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The topology of being and the geopolitics of knowledge

Modernity, empire, coloniality[1]

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This essay by Nelson Maldonado-Torres examines the conjunction of race and space in the work of several European thinkers. It focuses on Martin Heidegger's project of Searching for roots in the West. This project of searching for roots is unmasked as being complicit with an imperial cartographical vision that creates and divides the cities of the gods and the cities of the damned. Maldonado-Torres identifies similar conceptions in other Western thinkers, most notably Levinas, Negri, Zizeck, Habermas, and Derrida. To the project of searching for roots and its racist undertones, he opposes a Fanonian critical vision that highlights the constitutive character of coloniality and damnation for the project of European modernity. He concludes with a call for radical diversality and a decolonial geopolitics of knowledge.

> "Until today, ontological foundation has taken the Center as the end and point of departure. 'Being' has been, in truth, the Center. 'Thinking' has been Central Thinking. In the Center they have met. Out of the Center one finds the entity, the contingent, and the underdeveloped; that which came to be recognized only through the Center.
>
> Metaphysics in its entirety has imposed a philosophical foundation that goes through the Center. The theory of knowledge in all its forms has imposed and still imposes an Enlightened Center. Ethics, on its turn, imposes a Center through which values obtain their value." (Agustín T. de la Riega[2])

It has become a pedestrian truth to acknowledge that social theory in general has taken a spatial turn that parallels the linguistic turn of Western philosophy. Reflections on how ideas about spatiality have shaped philosophical thought are also gradually emerging in the field of philosophy. For too long the discipline of philosophy proceeded as if geopolitical location and ideas about space were only contingent features of philosophical reasoning. Rightly avoiding the reductionism of geographical determination, philosophers have tended to consider space as too simplistic for being philosophically relevant.[3] To be sure, there are other relevant reasons to explain the allergy of space as a significant philosophical factor. Questions about space and geopolitical relations undermine the idea of a neutral epistemic subject whose reflections only respond to the strictures of the spaceless realm of the universal. They also bring to light the ways in which philosophers and teachers of philosophy tend to affirm their roots in a spiritual region always described in geographical terms: Europe.[4] The absence of reflections on geopolitics and spatiality in the production of knowledge works in tandem with the lack of critical reflection

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regarding the commitment of Western philosophy and philosophers with Europe as a privileged epistemic site.

While the introduction of spatiality as a significant factor in the understanding of philosophy is an important step forward for the discipline, it would be a limited one if it promotes the reaffirmation of a new neutral epistemic subject who can alone map the world and draw associations between thinking and space. This is a risk not only for philosophy, but for social theory as well. The idea is not to change the alleged neutrality of the philosopher with that of the equally mythical image of the neutral scientific cartographer. The introduction of spatiality as a significant factor in the understanding of philosophy and in the production of social theory can become the new locus for the idea of a detached observer who can only examine the intricate relations between knowledge and ideas of space because she or he is ultimately beyond such relations. At the end, such belief in neutrality, I would like to suggest, tends to reproduce blindness, not in regard to space as such, but in relation to non-European ways of thinking and to the production and reproduction of the imperial/colonial relation, or what I would like to refer to, following the work of the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, as *coloniality*.

This essay has to do with what I would call the *forgetfulness of coloniality* in both Western philosophy and contemporary social theory. To be sure, in this context I can only offer brief analyses which fortunately will make sufficiently clear both my criticism of modern and contemporary tendencies in philosophy and social theory as well as my suggestions as to how to overcome these limits. In the first section of the essay I critically analyse influential thinkers in the linguistic turn. I focus on the relationship between Martin Heidegger's ontology and Emmanuel Lévinas's metaphysical ethics. My aim is to show that while both Heideggerian ontology and Lévinas's ethics gave a strong ground to the linguistic turn and provided ingenious ways to overcome the limits of the Western idea of Man, their philosophies remained complicit with imperial spatial formations. Their philosophies are marked by the forgetfulness of coloniality. In the second section I offer a theoretical account of coloniality in relation to the concept of modernity. I distinguish this critical perspective from critical theories that conceive the global as a post-imperialistic network of relations, most notably Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*. In the third and final section I offer an alternative to Western identity politics, as it is expressed in the project of searching for roots in the West. Instead of legitimating the search for European and US roots and its link with an allegedly universal point of view, I will defend a notion of radical diversality. Radical diversality is a critique of roots that brings into light both coloniality and the epistemic potential of non-European epistemes.

