity from Baudelaire to Goethe's Faust to Nietzsche to Schumpeter. Beginning with Baudelaire: “ ‘Modernity,’ wrote Baudelaire in his seminal essay ‘The painter of modern life’ (published in 1863), ‘is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is the one half of art, the other being the eternal and immutable.’ .... Modernity, therefore, not only entails a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions, but is characterized by a never-ending process of internal ruptures and fragmentations within itself...” If the Enlightenment sought to incorporate the aspect of “eternal truth” into the maelstrom of change accompanied by the modernizing project, this aspect of the modern trajectory is rejected by Nietzsche who “plunged totally into the other side of Baudelaire’s formulation in order to show that the modern was nothing more than a vital energy, the will to live and to power, swimming in a sea of disorder, anarchy, destruction, individual alienation, and despair. ‘Beneath the surface of modern life, dominated by knowledge and science, he discerned vital energies that were wild, primitive and completely merciless.’ [M. Bradbury and J. McFarlane, *Modernism, 1890-1930*, Harmondsworth, 1975, p. 446]. All the Enlightenment imagery about civilization, reason, universal rights, and morality was for naught. The eternal and immutable essence of humanity found

One might say that Castells is positivist and materialist, because he places so much emphasis on scientific cognition as the unique source of the kind of knowledge that translates into geopolitical power (as an expression of higher levels of economic productivity and technological, including military, sophistication), and perhaps a

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its proper representation in the mythical figure of Dionysus: 'to be at one and the same time 'destructively creative' (i.e. to form the temporal world of individualization and becoming, a process destructive of unity) and 'creatively destructive' (i.e. to devour the illusory universe of individualization, a process involving the reaction of unity)' [loc. cit.]...The image of 'creative destruction' is very important to understanding modernity precisely because it derived from the practical dilemmas that faced the implementation of the modernist project. How could a new world be created, after all, without destroying much that had gone before?...The literary archetype of such a dilemma is...Goethe's Faust... 'It appears,' says Berman [M. Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Thin Air*, New York, 1982], 'that the very process of development, even as it transforms the wasteland into a thriving physical and social space, recreates the wasteland inside of the developer himself. This is how the tragedy of development works'....Yet we are liable, in the end, if we strive for the eternal and the immutable, to try and put our stamp upon the chaotic, the ephemeral, and the fragmentary. The Nietzschean image of creative destruction and destructive creation bridges the two sides of Baudelaire's formulation in a new way. Interestingly, the economist Schumpeter picked up this very same image in order to understand the processes of capitalist development. The entrepreneur, in Schumpeter's view a heroic figure, was the creative destroyer *par excellence* because the entrepreneur was prepared to push the consequences of technical and social innovation to vital extremes. And it was only through such creative heroism that human progress could be assured. Creative destruction, for Schumpeter, was the progressive leitmotif of benevolent capitalist development. For others, it was simply the necessary condition of twentieth-century progress." Harvey, op. cit., pp. 10-17. Understood in this way, the notion of "progress" as capitalist "modernization" is a way of bringing together the Enlightenment notion of progress as human perfectibility and the kind of amoral individualism emerging from Nietzsche's analyses of modern nihilism and the will to power. The capitalist entrepreneur, in Schumpeter's sense, embodies the "creative destruction" of Nietzsche's will to power in her/his pursuit of profit (exchange value), thereby dissolving pre-existing (pre-capitalist) forms of human society, but by means of constant technical innovation, and thus in the service of social evolution, of "progress" defined in terms of the production of new use values and new forms of human organization ("destructive creation"). Of course this is the sort of discourse that Castro-Gómez probably has in mind when he makes the scathing comment, quoted in note 4 to this chapter, that from the occidental point of view, the pain and suffering of colonized peoples is seen as nothing more than a necessary condition for their "modernization" and their "progress." And Mignolo would undoubtedly say, and with much reason, that this sort of occidental internally critical discourse about modernity is utterly blind to the "colonial difference." Again, exploited peoples in the colonial periphery do not need to be informed about the "destructive" side of the "modernity" equation. As far as the "creative" side is concerned, that would seem to be something that is largely enjoyed at the "center" of the modern world system, from the postcolonial point of view. In the periphery is experienced the "wasteland" of capitalist development, while in the center is to be found the "thriving physical and social space." My point here, and in this chapter generally, is not to argue that capitalist modernity has not had devastating impacts on its colonial peripheries, or that there is some clear trajectory of universal human betterment which in any sense justifies this. My point, rather, is to argue that modernity must at some level be understood as a process of transformation brought about by the creatively destructive forms of technological and sociological revolution/innovation originating in the centers of capitalist production, and that its colonialist dimension is perhaps a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for its existence or its conceptualization. Thus, to take a "postoccidental"/"postcolonial" stance with respect to modernity is not the same as deconstructing it in its entirety (i.e., exhausting its meaning), because there is something left over after the deconstruction that has to do with materiality and structural transformation on the level of technology and forms of production, and the kind of knowledge they require.

