

# **Imperial/Colonial Metamorphosis: from the Ottoman and Spanish Empires to the US and the European Union**

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## **I**

As you can imagine, I do not intend to provide you here with a global history of several empires and their interconnections through time in less than one hour. What I intent to do is (a) to review and re-map some basic principles of how history has been and continues to be written; and (b) to speculate on how the shift in perspective I am suggesting could contribute to reveal or unveil certain obscure corners of history, hidden, although still overwhelming hegemony of Eurocentered concepts of history and society.

I will talk about an epistemic shift, a geo- and biopolitical epistemic shift that is taking place in front of our eyes and around the globe and that directly impinges on the ways we conceive the relationships between “Islam, Latinity and Transmodernity.”

As we know, the debate on Eurocentrism has at least two dimensions. One dimension remains within European history of ideas; that is to say, between the defenders of Eu-

ropean exceptionalism and its detractors. They both operate within an internal debate in which the rest of the world is absent. Take, for instance, David Landes's *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (1998) as an example of the defenders of European exceptionalism (another one could be Slavoj Žižek) and the recent John M. Hobson (International Politics at the University of Sheffield), *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (2004). There are plenty of interesting arguments in Hobson's book to show that, on the one hand, Europe is not that exceptional and, on the other hand, that European exceptionalism was mounted on imperial expansion and violence. The argument is important because imagining possible worlds for the future would depend on what stories of the past we tell. For example, Susan George (*Another World is Possible If...*, 2003) has been one of the advocates for what the European model has to offer to the future of the humanity. Her argument is constructed upon the imperial difference between France and the U.S. since the nineteenth century (when the idea of Latinity was introduced in South America as a barrier to stop U.S. imperial expansion toward the South) on the one hand, and the European Union and the U.S. on the other.

All that is fine and well. But for people who come and still are very much thinking from the colonial wound (i.e., I describe the colonial wound as the modern imperial denigration and dispossession of non-European people, languages, cultures, histories), whether the world in the future will follow the European or the U.S. model doesn't make much difference: these are both alternatives within the history of

imperial/colonial metamorphoses of the West. That is, Christianity, capitalism and secularism. At this moment, I see the European Union as a subaltern empire operating within the internal imperial difference that, constructed in the eighteenth century as the imperial difference between the South and the North of Europe, has been translated to the imperial difference between the European Union and the U.S. in the twentieth century – a difference that began to be articulated in Thomas Jefferson's idea of the Western Hemisphere. And here is where the second leg of the debate on Eurocentrism takes center stage. Certainly, there may be supporters of George's idea of Europe as a model for the world, in India or in the Middle East, in North Africa and in Latin America. But certainly, and more so today, *ca ne va pas de soi*. The choice between the U.S. and the European model may be a clear choice if the world was—in its totality—divided between the U.S. and the European Union. But it so happens that both, country and Union, together are much below the 50% of the world population. Vladimir Putin would like to follow the legacy of Peter and Catherine the Great, and come as closer as possible to the European Union while the tycoons would like to follow the neo-liberal and corporate bent. It is not clear—at this point—whether strong dissenters also exist in Russia. From outside, one have the impression that Russia is the best example, today, of the deadlock of European post-enlightenment ideas and ideals—a deadlock between neo-liberal and market fundamentalism, on the one hand, and, on the other, the legacies of state totalitarian control. Similar observations—in the sense that the entire planet today has to deal one way or another with (neo) liberal, (neo) conservative and (neo) socialist

ideas and ideals) could be made about the *local histories* of the Middle East, China, India, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa in their inter-connections with the *local histories* of Europe and the U.S.—power differential mediating, of course. In Latin America the opposition to the U.S. is growing and now there are four States (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay), whose governments are not willingly waiting for the U.S. to invite them to join an imaginary American Union. And of course, in the Middle East the opposition to both European modernity and the U.S. has been consistent since the seventies. Examples abound. In the Middle East, the writing of Sayidd Qut'b, Komeini, Al Jabri, Ali Shariati, etc., are well known. Collective critiques of Eurocentrism are also well known in the actions and writings of the Zapatistas and in the World Social Forum and the Social Forum of the Americas. It is true that “Eurocentrism” not always appears in those terms. In the Islamic world, “modernity” is one of the explicit targets; in the World Social Forum, “globalization” and among the Zapatistas “neo-liberalism.” In my view modernity, globalization and neo-liberalism are different shades of the more general metaphor of “Eurocentrism” understood as an epistemological model that organizes the state and the economy, gender and sexuality, subjectivity and knowledge. Now, all these critiques from outside the U.S. and Europe, join forces—of course with—Eurocentered critiques of Eurocentrism, as those advanced by scholars and intellectuals such as Wallerstein, Blaut, Gunder Frank, Latouche.

It is my contention that to understand “trans-modernity,” one of the key concepts of this conference, we have to understand modernity and coloniality as two sides of the

same coin. That is, coloniality is constitutive of modernity; there is no modernity without coloniality. Otherwise, we will remain within the parameters of “post-modernity” and not of “trans-modernity.” Without overcoming the historical links between modernity/coloniality and imperialism/colonialism, “trans-modernity” will remain as only one side of the story. If “another world is possible...,” as the World Social Forum has it, it would be indeed “an-other” world; a trans-modern world that overcomes the compli-cities between modernity and coloniality. A trans-modern world can hardly be imagined if under the name of trans-modernity the reproduction of European imperialism takes the lead instead of the U.S. model. There are both entren-ched in the colonial matrix of power (coloniality) that struc-tured, in the past five hundred years, the modern/colonial world.

## II

This is the moment to enter the house of the impe-rial/colonial metamorphoses and to trace the metamorpho-ses of the imperial and colonial differences that structured the colonial matrix of power from the sixteenth to the twenty first century.

Let’s go back to the middle of the sixteenth century. For my argument, the following historical scenario is relevant. Souleiman the Magnificent was the Sultan of Ottoman Empire between 1520 and 1566, under whose governance the Ottoman Empire reached the pick of its power. Charles

V of the Holly Roman Empire (1520-1558) and Charles I of Castille (1516-1558), was the most powerful governor in Christendom and governed over the transformation of Castile from a Kingdom to an Empire. Difficult to say who was more powerful at the time, Souleiman or Chalres, and perhaps it is irrelevant to rank them. There were two-power houses. The difference lies not so much in their coeval imperial powers, but in the history that unfolded since then. It is not Spain, today, or the European Union who are waiting to join Turkey but the other way round. The Ottoman Empire doesn't exist any more and Spain and the Holy Roman Empire upon which Charles I and V, respectively presided, have been metamorphosed into Hegel's Europe, first, and into the European Union, today. How is it that if Souleiman the Magnificent and Charles I and V ruled over equally powerful empires, it was Christendom and Europe that prevailed and not Islam and the Ottomans?<sup>1</sup> And what this history means to us, all of us in the global order, today? We can ask, to help ourselves understand the underground of today's global order, why is it that Ivan the Terrible began to built an equally powerful empire around the years when Souleiman the Magnificent and Charles the V were still in power, Russia is not a prospective candidate to join the European Union while Turkey is, as Madina Tlostanova discusses in her paper?<sup>2</sup>

When Samuel Huntington published the original article, in *Foreign Affairs*, that was the foundation for his book on the “clash of civilization,” he printed a map on page 8 that it

is worthwhile to remember. The line is quite revealing of the underground forces that gather us here, in Ankara and Istanbul, today. The dividing line starts in the North and runs south over the frontier between Finland and Russia. It runs down to the East of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (already accepted in the European Union) and cuts Belarus and Ukraine in two parts; down to the middle of Romania and in Romania the line makes a sharp right turn (coming from the North) and cuts Bosnia in two, leaving Croatia in the West and Serbia in the South. To the East of the line, Huntington placed the Orthodox Christianity and Islam; to the West of the line—Western Christianity. And he risks a date: circa 1500. We now all in the same page: 1500 is the date the Zapatistas have been using as reference point in the sharp change in Indian history; Afros in South America and the Caribbean also refer to 1500 as the reference point of massive slavery in the Atlantic and the dissemination of African communities. In Jews and Muslims memories 1500 is also the date in their memory marking a dramatic shift in the history of their communities. Thus, 1500 is not just a date in the natural unfolding of human history, but the triumph of Latin Christians over Jews and Moors and the expansion of Latin Christianity (or Western) to the New World; last but not least, toward 1520, and when both Souleiman and Charles were beginning the escalade of Catholic Christian and Otomman empires, Moscow is declared as the Third Rome. Consequently, 1500 is a meaningful date for millions of people from the New World to Africa and to the borders

of the line traced by Huntington to indicate the clash of civilizations.