Between Athens and Jerusalem: Heidegger, Levinas and the search for roots

The work of Martin Heidegger occupies a central place in the list of philosophers whose work has been influential in the creation and propagation of the perspective commonly known as the linguistic turn, particularly in its hermeneutic and deconstructionist variations. Heidegger first got international notoriety by shifting the grounds of philosophy from epistemology to a form of ontological reflection that offered new perspectives to think about the subject, language and historicity.[5] The question of the meaning of Being represented for him the rescue of a radical point of departure which came to oblivion through the tradition of Western metaphysics. This point of departure provided the means to respond to the crisis of modernity by proposing a philosophical position that

pointed to alternative ways of being and behaving. Heidegger was not thinking particularly in ethics when he considered alternative ways of being that defied the parameters of modernity. His writings rather sought to formulate subject positions not inspired by the primacy of the subject or the model of being human that is dominant in modernity, that of Man.

The key to evade the problematic effects of metaphysics and the modern conception of Man, which for Heidegger undergirded the ideal of modern life in terms of technological advancement, resided in shifting philosophical reflection from epistemological to ontological questions. This does not mean that Heidegger did not have anything to do with epistemology; the idea is rather, that instead of positing epistemology as first philosophy, he explored epistemological questions in terms of the horizon of questioning opened up by the question of the meaning of Being. While Heidegger's first efforts in this direction gave a central important to philosophical anthropology, his critique of epistemology and the idea of Man—the subject of modern European epistemology—led him to shift from a perspective that took human existence as the opening toward Being to language itself and the opening to language as the locus of ontological reflection. After Heidegger's so-called *Kehre*, the ontological turn decisively represented also a linguistic turn.[6]

Language, Heidegger came to affirm, is the house of Being, and human beings, rather than lords of it, are its shepherds. By turning to language in this way Heidegger believed that he had found an opening that allowed him to articulate an alternative to the metaphysically and epistemologically oriented Western philosophy which ultimately led human beings to become prisoners of their own creations. Like other Western philosophers before him, Heidegger believed that he was confronting an epochal moment and that philosophical perspectives played a fundamental role in sustaining the ideas and historical projects that defined that moment. The moment in question was for him the crisis of Europe which found expression in Western nihilism and the rootless cosmopolitanism of liberal models of the nation-state designed in the context of the French Revolution.[7] Charles Bambach has examined carefully the links between Heidegger's thought and the terms with which he defined and tried to respond to what he conceived to be the crisis of Europe. A brief exploration of Bambach's theses concerning Heidegger's philosophical discourse and project will give an idea of the ways in which Heidegger's ontological and linguistic turn cannot be understood completely without perceiving a geopolitical turn in his work that gave a new basis to racism.

Bambach's *Heidegger's Roots* analyses Heidegger's work in the context of intellectual and political debates concerning the crisis of Europe. The crisis of Europe was conceived by a number of conservative thinkers in Germany, not as the crisis of Europe *per se*, but as a crisis of the centre of Europe.[8] At the centre of Europe there was for them Germany and the German *Volk*. The crisis of Europe came to be understood in this way as a crisis of the German *Volk* and the rural environment in which many of them lived. Important in this context was the Athenian myth of authochtony according to which the founder of Athens, Erichthonius, was himself self-generated from the earth.[9] Erichtonius had an indigenous relation with the Athenian land and landscape. The vision of the myth is clear: the greatness of Athens depended on a similar intimate relation between the citizens of Athens and its soil. Many thinkers in Germany conceived the political crisis of their country in similar terms. Only the affirmation of roots in the land could withstand the force of nihilism and the rootless cosmopolitanism of the French Enlightenment. And such roots were found precisely in the world of the Greeks. Bambach comments that,