technological determinist. However, if he accepts the positivist separation of fact and value in his analysis of the historical causality at work in the creation of modern hegemony, he nevertheless considers essential to the *evaluation* of contemporary globalization (as well as earlier phases of capitalism) the social, cultural, and ethical consequences of this, as of previous, technological revolutions.<sup>37</sup> In terms of historical causality, however, he has no doubt that technological innovation is the single most important cause of social-cultural change and that its social-cultural consequences are part of the onward march of history<sup>38</sup>, so to speak, however lamentable some of those consequences may be.

In what I see as another counter to the postoccidentalist attempt to establish Iberian mercantilism/ colonialism as the fountainhead of modernity, the historian John Lynch provides an account, in his analysis of “the origins of Spanish American independence”, which could constitute a basis for questioning the claim that Iberian mercantilism was, in itself, a sufficient impetus for successive phases of modernity.

Spain was a durable but not a developed metropolis. At the end of the eighteenth century, after three centuries of imperial rule, Spanish Americans still saw in their mother country an image of themselves... Here was a case rare in modern history – a colonial economy dependent upon an underdeveloped metropolis.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> He devotes a substantial part of his analysis to the social and economic consequences of the information revolution for those parts of the world which have been, or had been, “peripheral” in the context of the world economy. However, he also is at pains to point out that formerly “peripheral” zones (for example, the Pacific Rim countries), have become major powers in global capitalism, in due measure as a result of their embracing the new technologies.

<sup>38</sup> Castells’ view of modernity and progress is not teleological, in the sense that he does not see the modernizing process as guided by some end, some “telos”, which can be said to be “higher”, or “better”, or more “civilized,” as is the case with the older occidental metanarrative of progress. Rather, his notion of history as a modernizing process seems to be guided by a materialist understanding of the repeated revolutions in human productivity that technology, in part, represents. He appears to see this aspect of human life as inescapable, and as the principal motor of modernizing, creatively-destructive, change. To what extent this point of view can be “deconstructed” and criticized by postcolonial discourse, I leave it to the reader to decide.

<sup>39</sup> John Lynch, “The Origins of Spanish American Independence”, in *The Cambridge History of Latin America, Vol. III*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 3-4. One could say, of course, that the “locus of enunciation” of this point of view, that of a British historian looking at Latin America from the point of view of the British hegemony which dominated it during its first post-colonial phase, needs to be taken into account here. However, note that this is essentially Quijano’s point of view as well, in the passages quoted in section 2.1 of this chapter, above. Moreover, Castells, though a Spaniard, presumably shares this point of

His historical perspective on the Bourbon bureaucracy takes the position that the Bourbon reforms, while undertaking a modernization of sorts of Spain's economic infrastructure, did not produce any profound, revolutionary changes in Spanish society or institutions, that "the principal aim was to reform existing structures rather than design new ones, and the basic economic objective was to improve agriculture rather than promote industry." Moreover, "economic improvement did not lead to great social change."<sup>40</sup> Spain's mercantilist policies in the late colonial period, on the surface aimed at promoting Spanish commercial sectors, did not fundamentally alter the dominance of Spanish economy and society by rural landowning interests. Thus, from Lynch's point of view, "Spain missed the opportunity of fundamental change in the eighteenth century and finally abandoned the path of modernization."<sup>41</sup> For this reason,