Consequently, the symbolic year 1500 is perceived and interpreted from two different historical paradigms. I am not referring here to two different interpretations within the same paradigm, but to two different paradigms. Huntington offers the extreme interpretation in the paradigm of “modernity.” The chronological line that divides “modernity” from “tradition” in *time*—that is, in the *visible* history of Western civilization—goes hand in hand with the line that divides “modernity” from “barbarism” in *space*—that is, the *invisible* history of “coloniality,” the darker side of “modern” Western civilization, from 1500 to 2005. In this context, think of the notion of “post-modernity.” It seems to me that, on the one hand, post-modernity is a break (as Foucault has it) in the historical paradigm of modernity as well as a critical reflection on its shortcomings. But on the other hand, the spatial shift that comes from the critique of modernity outside Europe cannot be subsumed under the linear history from modernity to post-modernity in the history of Europe. Think now of the notion of “post-coloniality.” Like it or not, it exists, but where is it coming from? While post-modernity is clearly grounded in modernity, post-coloniality is grounded in a void, in some kind of invisible pillar or ground that I referred to above as the “invisible and the darker” side of modern Western history, precisely since 1500—that is, coloniality. For it seems obvious that if you are able to think post-coloniality—that presupposes coloniality. You can guess

then that my argument is unfolding in a paradigm that is not visible, or not clearly visible. I will name it the paradigm of “de-coloniality”; that is, the undoing of coloniality which implies the undoing of the perverse complicities between modernity and coloniality. The notion of *trans-modernity* may help us moving beyond post-modernity and post-coloniality, both prefixes still caught in the “modern” ideology of a linear concept of time; of the unfolding of history. But before moving in that direction, let’s continue a little further in Huntington’s map.

The temporal line grounded in 1500, goes together with a thin spatial line dividing, on the one hand, Western Christianity and, on the other, Orthodox Christianity and Islam. The focus on Islam after 9/11 has been both justified and cleverly used by the U.S. government. However, both events, the fall of the Soviet Union and the fall of the towers of the World Trade Center, remind us, from time to time, that Christian Orthodox are together with Islam on the other side of Huntington’s line.<sup>3</sup> Where is this division coming from? Well, Souleiman the Magnificent and Ivan the Terrible on one side of the line; Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire and Charles I of Castile, on the other. And on the other hand, think of Byzantium from were, the transference of Roman power to Constantinople took place. The Byzantine Empire had a lasting impact on such modern nations as Albania, Armenia, Belarus’, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Rumania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Syria, Ukraine, and Turkey. If Byzantium was the second

Rome, Moscow was the third, so named at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

James C. Rosapepe who served as US Ambassador to Romania from 1998 to 2001, and now is a CEO of Patuxent Capital Group, published an interesting article asking whether a Euro Curtain Exists.<sup>4</sup> Let's remember Hegel, while thinking about Rosapepe's. Huntington's re-mapping of the borders of Europe presupposes Hegel's division between the heart of Europe, the South and the North West. Huntington's re-mapping came at the end of a two hundred years history, that was Hegel's present—from the ascension of British imperialism and France and German leadership in the new world order to the fall of the Soviet Union. Imperial power change of hands, after WWII, when US took over the European imperial leadership did not change the Hegelian world order. And that world order, as you remember, was mapped by Hegel at the end of the introduction of his lessons in the philosophy of history, toward 1822. Europe comes at the end of the introduction to his lesson in the philosophy of history, after he described the geography of Asia and Africa. Because Europe is geographically different from these two continents, Europe requires—Hegel says—a different basis of classification. And so he goes.

In Hegel's conceptualization of Europe, the first part is Southern Europe. He traces the geographical profile (the Pyrenees, the Mediterranean, the Alps that divides Italy from France and Germany). While this may be geographically true, the point is that rather than true Hegel was loo-

king for justifications. Italy, at that time became—with Spain and Portugal—the South of Europe, the “tradition of modern Europe,” while the present was Germany, France and England? “Hegel’s heart of Europe was already clear in Kant.” The heart of Europe is the second section of Europe. Hegel makes sure that there is no mistake here—that “the heart of Europe which Caesar opened when conquering Gaul.” After going thought a short list of glorious past events, he makes sure again that there is no confusion and states that “in this center of Europe, France, Germany and England are the principal countries.” And then is the third part that consists for Hegel of the North-Eastern States of Europe—“Poland, Russia and the Slavonic Kingdoms.” And he adds, “they come only late into the series of historical States, and form and perpetuate the connection with Asia.”<sup>5</sup> This is the map and the underground, in front and underneath Huntington’s clash of civilizations. And of course, of Rosapepe’s question, where does the “New Europe” ends—assuming that the “Old Europe” is Hegel’s.

A few observations by Rosapepe are helpful here. He surmised that religion is of course a factor, but cannot by itself justify the “clash of civilization” and they are different from the “clash of ideologies” symbolized by the Berlin Wall. Although exceptions justify the norm, it is interesting to remember that Orthodox Christian Greece is a member of NATO and of European Union and, in this case, and even for Huntington, the Greece that is a cradle of Western Civilization underscores the Greece that is now a Christian Ortho-

dox country and was influenced by Byzantium. Catholic Croatia, instead, is neither a member of NATO or the European Union. There is also an interesting re-ordering of who is in and who is out, when we look at the ex-Soviet states of Central and Eastern Europe. In this regard, “all EU members are Protestant or Catholic, while the former Soviet republics are Orthodox or Muslim” (Rosapepe, 2004, 68).<sup>6</sup> At certain level, it seems that Huntington was not describing a historical situation as much as mapping it in relation to five hundred years history of empires, capitalism, and modernity. Coloniality is left out of all these accounts. Why it is so? It is part of the rhetoric of modernity—rhetoric built by scholars and intellectuals inhabiting what they define as modernity—the assumption that history is the history of empires; it is imperial history, while the colonies survive in silence, out of history. But let’s stay a little bit longer on Rosapepe’s observations. He brings Turkey into the picture, at the end of the article:

Turkey’s candidacy for EU membership is generally painted as a difficult and defining challenge to Europe’s future. The country is large, its population is growing fast, and it is Muslim. But in many ways, it is already quite integrated with the West. Turkey has been a NATO member and a market economy for decades; it has long had close trade and labor ties with Europe. Moreover, the United States supports EU membership for Turkey, as do many European countries. (Rosapepe, 2004, p. 72.)

I am not quoting this paragraph to provide information for those assisting to this conference, and even less for those

of you based in Turkey. You all know that better than I do. I quote it for different reasons. One of them is to have a sense of how this paragraph may sound when I read it in Istanbul or Ankara; and how it sounds when I write it, at this very moment, in North Carolina, U.S.; how a statement from someone who was mainly based in Rumania and now is in the U.S. sounds to the ears of those of you who are based in Turkey, and those of us, who are based some place else but today are in Turkey, reading or listening to this paragraph. The second reason I quoted it – is indeed double. What happened to the long history from Souleiman the Magnificent to Turkey that has been, for many decades, a NATO member and integrated into market economy? And secondly, how is it that a Muslim country joins the European Union? There are exceptions, as I just mentioned (Greece and Croatia). And Turkey may be another one, a basically Muslim country joining the European Union that is basically Christian. As Rosapepe insists, religion is not enough to understand where the “Euro curtain” is being re-located.

What is beyond religion then? Nationalism and the secularization of racism (from purity of blood in Christian Spain to the color of your skin in secular France and Germany), are two good candidates. Immanuel Kant would be helpful to understand what is at stake, today, in the domain of subjectivity, how the racial division has been constructed. Let's start by the translation, in Kant's perception, of the Christian/Islam divide into the national profiles. Kant is tracing in the following paragraph the national characters or profiles:

The Spaniards, who evolved from the mixture of European blood with Arabian (Moorish) blood, displays in his public and private behavior a certain solemnity [...] The Spaniard's bad side is that he does not learn from foreigners; that he does not travel in order to get acquainted with other nations; that he is centuries behind in the sciences. He resists any reform; he is proud of not having to work; he is of a romantic quality of spirit, as the bullfight shows.<sup>7</sup>

Well, that should be enough for Kant's insightful comments. It should; but it isn't yet. He has more to say about the Russian, the Polish and the European Turks:

Since *Russia* has not yet developed definite characteristics from its natural potential; since *Poland* has no longer characteristics; and since the nationals of European Turkey never have had a character, nor will ever attain what is necessary for a definite national character, the description of these nations' characters may properly be passed over here.<sup>8</sup>

What happened to the Ottoman Empire, that two centuries before Kant, was in its full splendor? And why Kant is not referring to the Ottoman Empire but to European Turkey?<sup>9</sup> In section four of *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime*, Kant repeats his tour of national characters. European national characters remain basically the same. But he omits the Russian, the Polish and the Turks, and goes directly to the Arabs.