> "In an age where German culture was developing without the framework of a unified nation state, a range of philosophers and writers asserted their own national

> ideals in terms borrowed from their visions of antiquity. Within the context of this German Hellenomania, heightened by the invasion of Napoleon in 1806, Fichte, Hegel, and their contemporaries came to draw upon the myth of a singular Graeco-German affinity rooted in both language and *Heimat*."[10]

One of Bambach's central points is that Heidegger's ontological and linguistic turn represents an original articulation of the search for a home or homeland (*Heimat*).[11] While Erichtonious remains as the model for the political myth of roots in the land, Heidegger posits Pre-Socratic thinking, "sprung up from the *arche* of being itself", as the authentic root of thinking—a way of thinking that would contrast sharply with Western metaphysics and epistemology.[12]

The location of an *arche* in Greece stood behind the effort to make Germany (the German language and the German *Volk*) the new *arche* of Europe. Heidegger's geopolitics is, as Bambach notes, a politics based on the intimate relationship among the people, their language, and their land. Geopolitics is both a politics of the earth and a politics of exclusion. Germany should be protected from "the French spirit of Enlightenment and from the Latinity of both Gallic and Roman Catholic culture".[13] Geopolitics also becomes for Heidegger a politics of epistemic racism and imperialism. Epistemic racism and imperialism are not new modalities in Heidegger's world. In some ways, they formed an intrinsic part of Western modernity and precede the excesses of technology that Heidegger found so problematic in the West. By accounting for the crisis of Europe in terms of nihilism and technology, and not in terms of such epistemic racism, he felt justified in the adventure to do to Europe what Europe had done to the rest of the world: epistemic subordination. His interview in *Der Spiegel* makes this very clear.

> Spiegel: It is exactly at the same place where the technological world originated, that it must, as you think . . .
>
> Heidegger: . . .be transcended [*aufgehoben*] in the Hegelian sense, not pushed aside, but transcended, but not through man alone.
>
> S: You assign in particular a special task to the Germans?
>
> H: Yes, in the sense of the dialogue with Hölderlin.
>
> S: Do you believe that the Germans have a special qualification for this reversal?
>
> H: I have in mind especially the inner relationship of the German language with the language of the Greeks and with their thought. This has been confirmed for me today again by the French. When they begin to think, they speak German, being sure that they could not make it with their own language.
>
> S: Are you trying to tell us that that is why you have had such a strong influence on the Romance countries, in particular the French?
>
> H: Because they see that they can no longer get by in the contemporary world with all their great rationality when it comes right down to understanding the world in the origin of its being.[14]

The idea of people not being able to get by without Europe's theoretical or cultural achievements is one of the most definitive tenets of modernity. This logic has been applied for centuries to the colonial world. Heidegger took on this tradition but shifted it in a way that, through his Germancentrism, he could do to the rest of Europe what Europe had done to a large portion of the globe. This epistemic turn is not surprising when one considers that not so many years before Heidegger made these assertions the Germans had taken over Paris. In some ways, to be sure, as Aimé Césaire so aptly noted, the Germans tried to do politically with Europe what Europe had done with the colonial world.[15] Heidegger continued this project, but in more strict philosophical ways. The epistemic ren-

dering of the project, to be sure, does not make it any less ideological or racist.