Spain remained essentially an agrarian economy, and overseas trade was valued above all as an outlet for agricultural production. In the final analysis the modernizing measures of Charles III (1759-1788) were designed to revive a traditional sector of the economy, and it was made more apparent than ever that the Hispanic world was constructed not upon a division of labour between metropolis and colonies, but upon ominous similarities."<sup>42</sup>

It would be outside the purpose of this section to go any further with this line of analysis, i.e., to investigate, for example, the similarities between Bourbon Spain and Bourbon France in their emphasis on production for the crown and the royal entourage, versus the kind of commodity production for common consumption that began in England

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view also. Perhaps there is something about the "locus of enunciation" that escapes me. Certainly, any discourse probably has some interconnection with the geopolitical and social affiliations, or intellectual and value commitments, of its author, but unless this idea is handled very carefully it reduces to the *ad hominem* or the genetic fallacy. A discourse cannot be automatically qualified, never mind discredited, by virtue of its origin or who enunciates it or from whose/which viewpoint it is supposedly enunciated.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 3-4

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

around this time, or how these economic differences were connected with differences in the political and class structure between Spain, France and England.<sup>43</sup>

However convincing these historical analyses may or may not be, the point here is not to imply a normatization of “industrialization”, or of “Anglo-Saxon protestant capitalism” as denoting that which is quintessentially modern, as though earlier forms of modernity were not equally “modern” in their own way. Lynch’s use of the term “modernization” perhaps betrays this kind of normatization, the reduction, as it were, of “modernity” to “modernization” (or, in Quijano’s terms, the reduction of modern Enlightenment reason to its instrumentalized, “Anglo-Saxon” logic, ignoring its emancipatory “Latin” dimension).

There is no intent to question here, in other words, that Iberian mercantilism – and the kind of Peninsular-American societies and colonial relations it produced – represents a foundational moment in what has come to be understood as modernity, and perhaps even the origin of a distinct form of Latin American modernism whose core has survived the subsequent hegemonization of Anglo-Saxon capitalist modernity, as, for example, Bolívar Echeverría argues in *La modernidad del barroco*.<sup>44</sup>

What is being questioned, rather, by introducing the viewpoints of Castells and Lynch, is the thesis that “modernity” can be adequately conceptualised by understanding it as a phenomenon emerging in the first phases of a world economy, rather than as a way of identifying a series of revolutionary conjunctures and discontinuities (some economic/technological, others political/cultural/social, but ultimately all interconnected) which only partly answer to the exigencies of the system as originally constituted. Implicit

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<sup>43</sup> See Barrington Moore, *Los orígenes sociales de la dictadura y de la democracia*, Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1991, (primera edición en inglés 1966), pp. 334-335.

<sup>44</sup> Op. cit., note 20 of this chapter.

in this questioning, moreover, is a questioning of the attempt to resignify “modernity” as synonymous with the idea of the constitution of a system of colonial relations.

Thus, I would argue, that not only is there is radical discontinuity in the “geoculture” of modernity with the emergence of the political ideology and imaginary of the Enlightenment and French Revolution (Wallerstein), but I also question whether the concept of a world-economic system (i.e., a modern capitalist world economy), as a “longue durée” structure, is adequate for understanding the successive logics of modernism that have occurred conjuncturally *within* that longue durée. In sum, it seems paradoxical to try to merge the concept of “modernity” as a signifier of constant change, fragmentation, inner rupture, etc. with the notion of a semi-millennial world “structure” or “system”,<sup>45</sup> or the notion of a