If we cast a fleeting glance over the *other parts* of the world (that is, we are leaving Europe here), we find the Arab the nobles man in the Orient, we find the Arab the noblest man in the Orient, yet of a feeling that degenerates very much into adventurous... His inflamed

imagination (that for Kant was certainly a serious deficit) presents things to him in unnatural and distorted images, and even the propagation of his religion was a great adventure.<sup>10</sup>

What happened then between the golden age of the Ottoman Empire and Kant? What happened to that Empire that Bartolomé de Las Casas had to recognize in its achievements, when he was classifying four types of barbarian, toward 1550, during the Ottoman golden age? Las Casas had a different concept of “barbarians” than the one we have today. If one type of barbarians is defined by their lack of social organization and government, Las Casas couldn’t locate the Ottomans in this category. Nevertheless, for Las Casas the Ottomans were barbarians. When he talks about the Ottoman as barbarians, he recognizes their achievement. They are “barbarians” because, said Las Casas, they have the wrong religion and do not have literal locution—that is, do not know Latin and do not write in Latin alphabetic characters. And here we have Latinidad emerging as a distinctive feature of civilization. Latinidad, at that point, was Christian, and religious, not secular, as it became since the nineteenth century.

As far as Latinity emerged as a project in the secular moment of modernity, after the enlightenment, there are two stages to keep in mind, in relation to both, Islam and modernity:

- 1) the post Renaissance moment of Latinity, which is Christian and Catholic;
- 2) the post Enlightenment Latinity, which is mainly secular, with a Christian background;

In the first case, Latinity confronted Islam at the level of religion; in the second at the level of secularism and rationality. That is why Kant saw the Arabs as people with “an inflamed imagination”, not quite rational; for “his inflamed imagination presents things to him in unnatural and distorted images, and even the propagation of his religion was a great adventure (*Observations*, p.109).” And he added that while the Arabs can be seen as the Spaniards of the Orient (that is, sort of exuberant and irrational), the Persians had to be seen as the French of Asia; they are refined and like poetry. Persians are good poets and have a fine taste. They are not crude and blind followers of Islam—said Kant—“they permit to their pleasure-prone disposition a tolerably mind interpretation of the Koran” (*Observations*, p. 110).

I would say that what happened between the golden years of Souleiman and the down turn of the Ottoman Empire in Kant’s eyes, was the expanding force of the colonial matrix of power, both in the economical affirmation of capitalism in the heart of Europe and the growing racist conviction of Europeans superiority over the rest of the world. That are Kant’s contributions to the darker side of modernity: the radical turn over between what the Ottoman Empire was for Las Casas in the mid of the sixteenth century. Perhaps an invisible set of events, because what was visible was the triumphal march of modernity (French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Enlightenment), but not the costs of that triumphal march; the corroding effects and consequences of the colonial matrix of power. What I am trying to uncover

here is the rumor of the imperial and the colonial differences that runs under the imperial and modern history of Europe and of the U.S—the making of the colonial and imperial differences mounted on the reproduction of the colonial wound.

Beyond the political corridors, beyond the stock market and trade centers; beyond the computer centers of the military bases, there is the population; the civil and political society, the masses, the *damnés de la terre*, the multitudes, the modern subaltern (e.g., European workers in Europe) and the colonial subalterns; the “civil” and political society in general who suffer the consequences of the colonial difference and the effects of the colonial wound—knowing and feeling that they are considered, as persons as well as in their faith, their nationality, their language, below the line of plain humanity. For the market, they are all workers and consumers; for the State they are citizens who cast a vote, or outcasts beyond the law who do not have the right to vote. For and by themselves, the *damnés*, the population, the subaltern, the multitude, there are persons with memories, desires, dreams, languages, religions, etc. The colonization of knowledge and of being, parallel to the colonization of economy and politics, means the repression of local memories beyond Greek and Latin legacies or the subordination to its (Greek and Latin legacies) hegemony—with knowledge goes language, and with language, feelings and affects. “Multiculturalism” is the imperial strategy to repress knowledges and categories of thought alternative to Greek and Latin,

and the repression is covered up with the celebration of a “multiculturalism” dependent and subordinated to the hegemony of Western epistemology and Western Christianity.

At this moment, the annexation of several countries beyond Hegel’s original heart of Europe to the European Union brings to the foreground two sets of problems: the accommodations, tensions and conflicts accumulated memories, not obvious in the books and country reports in the web page, but inscribed in the body of the population; inscription that is bringing to the foreground a new political agency: those wounded by the colonial wound that Frantz Fanon described—at the heart of Latin colonialism (a Black from Martinique joining the war in Algeria)—as “Les damnés de la Terre”. The ghost of racial conflict is not addressed in political and economic analysis of European Union, since religion—more than race—still deserves more attentions in Europe, in spite of the growing immigration from the ex-Second and Third Worlds. Emphasis on class after the Industrial Revolution, and the ghosts of religions that haunted the secular minds of the European enlightenment, maintained racism hidden in a population that was homogeneously white, for whom the main problems were religions and class differentials; while racism was beyond their frontiers, in the colonies or in non-European empires, like the Ottoman and the Russian. What has been overlooked and hidden in European intellectual history since the eighteenth century is the fact that there is an irrevocable link, in the modern/colonial world between race, religion, nationalism and globalization.

After all, one of the pillars of the modern/colonial imaginary was the purity of blood defended by Western Christians over the Moors and the Jews. That conceptual legacy and the subjectivities it created never went away, in the West, and it could be traced back to its original moment of expansion over the globe: once again, the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuits in the sixteenth century, the emergence of capitalism and its complicity with Christianity and racism.

The question prompted by these observations is how to deal with a future in which *trans-colonial modernity will be overcome*. What do I mean by *trans-colonial modernity* here? The “heart of Europe,” in Hegel’s description, had a Southern periphery (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal), and the Northwestern coast. A glance at the map of Europe around 1800, that Kant was looking at, is revealing (<http://www.euratlas.com/big/big1800.htm>). Starting from the South, there was the Kingdom of Spain; the Kingdom of Naples and Sardinia; the Republic of France; the Batavian Republics; the Kingdom of England; the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austrian Monarchy; Saxony in between the last two; on the North the three Kingdom of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. To the east of Prussian Kingdom and Austrian Monarchy, the Empire of All Russia extended to the East. And at the south of both, the Ottoman empire extended itself from the Eyalet of Bosnia, in the West to the Eyalet of White Sea Island (Greece) in the center to the Eyalet of Mosul in the East. To the South it was extended to the Eyalet of

Damascus. With just these examples in mind, we could look at the history of the past five hundred years at least in three different ways and from different paradigms of interpretation:

- There is, within Hegel's paradigm, the transition from modernity to *post-modernity*. This transition took place within the parameters of Western Civilization. That is, the Greek and Latin linguistic and categorical foundations of knowledge, translated into the six modern imperial European, and vernacular, languages—Italian, Spanish, Portuguese (predominant during the Renaissance, because of the Spanish and Portuguese empires on the one hand and Venice, Florence and Genoa as three powerful commercial and financial centers in the Mediterranean, on the other) and English, French and German after Napoleon (predominant during and after the Enlightenment when the British Empire, French Colonialism and German economic and intellectual centers took over Southern European dominance). The transition from the modern to the post-modern presupposes “paradigmatic” changes but within the same tradition. I would like to see this transitions as intra-paradigmatic changes within the same paradigm.
- There is today the need to account for *transitions* between the parameters of different civilizations. I would describe these changes as *transcultural transitions* to underline the fact that this transitions are taking place beyond the geo-historical space of Western European

history. Trans-cultural transitions involve different categories of thought ingrained in non-European, imperial and modern languages; neither do they have a foundation in Greek thoughts. I suspect that in this conference the notion of *trans-modernity* points toward this kind of historical phenomenon that the European Union, in its expansion, will encounter. “Trans-modernity” in this sense presupposes the march of “modernity” crossing its own linguistic, religious and epistemic parameters: modernity becomes “trans” in this march instead of “post” because it is confronted with other languages, religions, histories (think of the complex history of Turkey in its Eastern roots and memories) beyond the parameters of Greco-Latin legacies in the West and Christian Catholicism and Protestantism. If, for instance, Ukraine would join the European Union, it would be another case of “trans-modernity” as far as Western modernity (linguistic, religious, epistemic) would rule over Orthodox Christianity and Slavic language. “Trans-modernity” in this model is a one way street in which, in the best of all possible worlds, a space of inter-state “multiculturalism” would be generated, while the control of the economy and authority (politics and government, military power); the control of gender and sexuality; and of knowledge and subjectivity would be still grounded in Western models of knowledge and subjectivity; economy; government, etc.—that is,

once again, Greek and Latin and the six European modern and imperial languages.