There were antecedents to the Nazi and the Heideggerean gesture towards Europe. Through the late 16th to the 19th centuries, the French and the English had established a line between northern Europe and southern Europe.[16] The difference gradually emerged through the propagation of the Black Legend, the prestige of technological advancement, and assertion of imperial control in Africa and South-East Asia. The French and the Industrial Revolutions provided additional justifications for the marginalization of Spain and Portugal from the story of modernity. The appearance of new disciplines in the modern Western university in the 19th century and their continued expansion in the 20th only came to cement the subalternized position of southern Europe. Heidegger's linguistic turn repeats some of these patterns. The difference is that where others put the north of Europe and south of Europe divide, he and other conservative German thinkers posit the metaphysics of *Mitteleuropa*. For Heidegger the new beginning is in the middle. And the middle is precisely what is being threatened first by French ideals and then by foreign forces. German conservative thinkers insisted early on the threat of France's *Zivilization* to Germany's *Kultur*. As Bambach points out, Heidegger not only shared this position, but also called attention to the threat of two emerging powers: the Soviet Union on the one hand, and the USA on the other.

The Soviet Union had become a major political force since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. After Hitler broke the Treaty of Versailles in the 1930s, France made a pact with the Soviet Union. The goal, to be sure, was to isolate Germany in the centre. Perceiving the alliance between the rootless cosmopolitan France and the Asiatic Soviet Union Heidegger stated in 1936:

> "Our historical *Dasein* experiences with increasing distress and clarity that its future is tantamount to a naked either/or: either Europe's rescue or its destruction. The possibility of rescue, however, demands two things:
>
> 1. The preservation of the European *Völker* against the Asiatic.
>
> 2. The overcoming of their own deracination and fragmentation.
>
> Without this overcoming such preservation cannot be realized."[17]

Although Heidegger maintained his Germancentrism until the end, he translated some of the core ideas of this position into the more widespread form of Eurocentrism. His Eurocentrism, to be sure, still presupposed a strong Germancentrism. In some way, the defence of Europe became an extension of his diatribe with French thought over who owned the legacy of Europe. France's pact with the Soviet Union indicated just how un-European they could be. Very disconcerting here is that it was France's reaction to Hitler's violation of the Treaty of Versailles, and not Hitler's anti-semitism and imperial policies, that represented the more dangerous threat to Europe for Heidegger.

Heidegger was very clear about the threat of the USA as well. In 1942, after the American entry into the Second World War, he wrote: "we know today that the Anglo-Saxon world of Americanism has resolved to annihilate Europe, that is, the homeland [*Heimat*], and that means: the commencement of the Western World".[18] Bambach summarizes Heidegger's view of America as follows:

> "Leaning on the staple of pronouncements from Hegel, Burckhardt, Nietzsche, Scheler, Jünger, Rilke, and others, Heidegger deemed America (by which he meant the United States) a land without history, a culture without roots, a people held in the deadening grip of total mobilization, preoccupied by size, expansion, magnitude, and quantity . . . Read within the context of his geo-philosophical account of *Mitteleuropa*, Americanism symbolizes

> rootlessness, deracination, the loss of autochthony and of any meaningful connection to the earth."[19]

Heidegger's philosophical geopolitics were ambitious, grand and racist. As Bambach notes, while Heidegger opposed the biological racism of Nazi ideologues, he still sustained a form of racism nonetheless.[20] His racism is not biological, nor cultural, but epistemic. As all forms of racism, epistemic racism is linked with politics and sociality. Epistemic racism disregards the epistemic capacity of certain groups of people. It may be based on metaphysics or ontology but its results are nonetheless the same: the evasion of the recognition of others as fully human beings.