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<sup>45</sup> Steve J. Stern, in an article in the collection of essays *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relation*, ed. by Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine LeGrand and Ricardo D. Salvatore, Durham, Duke University Press, 1998, alludes to his criticism, in an earlier article written by him, of “the usefulness of Immanuel Wallerstein’s interpretation of the sixteenth century as a founding era in the creation of a capitalist world-system encompassing the Americas as well as Western and Eastern Europe”, as follows: “When I found Wallerstein’s paradigm untenable from both explanatory and descriptive points of view, I tried to avoid nihilism by proposing starting points...for a new conceptual approach. The apparent solution was a triangle of interacting and internally contradictory ‘motors’ – the European world-system, popular strategies of resistance and survival within the periphery, and mercantile and elite interests joined to American centers of gravity.” He quotes from his earlier article as follows: “It is in the contradictory interplay between these three grand motors, and in the divisions and contradictions internal to each of them, that we will find keys to a deeper understanding of the structures, changes, and driving forces of colonial economic life.” (The reference to the earlier article is: Stern, “Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean”, in *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America*, Frederick Cooper et. al. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 23-83, p. 55. In the present article, however, Stern moves even further away from world systems analysis as a way of understanding the Latin American context, by criticizing his *reformulation* of it on three grounds: (1) for its being too abstract, without a much more detailed understanding of what each of the three parts of his explanatory triangle mean in the concrete; (2) for its over-reliance on “political economy” as providing the questions needing to be answered; (3) for its lack of “historicity”. He explains the latter as follows: “Once one acknowledges the possibility of major transformations in the social dynamics and power balances of transcultural and transnational encounter, the usefulness of *any* conceptual formulation beyond a particular space/time is open to question.” Steve J. Stern, “The Decentered Center and the Expansionist Periphery”, in op. cit., pp. 48-50. From a perspective perhaps similar in some ways to Florencia Mallon’s (see earlier citations), Stern seems to view the European/North American – Latin American interrelationship in a way that defies either “longue durée” structures or European self – Other binarisms. The specificity of colonial and postcolonial encounters suggests that the emergence of “modernity” in Latin America answers to a variety of logics rather than an “overarching” discursive formation or structural articulation. As Stern says a bit earlier, in this same article: “How, then, do we conceptualise a foreign presence that is integral yet not totalizing in its power to mold peoples and events, a foreign-local relationship that constantly draws cultural boundaries of ‘we’ and ‘they’ yet fails to preclude

discursive trajectory whose semiotic logic is reducible to a single, fundamental imaginary, i.e. "Occidentalism."

### 3.3 Conclusion

I have tried in this chapter to single out for criticism certain aspects of postoccidental analysis and discourse which, it seems to me, attempt to deny to the concept of "modernity"

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communications, mediations, and identities that confound division into 'we' and 'they'? How do we accomplish this conceptual challenge, as well, in dialogue with a historical sensibility that recognizes major changes over time – distinct eras in the meanings and relations of *foreign* and *local* in Latin America?" Ibid., p. 47.

To this, postoccidental critique might counter with agreement about the subaltern resistance to the totalizing intent of colonial discourse, but with scepticism about the latter's inclusion of "communication" or "mediation." It would tend to view subaltern identities as subversions of hegemonic forms of identification rather than as syncretic constructions, or "hybridized" identities, in the manner of Nestor García Canclini's analyses. Thus, Walter D. Mignolo emphasizes the "dichotomous" nature of the European-colonial encounter, epistemologically, if not ontologically: "This, in other words, is the key configuration of border thinking: *thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than order the world in dichotomies*. Border thinking, in other words, is, logically, a dichotomous locus of enunciation and, historically, is located at the borders (interiors or exteriors) of the modern/colonial world system...." Mignolo, 2000, op. cit., p. 85. In Mignolo's thought, there is a tendency to view the occident-other relationship in dichotomous terms, and to see the "colonial difference" as equally pertinent today as it was 500 years ago. See, e.g., *Local Histories/Global Designs*, op. cit., pp. 7-8, where he speaks of the idea of "world views in collision" as a characteristic of the colonial encounters of the last 500 years. The idea that "modernity", however asymmetrical it may be in its articulation, involves precisely a breaking down of "world views" or "cosmologies" or "epistemologies" established in intimate relationship to nature and in relative isolation from one another challenges, I think, the idea that the colonial encounter can be understood in terms of persistent epistemological dichotomies. Mignolo acknowledges that cosmological world views cannot really be viewed as in a dichotomous relation in the contemporary world, but still holds out for the idea of "world views in collision", as in the following commentary: "If Confucianism offers the possibility of desubalternizing knowledges and expanding the horizon of human knowledge beyond the academy and beyond the *Western concept of knowledge and rationality*, this possibility is also open to forms of knowledge that were hit harder by the colonial tempest, including the *knowledge of Amerindians and Native Americans*. Vine Deloria Jr., as intellectual and activist has been insisting (since the 1970s) on the cracks (or the colonial difference) between Native American knowledge and the structure of power in the hands of Anglo-Americans. Deloria has been criticized for essentializing the difference by presenting it in dichotomous terms. I do not have the time here to dispel a form of criticism when it comes from a postmodern leftist position that is just blind to the colonial difference. Of course, America is not a two-sided struggle between Anglo and Native Americans....[However], what really matters is the colonial difference. As Deloria argues, 'world views in collision' have been a fact of the past five hundred years and they have been in collision in the sixteenth century and today. However, neither of the world views in collision remained the same and they were not just between Anglos and Native Americans. World views in collision have been many, at different times around the planet. This is precisely the geohistorical density of the modern/colonial world system and the diachronic contradictions of its internal (conflicts between empires within the same world view) and external borders (world views in collision)." Mignolo, 2000, op. cit., pp. 7-8, emphasis added. It seems to me that Mignolo avoids the logic of what he is acknowledging: if world views change in response to their contact with one another, how can they still be said to be in "collision"? Conflict, contestation perhaps, but "collision" is too binary a term as I see it.