- And there is—last but not least—a set of processes that would be better described as “trans-colonial modernity.” Here we confront a paradigmatic *shift*. In this model the problems to be solved for a future trans-colonial modern world, are all related to the de-colonization of the colonial matrix of power. Without the de-colonial step, trans-modernity may be at best a moderate type of imperialism, perhaps following the European Union model as Susan George’s suggests, but in which all languages and local histories beyond the local history of European modernity (again, epistemically grounded in Greek and Latin and deployed in the six imperial languages of modernity); languages and local histories inscribed in Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic, Russian, Urdu, Bengali, Aymara; religions and epistemologies built in those languages, will have to continue in their second class role in relation to the categories and rank impressed in the six European imperial languages and their foundation in Greek and Latin. The political and economic spheres are related to languages, epistemology and religions in the sense that political and economic structures are not entities in themselves, but are imagined, framed and enacted by individuals formed in a certain type of subjectivity; a subjectivity that is also framed in the dominant structure of knowledge. Of course,

capitalism could continue in English, Chinese and Arabic. This scenario corresponds to the trans-modernity model I describe above. What is different, then, in trans-colonial modernity?

Trans-colonial modernity is the situation we are in today: a single modernity from the European perspective in a variegated array of colonial experiences, in three continents over five hundred years. What is different is that trans-colonial modernity has to negotiate the colonial and the imperial differences, from the perspective of subaltern empires and nation-states that are a consequence and outgrow of imperial/colonial expansion. And therefore, the consequence of a trans-colonial state of *affaires* is de-colonization of knowledge and of being; *what trans-colonial modernity* engendered was the *de-colonial shift*. *Shifting* the perspective means to look at the history of Europe and the U.S. from the experiences and memories of the locations that received (willingly or not) Western expansion at all levels. The de-colonial shift becomes complementary and at the same time autonomous from critical theory, as defined by Max Horkheimer and developed in the European tradition. The de-colonial shift could be understood as a critical theory from the colonies under the condition that critical theory in the European tradition be understood as de-colonization from within. The geo- and bio-politics and ethics of knowledge is at stake here. There are two paradigms of imperial domination and totalitarian bend, that Aimé Césaire saw as the two sides of the same coin, in the early 50s, when he un-

derscored the common strategy in European external colonialism and Hitler's internal colonialism. Common to both was the colonial matrix of power, and de-colonization is needed at both ends, from the colonial wound both in the colonies or ex-colonies and in the heart of the empires.

The histories of Bolivia or Tanzania, Russia or Uzbekistan; Algeria or Iran, for example, are not easily subsumable under the patterns and the linear history of Europe starting in Greece, or in the line of global history traced by Hegel.<sup>11</sup> The question here is how critical intellectuals who are dwelling and thinking in and from geo-historical and bio-graphical experiences, would describe themselves—and the history of their communities—as an actor of the global history? Take the case of the Creole elite, in Latin America, white and from European descent. Seeing and feeling themselves as geo-historically different from Europeans (Spaniards first; French and British later), they adopted “Latinidad” as the difference in “sameness” with Europe. But, for the invisible Indian and Afro population, in South America and the Spanish insular Caribbean, “Latinidad” was not a concept allowing them to see themselves as actors in the global history. With time, Indianidad and Africanidad provided an empowerment and nourished a new perspective of global history in the past five hundred years in which their ancestors, and them today, have been actors but without the possibility of telling their own story: they have been actors “made” by the official story of Europeans intellectuals or by those of the Creole elites from European descent. You have

here a double example of trans-colonial modernity. On the one hand, the creation, in the Americas, of Creole elites from European descent (Latin and South of Europe in South America; Anglo and Franco in North America) who defined themselves both in relation and in contradistinction with Europe (e.g., Jefferson's idea of the Western Hemisphere). On the other hand, the diversity of Indians and Afros spread all over the Americas from the North to the South, the people, who do not see themselves except as passive victims in the stories told from the perspective of self-narrated European history.

In the Middle East and North Africa, we have been witnessing similar processes and more or less simultaneous with the “waking up” of Indians and Afros, in South America and the Caribbean, during early and middle years of the Cold War. When—for example—Sayyid Qutb's states that:

Humanity is standing today at the brink of an abyss, not because of the threat of annihilation hanging over its head—for this is just a symptom of the disease and not the disease itself—but because humanity is bankrupt in the realm of “values,” those values which foster true human progress and development. This is abundantly clear to the Western World, *for the West cannot longer provide the values necessary for the [flourishing of] humanity.*<sup>12</sup>

Qutb is switching the terms of conversation and not only changing the content of history in a linear transition, within the same paradigm: a trans-colonial modernity is not a question of integration or recognition, but of participation on equal grounds in building the future. This is what In-

digenous intellectuals, leaders of social movements, and members of the government (senators, deputes) call *intercultural relations*. Intercultural is a project moving toward a pluri-national state and, therefore, toward a trans-modern and de-colonial modernity. I take Qutb's seriously and see in him the equivalent to the de-coloniality of our time of what Kant or Hegel were to the modernity of European time. I see in Qutb's the equivalent to the struggle of Indians (in America, Australia, New Zealand) and Afros (in the Africa, Europe and the Americas), in a local histories such as the Middle East here the accumulation of imperial struggles (e.g., Islam and the legacies of the Roman empire up to the end of the fifteenth century) endured imperial/colonial violences, after Napoleon, with the ascension of British and French imperialism. I see the de-colonial shift in the World Social Forum as far as the Social Forum not only provides a location for the “anti-Davos multitude” but mainly because of the diversity of de-colonial epistemic and political projects emanating from the colonial wound inflicted by the colonial difference. What we are witnessing today, in Iraq, Lebanon, Ukraine, Latin America—on the one hand—and Europe and the U.S. on the other (and I stop here for lack of time and space to develop in more details cases from East and South Asia or from Sub-Saharan Africa), are clear examples of two general tendencies and visions toward the future:

- 1) One is the historical expansion of the European countries of the West coast of Europe and the US since the sixteenth century. Europe lost the leadership of that expansion to the U.S. after WWII, and it is

now reconstituting itself as the European Union. In the history of capitalism, as told by Giovanni Arrighi, for example, Spain, England and the U.S., lead the three major moments of formation and expansion of modern and imperial Europe and the U.S.<sup>13</sup> We could describe this process as globalization from above, as trans-modernity or as bully and double-desired imperialism. Double desired because, on the one hand, imperial designs reveal a bent to control and posses; to maintain the colonial matrix of power (economy, authority, gender and sexuality, subjectivities and knowledge), under the rhetoric of modernity (progress, democracy, market economy, free trade). On the other, the elites that join imperial designs, desire to be part of the empire, without necessarily solving all the problems of the colonial matrix of power that links together the imperial power with colonial elites. “Internal colonialism” is the expression coined in the vocabulary of the social sciences to describe the switch from imperial domination to nation-states ruled by an “indigenous or Creole” elite. One of the consequences of the “natural march of modernity” as the only historical option, is not only the confrontation of fundamentalisms, Western market fundamentalism, Hindu Nationalism, Islamic Fundamentalism, Russian tendency to a totalitarian State. That is to say that in the colonial sites and ex-colonial sites and in subaltern empires (Russia, China, Japan) there is a division between two types of projects: pro and anti Western. And both are dead-

lock situations and the reproduction of the *statu quo*. In between, there are the local elites in power who play the role of local branches of imperial states designs instead of sovereign states caring for the well being of the majority of the population. Many of these processes are now in a deadlock to overcome the imperial and colonial differences. Recent events in Lebanon and the year long process in Bolivia, from October 2003 to the recent resignation of President Carlos Mesa, are not unrelated in spite of the fact that people in Lebanon are mainly Muslims and in Bolivia mainly Indians. In a nutshell, the deadlock is the clash of two *types* of fundamentalisms: Christian-(Neo)Liberal and market driven; and the *second type* is not one, but many. They emerged as *many responses to Western expansion in different part of the world* (India, Middle East, Latin America). *This diversity cannot be reduced and grouped together as non-West*, a la Huntington. The “clash” is not between West and non-West, one to one. But once against—between many and at different levels and histories of the imperial and colonial differences. The situation in Russia, for instance, is of a different kind. The deadlock in Russia is between wild neo-liberalism that mounted fortunes and power in a matter of months and on the other the need of Putin to rein-force the State to control the excesses of neo-liberalism. The two extremes of the deadlock here are the neo-liberalism and wild capitalism on the one hand and, a totalitarian State, following Stalin’s le-