Heidegger's racism was very clear in his perception of the Jews and the Hebraic tradition. In a letter to a colleague in 1929 Heidegger states:

> "I would like to say more clearly what I could only hint at indirectly in my report. At stake is nothing less than the pressing consideration that we stand before a choice: either to provide our *German* spiritual life once more with genuine forces and educators rooted in the native and indigenous or to deliver it over ultimately to increasing Judification."[21]

Heidegger's views of the Jews were grounded on the nationalistic ontology of the homeland (*Heimat*). The experience of exodus and diaspora made the Jews inherently rootless subjects for him.[22] He considered Jews to be a threat to the *homeland*. They have an urban, rather than a rural identity. These wanderers defy the Athenian principle of autochthony. For this reason, even those Jews who speak German still represented a threat to the German *Völk*. That Heidegger owed gratitude to his teacher Edmund Husserl does not represent an exception from this. Heidegger was not concerned so much about individuals *per se*, but about "increasing Judification", which has to do, not with his relationship with any one Jew in particular, but with his attitude regarding their overall collective influence in Germany.

Heidegger's epistemic racism certainly did not go unchallenged. One of Heidegger's most virulent critics, if not the most, was a former student of Edmund Husserl in Freiburg who also attended Heidegger's lectures: Emmanuel Lévinas. All of Lévinas's mature work attempts to subvert Heidegger's thought. In his first great work, *Totality and Infinity*, Lévinas describes ontology as a philosophy of power.[23] Against Heideggerean ontology Lévinas proposed ethics as first philosophy. And this ethics was strongly based precisely in what Heidegger could not find any value: the Hebraic tradition. While Heidegger's criticism of the West is based on the alleged forgetfulness of Being, Lévinas criticism rather lies on the forgetfulness of the Hebraic in Western thought. Lévinas found in Jewish sources the possibility of articulating an ethical metaphysics that put limits to the Christian and liberal ideas regarding the autonomy of the subject. Jewish sources also provided Lévinas clues to develop an account of corporality very different from Nazi racial logics.[24]

Lévinas's ethical turn in philosophy rescues the epistemic relevance of Judaism while also holding on to the legacy of the Greeks. As Husserl before him, what he took and praised from the Greeks was not the myth of autochthony, but the idea of universality. Lévinas insisted that this idea of universality was very well compatible with Jewish sources. Philosophy for him became precisely the creative fusion of Greek and Jewish sources. For him, Athens and Jerusalem were not principled opposites, but co-habitations of the universal in the human.

Lévinas responded to Heidegger's epistemic racism directly. He attempted to show that Jews could not be excluded from Europe or the West because of alleged epistemic differences. The Hebraic experience and knowledge based on a combination of the Hebraic and Greek traditions of thought were in this regard not extra-Western, but in some way paradigmatically Western. Lévinas

reconfigured the idea of the West and attempted to construct an alternative philosophical framework that would simultaneously respond to the threats of racism and violence and that would make clear the epistemic relevance of Judaism.

Lévinas had a different philosophical geopolitics from Heidegger. He could imagine Athens and Jerusalem side by side as the bedrock of the West. The question is the extent to which this marriage responded satisfactorily to the challenges confronted by other regions and cities in the world. While Heidegger holds on to the ground or earth of the rural environment, to the myth of Greek autochthony and to German as the language of the *Volk* in the middle of Europe, Lévinas more decisively embraces the cosmopolitanism of the urban experience, but only thinks of Greek and Hebrew as legitimate languages for thinking. At the end, only Athens and Jerusalem stand out as cities of knowledge in his work. In some ways Lévinas writes as if the epistemic inclusion of Judaism in the internal dynamics of the West were enough to address epistemic exclusion everywhere. Thus, while Lévinas successfully defends Jews and Judaism from Heideggerian epistemic racism (indeed, from an epistemic racism endemic to much of modern Western philosophy), he does not escape Heidegger's logic of searching for roots or his inclination to think about epistemology only in reference to the achievements of the Western world. As a European Jew Lévinas searches for roots in the West, and thus transforms the hegemonic idea of the West in order to fit in it. But he transgresses Heidegger's discourse (and that of much of European philosophy) only partially. He is still concerned with finding roots and defending the idea of Europe (and Israel, to be sure) as project. His geopolitics are thus limited by his strong desire to find roots in Europe.