a richer polisemia and historical specificity and concreteness, than the postoccidental equation of “modernity” with “eurocentric coloniality” seems to allow. No value judgment is implied as to the “superiority” of occidental culture in this analysis, in part because I do not see “modernity” as a concept which either analytically (by definition) or empirically-historically implies either cultural superiority, or the ethnocentric-discursive attempt to construct an imaginary of cultural superiority. In saying this, I do not deny that there exists an imaginary and *Weltanschauung* which can be described as “Occidentalism”, and which has been the basis of ethnocentric discourses that have sought to connect themselves with the concept of “modernity” in terms of “civilization”, “progress”, “modernization”, “development”, etc. Rather, I am questioning the idea that “modernity” as a socio-historical concept, is reducible to the imaginary, or discourse or “overarching metaphor” of “Occidentalism”, or any other single cultural-discursive trajectory, or even that it refers to something “discursive” in its fundamental signification, though I accept up to a point the poststructuralist insistence that structure/materiality are not ultimately separable from discursivity.

To the extent that this imaginary and *Weltanschauung* have accompanied the structural and cultural transformations which I understand by “modernity”, it seems clear to me that “Occidentalism”, insofar as it can be said to exist as the unifying theme or “overarching metaphor” of various discourses (Christian versus infidel, civilization versus barbarism, development versus underdevelopment, etc.), has tended to confuse technological-material prowess, based on scientific rationality, machine efficiency and the hierarchic and rationalized organization of capital and labor, with cultural superiority. However, I do not see “Occidentalism” in this eurosupremacist sense as the “overarching” logic of “modernity”, nor do I view “modernity” as a concept capable of being resignified as



equivalent to a *longue durée* “modern/colonial system” or reducible to the logic of “coloniality” without sacrificing its signification as a way of describing objective technological, economic, political and cultural transformations that transcend, or at least are distinguishable from, those categories. What I am arguing for is the validity of using the term “modernity” as a signifier that refers to historical phenomena which, while perhaps historically connected with the colonialist aspect of capitalism as a world system, are not reducible to the logic of coloniality or eurocentrism as such.

## **CONCLUSION: “MODERNITY” AS DISCOURSE VERSUS MODERNITY AS HISTORICAL PHENOMENON**

### **C.1 Introductory remarks**

In the course of my investigation, I have found the postoccidental critique of modernity, as I have understood it within the limitations of my knowledge of the postoccidental literature and of my even more limited grasp of the vast body of historical and theoretical information that surrounds that literature, to be formidable, often powerful and deeply disturbing in its questioning of hegemonic modes of thinking about the world in general and Latin America in particular. Its deconstructions have forced me to rethink almost everything I have understood by the term “modernity”, and to look critically at the burden of ethnocentricity and colonialist imagery that the term carries.

Whatever the merit of my criticisms of the postoccidental critique of modernity, I have tried, in the more expository parts of my thesis, to present somewhat schematically a point of view which, it seems to me, tends to resist schematization, whose style and ethical-political-cultural orientation almost defy the attempt to systematize the fundamental ideas involved in its critical perspective. I felt that my chief task was to try to better understand this critique in order to come to grips with my unease about some of its most frequently reiterated claims. For from the very beginning of my investigation of this literature, I have felt that postoccidental critique sees as evident propositions which are by no means evident to me and which, therefore, I have felt the need to question and problematize.