gacy, to control the excesses of neo-liberalism on the other. But Russia has still another simultaneous problem: that of the colonies. In this case, the deadlock is not between neo-liberal economy and state control, but between Slavic and Christian Orthodoxy and the wide array of Islamic and Asiatic religions and cultures of the ex-colonies whose frontiers are necessary to control and current colonial areas in the Caucasus; or areas of influence, like with Belarus and Ukraine. As you can see, and certainly know, the “clash of civilization” between Christian-(Neo) Liberalism on the one hand and Islam and Christian Orthodoxy on the other, need to be looked at further in the tensions created by the historical memories of the imperial and colonial differences. Russia and Europe are not in conflict because one is Orthodox and the other is Protestant, but because of the imperial difference that, over the centuries, put Russia as a second class Empire in relation to Europe.<sup>14</sup> And the imperial difference was not directly a question of religion but of racism and imperialism/colonialism in conjunction with capitalism at the global scale. In this model, the general tendency is not only of violence generated by Western expansion but, more so, it is connected with the Western expansion as practiced today by the U.S. that needs State and military violence, i.e. war, to maintain economic and political dominance. The case in Iraq is telling. The economic benefits are not so much or only ripped from the control of land and natural resources (oil), but of the ba-

sic process of destroying the country and re-building it by contractors who are the tycoons of the global economy. We should not be surprised if Iraq is the last war in which the Empire sends its national troops (even in the case when soldiers are in a significant proportion from the racial minorities). It may very well be that the next war will be under contract, and modernity in this regard will be contractors from now all the way down, to paraphrase Anthony Giddens description of the future of modernity.

- 2) What I just described is a highlight of the main tendencies of Western imperialism and capitalist economy, since the sixteenth century. Today, the European Union has initiated a new process and a new model, a type of “mutual consent annexation” in a differential structure of power: it is not France or Germany who requested to join the European Union but Poland, Rumania, Lithuania, etc. Countries entering the European Union are not colonized by violence, but, on the contrary, fulfilling an old dream, that of belonging to Europe. There are of course good reasons for that, be it eighty years of political experience under the Soviet regime or the bright lights of consumer economy and good living standards. What European imperialism managed to create, after the eighteenth century, was a desire for “civilization” and life style that still continues to exist today. That is all fine and good. The question is what is next? The annexation shall end at some point; at some point

Europe will have its new frontier but it would still be a frontier. Rosapepe is on target when he assesses the double-bind between European core countries and those who have been invited to join the European Union:

The EU accession process is both a result and a cause of the New Europe's relative success in making the political and economics transition from the Soviet bloc. Part of the reason why they have been invited to join the European Union is that they have done well in creating democratic states and re-orienting their economies to the market place. But, equally, part of the reason why they have done as well as they have is their expectation of EU membership.

Who are they? Mainly political and economic leaders, supported by the media; but we can guess that also the civil society of new members would go along with that desire of belonging to the European Union. Now, look outside of Europe. In Ukraine, the "orange revolution" was able to mobilize the sector of the population desiring Europe and the U.S. as well! Behind the orange revolution are those who are against Vladimir Putin and Russia's dominance. That is precisely what the revolution was about—to overthrow Russian influence and out a pro-American president instead. Lebanon, instead, is beyond the frontier of the European Union. However, links with Europe as Rafik Hariri had with Jacques Chirac, show that although the European Union will not extend itself that far, political and economic links can be established. But, on the other hand, the opposition to the U.S. and the Western modernity to Islam is not likely to vanish in the near future.

Let's imagine possible futures (and here I am still exploring how to imagine trans-modernity). One would be that the opposition to Western modernity will be overcome and it will be modernity all the way down, as Anthony Giddens has it. That means that the entire globe will be annexed to the Western models in economy, politics, sexuality, subjectivity, and knowledge. Another possible outcome is that the first scenario (modernity all the way down from now on) will not obtain. Then what? How can an-other world be possible without the blue-print of Western capitalism, democracy and epistemology? A future in which Western contributions to human civilizations will be recognized, although the future of Islamic countries will be in the hands of progressive leadership instead of radical fundamentalists or local agents of Western capitalism. Let's imagine that the same happens in India, in Latin America and in Russia. That is, the opposition to the Western modernity is not overcome and the future is lead by local progressive leaders and intellectuals who take in their own hands the contributions of Europe and the U.S. to Western civilization. Now, this model is not my invention but the ideas and ideals of the Indigenous movement in Ecuador and their vision of taking back the control of epistemology in order to re-orient a learning process based on Indian cosmology instead of modern Western cosmology. Take technology, for example, or agriculture and environment. Technology could be implemented within an economy of reciprocity, for example, instead of within a capitalist driven market economy and the same

with agriculture. Instead of using transgenic seeds to produce more in a capitalist competitive market, transgenic seeds could be used to supplement and enhance the environment and the well being of all. Consequently, the management of society, politically and economically, not necessarily should be in the hands of the State, the Corporations and the Christian Church, but could be in the hands of cooperative communities in a society in which the main objectives will not be killing for individual profit or killing to impose the benefit of democracy onto the population of the world (onto whatever population is left after the massive killing in the name of democracy would take place). An-other world would be possible once we start thinking beyond the clashes of fundamentalisms, Western and non-Westerns.

### III

Time has arrived to pull the strings and make explicit the connections I have been suggesting—in my previous speculations—between Islam, Latinite and trans-modernity. But first, let me make a more general statement about the argument and the narrative I am deploying. I said at the beginning that I am not an “expert” in European history or in Islam; and I am neither European nor Muslim but a Latin American from Italian descent who, for several decades now, have been a Hispanic or Latino in the U.S.—and not by self-election but by State discursive imposition. I am not saying that I am a “renegade Latino,” or that I do not care for identity. I am saying that the Hispanic/Latino/as definitions

were forced by the State, they were allocated. Our role (Hispanics, Latinos/as) is to relocate ourselves in relation to the State ethno-racial classification.

I would like to add—to the previous disclaimers—that I am neither a political theorist nor an expert in political economy. So, in what capacity I have been talking about the state, the market, inter-state political relations, European Union, Islam, etc.? Either as a dabbler or as a concerned citizen who has the rights to voice his or her opinion in any sphere that he or she is concerned with. What I am talking about, in the last analysis, is my own personal and social experience, using the tools of scholarship to built my arguments. I am not an expert in political theory or political economy, but I do not think either that only “expert” in those fields have the right and the capacity to talk about them.<sup>15</sup> I am, in other words, a Humanist not a Social Scientist. But I am also some one who was born and educated in the Third World and since I came to the U.S. the social imaginary of the U.S. put me among the “Latino/as” or “Hispanics.” I am where I think. And I am thinking at the cross road of a Latinity from European descent, in the Third World, displaced in the reconfiguration of Latinidad in the U.S. where the links with Europe have been cut off. Let me further explain this. Expertise or disciplinarity are not a warranty of truth, neither of knowledge of justice and equality.

First, then, let’s recast the articulations of Latinity and modernity.<sup>16</sup> The first moment that extends through the European Renaissance, could be called the “Constantine Le-

gacy,” that is, when Constantine linked Christianity to the Empire. In the Renaissance, and particularly in the sixteenth century, Christianity is re-articulated due to its “final” victory over the Moors and the Jews and due to its leading role in dealing with an unknown population inhabiting an unknown part of the world, for Western Christians, until then. However, the global expansion of Christianity broke up the complicity between language and religion. The majority of Christians in Lebanon, for example, a country where the official language is Arabic, is one example. In Indonesia, a country with a population close to two hundred millions (in contrast with the four millions population of Lebanon), the official language is Bahasa Indonesia, and about one hundred and forty thousands out of the two hundred thousands of the total population is Muslim. Thus, the original ties between languages and religions have been broken up by the global spread of imperial religions.

This brings me to the second moment of Latinity in its secularized form and diversified in the various Latin languages of modern imperial Europe. Secular Latinity began to occupy the unifying role that Christian Catholicism occupied in the South of Europe, the so called Latin countries. At that point in time (mid nineteenth century), France took the secular lead of Latinity that, previously, was in the hands of Catholic Spain. Furthermore, Latinity became the imperial ideology in the ex-colonies of Spain and Portugal in South America in the process of building “independent” nations and sub-continental identity. The ex-colonies that gained in-

dependence from Spain and Portugal became semi-autonomous entities that depended economically on England and intellectually and in points of subjectivity from France. Thus, “Latin” America was the consequence of the imperial/colonial expansion without colonies, that started in the nineteenth century and that today is being implemented by the U.S. Secular “Latinity” in the nineteenth century in South America and the Caribbean replicated the history of Europe in its ex-colonies: the South of America became “Latin” and the North of America Anglo-Saxon.