Where can one find a more radical response to Heidegger's project? Lévinas responds critically to Heidegger's anti-Semitic views. But Heidegger's epistemic racism, as that of many European philosophers, goes well beyond that scope. It was not only Jerusalem that Heidegger was sceptical about. As we have seen, it was also Rome, Asia Minor, Russia and America that were in question. Heidegger articulated his philosophy in a context where European imperialism was being contested from many directions. Taking into consideration this larger geopolitical context, Bambach contrasts Heidegger's efforts to find roots in the West with those of the Martiniquean psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon.[25] Fanon, who fought against the Germans in the Second World War and later on against French imperialism in the Franco-Algerian War, had in mind not only the predicament of the Jew in the Holocaust, but also that of other victims of the European racist and imperial ethos in other parts of the world, particularly the colonial world. This historical experience and political commitment led Fanon to enunciate, in remarkable contrast to Heidegger and Lévinas:

> "The European game has finally ended; we must find something different . . . For centuries [Europeans] have stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience. Look at them today swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration . . . Europe now lives at such a mad, reckless pace that she has shaken off all guidance and reason . . . It is in the name of the spirit, in the name of the spirit of Europe, that Europe has made her encroachment, has justified her crimes and legitimized the slavery in which she holds four-fifths of humanity. Yes, the European spirit has strange roots."[26]

Bambach's comment to this passage is enlightening: "Like Fanon, Heidegger understood that Europe was 'running headlong into the abyss.' But where the former colonial understood the need for difference, Heidegger sought the way out of Europe's crisis by authorizing a more narrowly constricted form of identity".[27] In the face of an encroachment that is not unique to Heidegger's project of finding roots in the German

Fatherland, an encroachment and a racism that had shown themselves for centuries to colonized peoples in different regions of the globe, Fanon proposed a radical dislocation of Europe and its roots. Modernity/nihilism appeared to Fanon as another expression of modernity/racism, the vile segregation and claim for superiority of Europe over all the other peoples of the earth.[28] Fanon's philosophical geopolitics were transgressive, decolonial and cosmopolitan. He wanted to bring into view what had remained invisible for centuries. He was claiming the need for the recognition of difference as well as the need for decolonization as an absolute requirement for the proper recognition of human difference and the achievement of a post-colonial and post-European form of humanism.[29]

Fanon's decolonial cosmopolitanism was grounded on the struggle for decolonization of the Algerian people. His cosmopolitanism did not sacrifice the commitment with local struggle. Rather than cosmopolitanism as such perhaps his project should be characterized as an attempt to give expression to a consistent decolonial consciousness. Decolonization is not for Fanon only about the achievement of national liberation. Decolonization is about the creation of a new symbolic and material order that takes the full spectrum of human history, its achievements and its failures, into view. This side of history is what neither Heidegger nor Lévinas could see—or did not want to see. Their search for European roots blinded them to this kind of decolonial geopolitics. Instead of giving primacy to the search for roots in Europe or elsewhere, Fanon's decolonial consciousness aims to dislocate the subject through the awareness of a response to those who are locked in positions of subordination. Rather than trying to find roots in the *earth*, Fanon proposed responding responsibly to the *damned of the earth*. Fanon's decolonial geopolitics offers an alternative to Heidegger's philosophical racism and to the limited perspectives of those who like Lévinas, while critical of some aspects of this project, are still in some ways complicit with it.

Heidegger's racism and Lévinas's blindness reflect what in their *will-to-ignorance* can be partly translated as the *forgetfulness of damnation*. The forgetfulness of the damned is part of the veritable sickness of the West, a sickness that could be likened to a state of amnesia that leads to murder, destruction and epistemic will to power—with good conscience. The opposition to modernity/racism has to address this amnesia and the invisibility of the damned. For this, a historical vision that combines space and time is needed. A group of scholars in Latin America and the USA has been working on a geopolitical perspective that rescues what they refer to as the logic of coloniality. Reference to this logic allows one to refer not only to ontological oppression, but to the coloniality of Being. In the effort to finding a more radical critical path than those opened by Heidegger and Lévinas's philosophical projects, I will elaborate in the next section some of the theoretical elaborations and findings that go in this direction. They constitute an important part of what could be referred to as Fanonian meditations.[30]