I hope that there is value in the schematizations that I have undertaken and that they shed some light on the kinds of claims that postoccidental critique is making, that they elucidate something of importance about the postoccidental perspective, even if the more critical sections of my thesis fall on deaf ears. What I have tried to do, most of all, is to

*elucidate* this point of view, because I think it is important, controversial and in need of debate and dialogue.

## **C.2 The treatment of the central question of the investigation**

The central question of this investigation had to do with whether the postoccidental deconstruction and resignification of modernity is successful in neologizing the term “modernity” in such a way that we are compelled to view it as referring to a discursive construction of a certain kind, rather than to certain “objectively verifiable”, more or less “universally accepted”, social-historical “phenomena” or “facts”. The deconstructions of postoccidentalism have made a deep impression on me, in their exposure of the false universality, totalization, reductionism of certain so-called “occidental” discourses about the social world, about the relationship between European/North American cultural norms and non-occidental cultures (though I think that postoccidental critique overstates the “non-occidental” nature of Latin America taken as a social whole, as well as overstating the non-occidentality of its own forms of cognition, notwithstanding the powerful non-European currents that make Latin America vastly different from Anglo-Saxon and culturally assimilated North America and notwithstanding the postoccidental attempt to stake out a non-occidental Latinamericanism).

However, in its attempt to deconstruct and resignify the term “modernity, so that virtually nothing is left of its original signification, postoccidental critique seems to me to exhibit its own tendencies toward totalization and reductionism and to be manipulative in its use of language. Chapter Three of this thesis was not intended to be any kind of conclusive “proof” of this hypothesis. The presentation of, and commentary on, the alternative viewpoints in Chapter Three that I saw as a way of problematizing elements of

the postoccidental critique of occidentally defined “modernity” were rather intended to *illustrate* problems and tensions that I have sensed in the postoccidental position.

If the critical commentaries of Chapter Three, together with the marginal criticisms accompanying the expository chapters of the thesis which precede Chapter Three, have succeeded in at least problematizing some of the claims of the postoccidental critique, along the lines of my supposition that there are totalizing and reductionist aspects to its deconstruction and resignification of “modernity” which call it into question on some level, then I will have succeeded, as I see it, in the critical part of this thesis. While I do not see my arguments and critical commentaries as conclusive in any way, I do see them as calling into question the attempt to resignify “modernity” as a signifier of eurocentric-colonial discourses answering to an “Occidentalist” logic, to deconstruct “modernity” as a basically ideological concept, thereby rendering the attempt to use it to refer to objective, historical phenomena in a social scientific sense a mask for its ideological function. I have resisted, in other words, the resignification of this term in such a way that, were we to accept that resignification, we would be forced to mean by the term something entirely different from its conventional meanings, leaving virtually nothing of its *prior* signification.

All of the conceptual moves in postoccidental analysis investigated in the Introduction and in Chapters One and Two – its establishment of “Occidentalism” as more fundamental than “Orientalism” and thus as the foundational postcolonial concept; its critique of postmodernism as unaware of “coloniality;” its reformulation of the idea of a modern world system as a modern/colonial world system; its critique of “development” as a discourse and as an overly structuralist understanding of center and periphery; its locating of dependency analysis in an “anti-colonial” stage of Latin American social discourse – have as their aim the totalization of “Occidentalism” as a “longue durée” discursive

trajectory and the reduction of the concept of “modernity” to a term referring to colonialist discourses, a denial of modernity as an objective, historical-material transformative process. In the process of positioning itself as: (1) a poststructuralist alternative to world systems theory, developmentalism and dependency analysis; (2) as the foundational postcolonial critique; and (3) as a critique of occidental postmodernism from the standpoint of the “colonial difference”, postoccidentalism seeks to advance the process of de-hegemonizing occidental influence in relation to Latin America, and to position itself as a vanguard of Latin American counter-modernism. By exalting the 500 year resistance to occidental influence in Latin America, postoccidental analysis projects a utopian vision of revindicated “border epistemologies” and marginalized cultural traditions, without having to face the fact of modernity as a real, objective phenomenon, *distinguishable* in some sense from the discursive imaginaries, triumphalist western metanarratives and eurosupremacist chauvinism that have accompanied those *processes of material, social and cultural transformation*. The felt sense that has guided my attempt to understand the postoccidental position in a critical way, is that this fundamental “meaning” of modernity cannot be “deconstructed” because it is not a meaning dependent on a discourse. If this makes me a naïve realist in some sense, I suppose I have to accept that and then reflect on why I find myself unable to completely take the poststructuralist turn, at least in this case.