The third moment of Latinity is a shift and a break away from Europe. When the “Latino/as” in the US define themselves as such, the umbilical cord with Europe has been cut; both with France and with Spain and of course with Italy. Italo-America is not to be a Latino. And I am considered Latino not because my blood is Italian, but because I am Italo-Argentinian. In other words, my Latinidad in the U.S. overruled my Latinidad in Argentina. While “Latinidad” in South America was the identity of the white (in Latin standards) Creole elite from European descent, “Latinidad” in the U.S. was the identity of culturally and ideologically non-white; the identity of colonial subalterns or, as Frantz Fanon named them, the wretched of the earth. For that reason, because Latinity in the U.S. was re-articulated by colonial subalterns,<sup>17</sup> a shift took place in subjectivity and epistemology. “Latinidad” in the U.S. has created links with other colonial subalternities, like “Africanity” and “Indianness.” In New York and Miami, “Latino/as” “Afro-Carib-

beans” have more in common than their skin color or place of origin: both communities are linked by the anger and the pain of the colonial wound and, therefore, they are able to create common spaces of contestations and projects of de-colonization. In the South West, “Chicanos/as” (that is, Latino/as whose history is grounded in Mexican-US relations), establish the common spaces of contestation and projects of de-colonization with “Indianidad,” that is, with Native Americans. The cut from the European umbilical cord, and the links established with Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Americans on the one side and Native Americans, on the other, re-structure also the relationship with South America. “Latinos/as” in the U.S. are not in the same boat with “Latin Americans”; that is to say, with Creoles from European descent and Mestizos who have mixed blood but pure mind (that is, Eurocentered mind), but with the vibrant indigenous movements in the Andes as well as with Afro-Andeans. Briefly, in the third moment “Latinidad” in the U.S. emerged as a project of de-colonization of knowledge and of being.

Let’s turn now to Latin-Islam relations.<sup>18</sup> The expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula produced the shift from Islam and Latin/Roman relations during the European Middle Ages, to the Islam and Latin/Christian relations after the Renaissance. The shift took place not only within the interior history of the making of Europe—that is, a chronological break in a universal history that goes from Greece and Rome to Spain, France, Germany and England. The shift

was a shift—and not a simple change—because it brought the relevance of *space* into the picture and since then, since the *Atlantic shift of 1500*, the history of European expansion cannot be separated from the double colonial histories where Europe (and the U.S.) expanded or affirmed itself. The imperial/colonial structural nodes in the world outside Europe and the U.S., has been always structured by a double pull of forces: governments (and part of the civil society) allies to European or U.S. imperial dominance—on the one hand—and the political society of dissenters on the other.

But Latin-Islam relations is a problematic way of starting the conversation. Put in this way, the silences are maintained, for “Latin” hides its ties with Christianity and “Islam” with Arabic, even if there is no one to one relation between language and religion. Therefore we should look at the relations and conflicts between Christianity and Islam, on the one hand and between Latin and Arabic on the other. The first is a religious affair, while the second is an epistemological one. Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Abed al-Jabri asks what happened between Ibn Rush and Descartes? Why the rational bent that Arabic philosophy took with Ibn Rush (1128-1198), in Southern Spain, had its continuation with Descartes, in Holland when Amsterdam was replacing Seville as the Western port of global trade? I do not endorse al-Jabri historical reading of Arabic philosophy from Ibn Shina, to al-Ghazali to Ibn Rush. My concerns are not of course the concerns of a specialist in Arabic philosophy, which I am not. My concern is prompted by the mo-

dern concept of history in al-Jabri—a linear chronology on the one hand and a sense of newness that once the new came, the old goes dead to the archive and the museums. For him Arabic philosophy is a long history and a wide geographic spread that started with Ibn Shina in Uzbekistan; continued with al-Ghazali in Iran and ended up in Ibn Rush in Spain and in Morocco. And from there philosophy moved to Descartes in Amsterdam. However, for al-Jabri, we are still leaving the “Averroist moment” although in European garb:

As a matter of facts we, Arabs, have lived, after Averroes, in the margin of history (in inertia and decline), because we have hanged on to Averroes after al Ghazali gave philosophy its rights to enter the house of “Islam.” Europeans, had lived the history from which we exit; they knew how to appropriate Averroes and to live until the present the Averroist moment.<sup>19</sup>

This is not the time, nor the place to debate al-Jabri’s statement; but it is the time and the place to recognize the importance of the problem he is addressing in a statement that can and should be disputed. What is more difficult to dispute, it seems to me—is the relevance of the problem itself. And the heart of the problem is this: the heterogenous historico-structural nodes that established a cut between Ibn Rush and Descartes, between Arabic language and Latin, between Arabic and European continental philosophy; between Seville and Amsterdam. That cut has two imperial moments beyond the history of philosophy proper. The first was the expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century that interrupted the trans-

lation flow from Arabic into Spanish and Latin by Alfonso el Sabio, in Toledo during the thirteenth century. That space of knowledge came to be occupied by Theology, both as philosophy and religion. The first moment was the displacement of the center of Atlantic commercial ports, from Seville to Amsterdam. When Amsterdam became the center of trade, and Holland had its short-lived imperial dominance before being overtaken by England, and Europe was in the middle of religious war, Réné Descartes was in Amsterdam writing *Discourse de la méthode* (1636). Thus, the relations between Arabic Islam, Christian Latinity and Secular Latinity, shall be understood in that complex heterogeneous historico-structural node that generated modern imperial/colonialism, capitalism as we understood it today, and a hegemonic epistemology based in Greek and Latin and deployed in the six imperial European languages of modernity.

Thus how to think trans-modernity within this history? To start with, modernity goes hand in hand with the formation of a European identity, coming out from Latin Western Christendom.<sup>20</sup> In the sixteenth century the Christian (Catholic) frontiers were mapped between Islam and the Ottoman Empire and Orthodox Slavic Christianity of the Russian Empire; and that located the Indians and Black Africans in the lowest rank in the scale of human beings. In the eighteenth century, when European self-definition was in the hands of northern intellectuals and philosophers (separated from Islam by the buffer zone of Southern European countries; protected from the Ottomans by the Austro-Hun-

garian Empire and having Peter and Catherine the Greats in their own German and French hands), modernity was redefined with the French Revolution as a reference point; secularization, the advent of Reason over Faith, and freedom and democracy as the irrepressible destiny of the entire humanity. Thus, when European leaders found themselves protected from the dangerous borders, they could concentrate in their own dreams instead of spending energy looking and waiting for the barbarians.

In this historical frame, trans-modernity, then, could be subjected to two types of interpretations. One type of interpretation was shaped from the perspective of the refashioning of the European identity *vis-à-vis* the European Union; and the other from the perspective of the barbarians *vis-à-vis* the continuation of de-colonial epistemic projects, the other side of the colonization of knowledge. At the moment of writing this article, I suspect that the meaning of “trans-modernity” in this conference is closer to the first than to the second type. The second type of interpretation, comes from the Third World, during the Cold War; more specifically from Latin American philosophy of Liberation.<sup>21</sup> In its first meaning, trans-modernity implies an expansive movement of Europe from its core toward peripheral European countries. And it presupposes also consent from the part of the countries being annexed. That is, the annexation is not by force but by mutual desire and different kind of interests. In its second meaning, trans-modernity implies the de-colonization of knowledge and of being. It

would be better then to describe this second meaning as trans-colonial modernity to refer to a historical state of affairs and to de-coloniality of knowledge and being as a set of projects oriented toward revealing and dismantling the colonial matrix of power, and contributing to create the conditions for the possibility of an-other world.

Now, in this historical frame, the relationship between “Latinidad,” “Islam” and “Trans-modernity” (in both sense) offer various possibilities and diverse visions of the future.

Let’s start this time by the de-colonial epistemic shift at the end of the historical line drawn by al-Jabri. Moroccan intellectual Abdesslam Yassine in his quite fascinating argument, *Winning the Modern World of Islam* observes

We are thus face-to-face with modernity that eradicates, a modernist ideology which calls for “disencumbering the way” so that “enlightened humanity” might dispel the darkness of “tradition”—a tradition which, in the eyes of the West, is currently incarnate in the “illuminati” of an obscurantist *islam*.

Modernity is thus a “sacralization” of the natural law of reason, and a submission to all that this entails. To be modern, it is supposed, means one must rebel against the sacred, against the divine. Ideological modernism ows it to itself to have as its goal “disencumbering the way.” This is rationalism’s violent indictment of the irrational, it is the crushing argument against the tatters of tradition by armed and wealthy scientific technology.<sup>22</sup>

This is a radical view, but not necessarily wrong. How do you work out trans-modernity in this case? Of course, we could join President Bush’s view and ignore or crash these

perspectives as consequences of the axis of evil; or as a clash of fundamentalisms, with Yassine at one end and Huntington in the other. But this way of proceeding is not really trans-modern but imperial. We should start by recognizing that racism, in the sense of different layers in the human chain of being, is here at stake; and the colonization of being and of knowledge is but one of the many consequences of racism. That is to say, racism is in the middle of the confrontation Yassine brings to the foreground. How much leverage the radical critics of modernity will have in a trans-modern project? Let's consider also, before answering this question, examples from progressive Muslim intellectuals, instead of radical ones, like Qutb or Yassine. Progressive Muslims intellectuals like Ahmad S. Moussalli, among many others, will propose a dialogue in the domain of political theory, for example, Moussalli argues that the basic doctrines of government and politics developed in the history of medieval Islam, include the seeds of modern liberal democracy and pluralism, and are not contradictory to it. The thrust of the argument is that while the history of “the highest Islamic political institution, the caliphate, is mostly a history of authoritarian governments, the economic, social, political and the intellectual history of Islam abounds with liberal doctrines and institutions.”<sup>23</sup>

Moussalli's observation shall be complemented and supported by a reminder of the totalitarian regimes in the post-enlightenment tradition. Liberalism engendered nationalism that engendered totalitarian Nazi conscience and so-

cialism as totalitarian communism. In the economic terrain, liberalism engendered neo-liberalism with all the consequences in arms and war escalate that we have been witnessing. So, there is no much difference between totalitarian caliphates, or any other forms of “Asiatic despotism” (used by Locke to justify liberal political and economic doctrines) and totalitarian regimes in the heart of Europe, in its imperial periphery (Stalin) or in the colonial periphery (Pinochet, Sadan Hussein). But what is then the difference? The difference is the privilege of Western modernity: The West solved all its totalitarian problems and economic crisis by itself, but the rest of the world depends on Western solutions to solve their totalitarian problems and economic crisis!!! I have no doubt that principles of justice, equality and equity could be found in Islam as well as in the history of the Ayllu's in Bolivia; principles that are compatible and pre-existed the European “discovery” of democracy in the eighteenth century. And that of course is good. What it is not good is the blindness and the arrogance of modern European Theologians, philosophers, political theorist and political economists, who ignore that similar knowledges and practices were already in place in other civilizations (Islam, Aymara-Qechua; Chinese philosophy and Indian philosophy, Sub-Saharan African's philosophical traditions, etc.). But, precisely, the victory of the West, since the Renaissance, was to demonize, racialize, surrogate, destroy, undermine every thing that was different from its cosmology and that prevented the imperial aspiration to world domina-

tion that emerged with the triumph of Christianity and the discovery of America, in the sixteenth century, and was reaffirmed with the French Revolution and with British imperialism and French colonialism in the nineteenth.

What precedes touches upon the realm of political theory (and I do not have time to even touch upon political economy in relation to trans-modernity). What about the spheres of subjectivity and knowledge; that is, the question of knowledge and being and the coloniality of knowledge and being? Farish A. Noor is another example of progressive Muslim intellectual and activist. Let's take two examples from Noor's argument:

- 1) When the Palestinian mother cries amidst the rubble of her home, searching for the bodies of her children buried underneath, her pain is seen as somewhat “exotic” and “incomprehensible” by some.
- 2) When the Bosnian son bears his heart and vows to avenge the death of his sibling who were killed by some murderous mercenaries, his cry for justice is seen instead as an irrational cry for blood

Noor's concludes from these two examples that “somehow the agony of Muslims is presented as being somewhat less than human, Muslims are often seen as being radically different. Much of this is due to our own introvertedness, born and bred in a climate of suspicion and frustrations.”<sup>24</sup> It could be that introversion, suspicion and frustrations explain part of the fact that “the agony of Muslims is presented as *being somewhat less than human*.” Well, yes, Muslims

are not outside the global racism, that is, the ranking of the population of the world whose first map we can find it in Las Casas “five kinds of barbarians”; in Kant’s ethno-racial tetragon and finally in Richard Nixon’s ethno-racial pentagon (when Latinos/as but for him Hispanics, transformed the Kantian ethno-racial tetragon). I quoted Kant, above, saying that the Arabs are the Spanish of the Middle East. And they are adventurous and passionate. Well, more developed since then, but the seed was planted in Christian discourse mainly after the sixteenth century when the modern/colonial map was drawn.

What does any of this has to do with trans-modernity, Latinity and Islam? Or, what are these examples telling us about the triple relation between Islam, Latinity and trans-modernity? I will conclude by making four interrelated points:

a) Latinity, in its Christian and secular versions is implicated in the making of the modern imperial/colonial world, of modernity/coloniality, as is Anglicity. In the nineteenth century Latinity became the banner of the European South confronting the Anglo-Saxon North. This division was reproduced in the New World with the formation and division between Latin and Anglo America, Simon Bolivar on the one hand and Thomas Jefferson on the other.

b) Islam, on the other hand should be looked at, in relation to Latinity, at two different levels. One is the religious level, Islam proper. The other is the linguistic-epistemic level where Arabic is the language of philosophy, science and

religion. In the first domain, Christianity/Latinity and Islam entered in a religious conflict and dialogue. They are both interrelated, Islam and Arabic language and philosophy, but they are also distinctively articulated.

c) And then what about trans-modernity? As I suggested before, one concept of modernity works from inside out and one example would be the European model, as Susan George and others have suggested, that is preferable at this point to the Washington Hawks model. That is, trans-modernity would be an alternative imperial model that Europe is practicing in the making of the European Union. In this regard, Latinity and Anglicity as leading secular ideologies of Hegel's Europe, would have to recognize and self-criticize the imperial history that is embedded in languages and cultures of European imperialism. The internal imperial difference between the U.S and the European Union means, as I stated before, that there are difference within the same. The external imperial difference, instead, between on the one hand the U.S. and the European Union and on the other—Russia and China, as well as with Islam, is founded on the racialization of the difference. Think in terms of passports. No much problem between the U.S. and the Western countries of Europe. But it is not the same with the Middle East, Russia or China. And of course, with Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, the racialization of the colonial difference puts limits on global citizenship. At this point it is unthinkable to imagine a move, from the U.S. toward the constitution of an American Union, annexing Latin America and the Carib-

bean. There are several reasons for Washington not to move in that direction. And if it did, the situation in Latin America is such that there is no total consent in “annexation by desire,” like in Europe. First, because the Atlantic coast States (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay) are in the hands of governments quite opposed to the U.S. Furthermore, the Indigenous movement in the Andes has been manifesting for a long time against the Free Trade Agreement.

d) But, finally, the question is not only trans-modernity as a vision toward the future, but of trans-colonial modernity in the making of the past five hundred years of global history and decolonization of knowledge and of being, for the construction of an-other-possible world. How would this model work? Well, first by self recognizing the power differential between the Western imperial dominance of Christian religion and Latin and Anglo languages, epistemologies, knowledges and cultures. The second is recognizing that Yassine, Qutb, Reynaga, etc., may be radical in their critique of modernity, but radicalism is not necessarily wrong when confronting fundamentalist atavism of European modernity, hidden or disguised under the talk of freedom, equality, justice as if the rest of the world was in such a barbarian state of mind that do not like to live in peace and in equality (like the Ayllu's in the South American Andes before the arrival of the Spaniards) and have to be forced, by violence, to be just and democratic human beings!!! Self-criticism within imperial spheres, that is, Western progressive intellectuals (and hopefully political and corporation lea-

ders, as well as major media), would have to imagine ways to yield to progressive Muslim, Chinese, Aymara, Afro-Caribbean intellectuals, activists, political leaders and non-market economic developments like Via Campesina or the Zapatista's example of Los Caracoles, etc.). Progressive Muslims and other non-European intellectuals, political leaders, creative economists and agronomists working with communities in an economic logic that makes communities independent from the global market at the same time allowing the communities to use the global market), should not be satisfied with asking for recognition of Islamic principles of justice and equality. We should reach a point in which the "good" principles and practices we find in Islam, in Aymara's history, in Chinese society, in Indian philosophy, in religious communities, etc., will be brought together to build a world in which many world would co-exist. You do not have to renounce being Islamic, or European or Aymara. But you have to recognize, on the one hand, that there is a power differential based on racism and epistemology in the ranking of human beings and knowledges. And, on the other, that there is no safe place. It is not enough to be Black or Homosexual, European Latin or Anglo-Saxon, Islamic or Christian, Marxist or Liberal, Aymara or Creole/Mestizo. Invoking principles derived from civilizations, languages, knowledges, cultures, political theories etc., it is hardly enough. It is not enough to be Black, when we have Condoleezza Rice. It is not enough to be Latino, when we have Alberto Gonzalez; it is not enough to be for democracy,

when it is the weapon that Tony Blair and George W. Bush have used in Iraq a few months after 9/11.