The deconstruction of “modernity” as a 500 year-old discourse, seen from this point of view, is an attempt, as I see it, to historicize the present according to a poststructuralist logic which is unable or unwilling to accept modernity as a material and social reality, the result of 500 years of successive epistemological, technological, and ideological ruptures.

In saying this, I by no means imply that the local histories of subaltern peoples – who have been marginalized and exploited by modernizing processes set in motion by the

internal dynamism and external expansionism of occidental culture – are not relevant to the modern age. However, I do not find in postoccidental critique a clear vision of how, and under what terms, “subaltern modernity” and “hegemonic modernity” can interact in a less asymmetrical way.

The attempt to relativize occidental forms of knowledge by viewing them from the standpoint of the “colonial difference” may in some sense undermine their hegemonic power by depriving them of their triumphalist pretensions, but those forms of knowledge will continue to produce effects in the world on the level of materiality. We are perhaps facing a time in which the technological power of occidental forms of knowledge is so divorced from value concerns (some would say that it always has been) that the only form of value it is capable of expressing is no-value, i.e., nihilism. But nihilism is not defeated by argument. It is defeated by the materialization and actualization of values that affirm something. The persistence and survival of peoples excluded from the modernist mainstream is a very important repository of values in the face of modern nihilism. For those values to be a counter to the nihilism of a technological modernism, they must, it seems to me, become *modern* values. To say that modernity is an uncompleted project is thus perhaps to mean that in some sense those marginalized by modernity as a *material* and *cultural* reality must be empowered by modernity as a *political, inclusionary, emancipatory reality*, out of which a more holistic relation between human values and materiality may become a possibility. In this sense, I agree with Habermas that modernity is a project still needing to be completed.

As I see it, the postoccidental critique of the denial of coevalness, i.e., of the occidental imaginary of historical time as a competitive race in which the “west” got to the destination – “civilization”, “modernity”, “advanced industrial society” – “first”, is a necessary step in

envisioning this inclusion of the marginalized in the ongoing construction of the modern world. I agree with Dussel that it is the “victors” in this imagined “race” who need to re-examine their relationship to those they believe they have left “behind” (through oppression, exploitation, marginalization) since what they have left “behind” is an important part of their own humanity. I believe, in other words, that something like Dussel’s transmodernity is necessary to complete modernity as a project of universal emancipation. I do not, therefore, see a fundamental contradiction between Dussel’s concept of transmodernity and the Enlightenment concept of modernity as emancipation.

I have tried to argue in this investigation that modernity as a system of values is not monolithic, that its emergence has been an evolutionary process with periods of revolutionary rupture, and that it therefore does not make sense to personify “modernity” as a synonym of the evil of the western trajectory and the mistreatment of those who have gotten in its way or have been taken into its vortex as human fodder. If we take Dussel’s notion of transmodernity, which comes out of the critique of the denial of coevalness, seriously, then we must ask, how do we get from here to there? Dussel’s vision of a kind of collective recognition of the sin of modernity and the need, on the part of this personified modernity to make amends to those who have been grist for its mill, seems to me too utopian to be historically real. I do not know what the alternative is, or whether there is one (or many). I only know that I remain less than convinced that the critique of modernity as an Occidental hegemonic project is an adequate theoretical and philosophical basis for confronting the structural asymmetries and cognitive dissonances of the contemporary world.