What is left then, are the *two types* of political projects that may work in complicity. Trans-modern projects that are liberating rather than “soft-imperialism” and de-colonial projects that are not only resistant but creative; projects imagining and working toward a society no longer based in models emerging in the Western tradition, from Greece to Western Europe in all its imperial faces, since the sixteenth century, to the U.S. but in the activation of categories of thoughts and ways of life that have been disqualified since the sixteenth century. In that scenario, and in that scenario only, recognition (by whom?) of democratic principle in medieval Islamic and Arabic philosophy, would generate effective transformation and des-centralization of economic and political organization; of subjective de-racialized subject formations that de-animalize the Muslim, the Blacks or the Indians. De-colonial projects focus on racialization as a major weapon of control and domination; a colonial matrix of power that has been working effectively since the sixteenth century. To what extend then, trans-modernity and trans-colonial modernity could be seen as projects leading to undoing the modern/colonial mind (e.g., the colonial matrix of power), pervasive in European histories and in their colonies? Only if the epistemic shift and the working together of diverse categorical traditions can make their way into building the future. Without the epistemic shift undoing what modern imperialism did (economically, epistemically,

subjectively) we may be able—not just to recognize but to dwell in the double bind of European and U.S. history in the past five hundred years. It was not by chance that Aimé Césaire, a black from Martinique, saw in the early fifties the two sides of the same coin: Colonialism outside of Europe and Nazism in Europe. Thus, imperial/colonial metamorphoses were successful thus far to maintain the colonial matrix of power hidden under the rhetoric of modernity.

### **Notes**

1. From J.W. Smith (1994) *The World's Wasted Wealth II* (chapter 14): “The Romans extended their empire around the entire Mediterranean Sea and part of the Bible is the record of battles resisting subjugation in the peripheral province of Israel. After three hundred years of persecution, during the fourth century A.D., Emperors Constantine and Theodosius made Christianity the state religion and “forbade the worship of ancient pagan gods.” Over the next eleven hundred years, as the Roman Empire in the West was overwhelmed by barbarians, the people of Turkestan – who had a long history of conquest and defeat, back and forth, with China, Mongolia, Europe, Persia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt – accepted the Islamic religion, formed an alliance with other Arabs and Muslims, and defeated and then ruled the Byzantine (Eastern) half of the “Holy Roman Empire.” See footnote 1 This was the Islamic/Ottoman (Turkish) empire, which reached its zenith under the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1550 A.D.”
2. The issue is being discussed in the West too. One article and one rejoinder have been published recently in *Harvard International Review* (3, Fall 2004, 48-53) titled “Together but separate. Russia and Europe in the New Century”; and the rejoinder titled “Remotely Russian.” The author of the first article Nikolai Zlobin, is Director of the Russian and Asian Program, Center for Defense Information

in Washington D.C.; and the author of the rejoinder, Bruce Parrot, is Professor and Director of the Russian and Eurasian Studies Program at John Hopkins University.

3. Madina Tlostanova told me that after the publication of his article in *Foreign Affairs*, Huntington became very popular among Russian Orthodox and Slavic intelligentsia as they saw in Huntington a confirmation of their ideas of Orthodox Russia controlling other smaller Orthodox communities outside of Russia.
4. “Beyond New Europe. Does a Euro Curtain Exist?” *Harvard International Review*, Fall 2004, 3, 68-72.
5. George W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree. New York: Prometheus Books, 1991, 102.
6. Not exactly. In present days Lithuania—for example—the Roman Catholic Church is dominant. Over 80% of the population consider themselves Catholics. Currently, along with the Catholics, there are the Russian Old Believers and the Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Karaite and Islamic communities. Besides, members of the evangelical reformed faith are most densely situated in northern Lithuania, and the evangelical Lutherans in the southwestern areas of the country. However, the general direction of Rosapepe’s argument is consistent.
7. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, translated by Victor Lyle Dowdell. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996, 231.
8. Kant, *Anthropology*, 235
9. The cartographic history of the Ottoman Empire from 1450 to 1840 shows that Turkey was in Europe, well into Europe, all this time and it was only toward end of the eighteenth century that began to recede. A significant difference with the Islamic Empire whose last bastion in Europe, Garnatha, was lost in 1492 and that victory of Christianity over the Moors was one of the landmarks in the triumphal march of “Western modernity” and the configuration of capitalism as we know it today. The map history could be seen in <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/histatlas/asmin/haxottoman.html>;

10. Immanuel Kan, *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime*, translated by John T. Goldthwait. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, 109
11. This issue has been powerfully raised by South Asian historians, and member of the South Asian Subaltern Studies project, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Post-colonial Thoughts and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2001.
12. Quoted by Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror. Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism. A Work of Comparative Political Theory*. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1999, 55.
13. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twenty Century*. London: Verso, 1994.
14. Madina Tlostanova, *Janus Faced Empire*. Notes on the Russian Empire in Modernity Written from the Border. Moscow, 2003.
15. Take one example among many: the article by Jeffrey D Sachs, “The Development Challenge” of *Foreign Affairs* (March-April 2005; 78-91). It is not the lack of “expertise” in the sense of amount of information he manages. The problem lies in the belief system that underlies his analysis; the principles and presuppositions from where he starts; and the critical acumen he put at work in his interpretation.
16. *Enemy in the Mirror. Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism. A Work of Comparative Political Theory*. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1999, 55. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twenty Century*. London: Verso, 1994. Madina Tlostanova, *Janus Faced Empire*. Notes on the Russian Empire in Modernity Written from the Border. Moscow, 2003. Take one example among many: the article by Jeffrey D Sachs, “The Development Challenge” of *Foreign Affairs* (March-April 2005; 78-91). It is not the lack of “expertise” in the sense of amount of information he manages. The problem lies in the belief system that underlies his analysis; the principles and presuppositions from where he starts; and the critical acumen he put at work in his interpretation.  
“Latinity” as any other type of identity, is based on memory, individual and collective. Colonization of being operates in cutting off those memories and in trying to integrate, individual and communities, into the imperial memory. In the same way that capitalism era-

ses any other form of economy, and annexes land and people to labor force, memory operates in the same way. That is why colonization of knowledge goes hand in hand with colonization of being.

17. By that I mean by racialized subject that carries the racial wound in their subjectivity and makes different from the modern subalterns, who are subalterns in terms of class but not racialized—which explains why modern subalterns, in Europe, will react against immigrants from North Africa and South Asia: immigrants are racialized, colonial subalterns who compete with them for jobs—in terms of class—but that are rejected by the modern subalterns.
18. Another issue I cannot go into but that I shall mention is the gender issue. Do Islamic women need the guidance of European or U.S. feminists, either Catholic, Protestant or Secular? Muslim women have long argued that Islam *per se* is not patriarchal but rather it is the male-dominated religious institutions, which have presented a negative and inherently patriarchal interpretation of Islam, and have called for a process of ‘reinterpretation.’ This particular argument has been presented and re-presented by both Muslim women and to some extent secular feminist who have come to ‘rediscover’ their Islamic roots through the process of ‘deconstruction and reconstruction’ of ‘Islamic discourse.’ However, this argument is by no means a new one, and as yet no one seems to have taken it step further and this book is no exception. The other rather fashionable debate seems to be emphasis of the differences of views among scholars of Islam. This concept is often treated in Western literature on Islam as though it were a newly discovered notion. The principle of ‘ikhtelaf,’ or the legitimate divergence of opinion on secondary matters of religion has been a long established tradition within Islamic jurisprudence. See, for instance, Haleh Afshar, *Islam and Feminism: An Iranian Case Study*. MacMillan, 1998
19. Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, *Introduction à la critique de la raison arabe*. Paris: Editions de la decouverte, 1994, 163.
20. “Western” here is the regular expression used to distinguish Western from Eastern Christians, and not in the sense of “Eurocentrism” (that makes Slavoj Zizek very nervous).

21. Enrique Dussel, *Postmodernidad y transmodernidad. Dialogos con la filosofía de Gianni Vattimo*: Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana; 1998; for an exploration of the consequences of “trans-modernidad” from the perspective of the barbarians decolonizing themselves, see my own article <http://www.javeriana.edu.co/pensar/Disens42.html>;
22. Abdessalam Yassine, *Winning the Modern World for Islam*. Translated from the French by Martin Jenni. Iowa City: Justice and Spirituality Publishing, Inc.
23. Ahmad S. Moussalli, “Islamic Democracy and Pluralism”. In *Progressive Muslims. On Justice, Gender and Pluralism*. Edite by Omid Safi, Oxford: One World, 2003, 286-287.
24. Farish A. Noor, “What is the Victory of Islam? Toward a Different Understanding of the *Ummah* and Political Success in the Contemporary World.” In *Progressive Muslims, op.cit*, 325-326.