On the other hand, without that critique we are perhaps unable to envision what Mignolo calls a “pluritopic hermeneutics”, through which the possibility of “communicative action”

– as the form of modern democracy envisioned by Habermas which goes beyond formal representative democracy – can perhaps be realized *between* cultural traditions which are epistemologically and axiologically still relative strangers to one another.<sup>1</sup> In my questioning of the postoccidental critique of “Occidentalism”, I have not meant to suggest that such a critique is unnecessary or unwarranted; only that we need to understand “Occidentalism” as itself a *pluralistic* cultural trajectory productive of knowledge about the world, which cannot be reduced to its ethnocentric and colonialist articulation without occluding important dimensions of its historical significance, and without rendering problematic the kind of “*traducción mutua*” between occidental and non-occidental (particularly Amerindian and Afroamerican) culture that was cited in the epigraph to this thesis. I recite it here near the close of this investigation.

“...[E]s indispensable que este cuerpo de saberes [de los pueblos indios] tenga un segundo nivel de aprehensión que le otorga la traducción *al* sistema occidental de conocimiento y que nuestro sistema occidental de conocimiento pueda traducirse a los términos usuales en las comunidades. Esta traducción mutua, que implica una recreación, es también una manera de expandir ese sentido en común ahora de un universo más vasto.”<sup>2</sup>

What “Occidentalism”, as a form of knowledge and social practice, has most conspicuously lacked throughout its triumphant capitalist expansion toward the rest of the world, and which its “antisystemic” ideologies have rather vainly tried to restore, is what the “saberes” of Amerindian indigenous communities and Afroamerican communities always place first, the sense of human and natural community as the foundation of life on this planet. As Ramón Vera Herrera explains it, earlier in his essay:

...[P]ese a las relaciones de violencia y pese a los sojuzgamientos internos inherentes a todo conglomerado, los pueblos indios, que traen tras de sí un trayecto de larga duración, han sabido mantener vivos algunos valores cruciales que el proceso civilizatorio ha ido cediendo por el desperdicio que es su modo de operar.

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<sup>1</sup> See loc. cit., Chapter One, cited in note 37.

<sup>2</sup> See loc. cit., in epigraph at beginning of this thesis.



Su racionalidad fundamental, lo que le da cuerpo a estos saberes, es que todos apuntan a fortalecer los vínculos comunitarios. Esta recuperación de los lazos comunitarios permite entonces ejercer el territorio sin la connotación de espacio delimitado. Territorio sería el ámbito en que operan los lazos comunitarios, el ámbito de operatividad de las afinidades, de la gestión conjunta, de la decisión en corto, el horizonte del sentido en común.<sup>3</sup>

With the “re-spatialization of time”, another aspect of the “denial of the denial of coevalness” which Mignolo and other postoccidental thinkers see as an unintended concomitant of globalization, this non-occidental (or at least non modern-occidental), communitarian understanding of “territory” has (re)entered the modern imaginary in the form of the assertion of the right of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands, the right to maintain an intimate connection with the communal “place”, as a way of undoing the cruelly colonial appropriation of the “other’s” territorial home. Thus, as Escobar sees it, the subaltern’s keeping alive of the sense of “place”,<sup>4</sup> (as distinct from “space”) throughout the de-territorializations of modern capitalist expansion and globalization, needs to be incorporated into any *transmodernity* as part of its emancipatory imaginary.

With this aspect of postoccidental reconstruction and rethinking of “modernity”, I can readily agree, except that I question its articulation in the form of a counter-modernist utopianism. My conclusion to this investigation, therefore, problematizes the question of how the recovery of non-occidental knowledge and practice can be understood within the context of modernity as a social-historical *phenomenon* which, on some level, resists deconstruction and whose historical reversal is, as I see it, virtually unthinkable.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> “[L]as teorías del posdesarrollo y la ecología política son espacios esperanzadores para reintroducir una dimensión basada en el lugar, en las discusiones sobre la globalización, quizás hasta articular una defensa del lugar....[U]na reafirmación del lugar, el no-capitalismo, y la cultural local opuestos al dominio del espacio, el capital y la modernidad, los cuales son centrales al discurso de la globalización, debe resultar en teorías que hagan visibles las posibilidades para reconcebir y reconstruir el mundo desde una perspectiva de prácticas basadas-en-el-lugar.” Arturo Escobar, “El lugar de la naturaleza y la naturaleza del lugar: ¿globalización o postdesarrollo?”, *La colonialidad del saber*, op. cit., pp. 114-115.

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