Modernity, coloniality and the coloniality of being

The concept of coloniality of Being emerged in conversations between a group of scholars in Latin America and the USA about the relationship between modernity and the colonial experience.[31] In coming up with the term they followed the lead of scholars like Enrique Dussel and the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, who put forward an account of modernity and a conception of power that are intrinsically tied to the colonial experience.[32] At first glance, there seems to be a mismatch between the theme of modernity and the imperial/colonial relation. One concept refers to time (the modern) while the other makes reference to space (expansionism and control of lands). Modernity would seem to be involved with the European's

colonization of time, that is, with the creation of stages in history that led to the advent of modernity in the European soil. Yet, the very ties between modernity and Europe in dominant discourses of modernity cannot escape reference to geopolitical location. What the concept of modernity does is to ingeniously hide the significance of spatiality for the production of this discourse. That is why most often than not those who adopt the discourse of modernity tend to tend to adopt a universalistic perspective that does away with the significance of geopolitical location. The escape from the legacy of colonization and dependency is provided for many by modernity, as if modernity as such has not been intrinsically tied to the colonial experience.

The problems of modernity surpass the excesses of instrumental rationality. Their cure, if there is any, resides well beyond the redeeming virtue of an allegedly inherent communicative turn, like Jürgen Habermas recommends.[33] Habermas's conception of modernity, its limits, and its possibilities, has not taken into consideration enough European modernity's ties with what J.M. Blaut has referred to as a diffusionist myth of emptiness. As Blaut describes it:

> "This proposition of emptiness makes a series of claims, each layered upon the others: (i) A non-European region is empty or nearly empty of people (hence settlement by Europeans does not displace any native peoples). (ii) The region is empty of settled population: the inhabitants are mobile, nomadic, wanderers (hence European settlement violates no political sovereignty, since wanderers make no claim to territory). (iii) The cultures of this region do not possess an understanding of private property—that is, the region is empty of property rights and claims (hence colonial occupiers can freely give land to settlers since no one owns it). The final layer, applied to all of the Outside sector, is an emptiness of intellectual creativity and spiritual values, sometimes described by Europeans . . . as an absence of 'rationality.' "[34]

The discourse of modernity has not allowed its firm adherents to explore the ways in which imperial conceptions of space have been formative of the modern experience. What are the relations between the instrumentalist and monological trends of modernity and the myth of the emptiness of lands and of rational peoples in those lands? How can one communicate with subjects who are *a prior*-ily suspected of lacking reason? In order to address these questions it is necessary to introduce a concept of modernity that takes seriously into consideration its relation to geopolitical relations. This is partly what the coloniality group in the USA and Latin America has been trying to do for a few years now.

As Walter Mignolo has pointed out, one of the most effective ways to maintain questions regarding the role of the colonial experience in modernity at bay has been to posit the late 18th century as the birth of the modern era.[35] It is true that post-colonial studies have brought to attention questions of spatiality and coloniality to the surface. But most often than not, post-colonial studies scholars assume the self-definition of modernity in terms of its beginnings in the late 18th and the beginnings of the 19th century. Thus, while they are able to illustrate the ways in which the imperial adventures of Britain and France in the 19th century were constitutive of Western modernity, they lose from view more long-standing patterns of colonial domination and exploitation.[36] It is not possible, for instance, to understand the ties between modernity and the diffusionist myth of emptiness that Blaut discusses without taking the so-called discovery and conquest of the Americas into account. It is for this reason Quijano and Wallerstein give a central role to Americaneity in their account of modernity:

> "In the Americas . . . there was such widespread destruction of the indigenous populations, especially among hunting and gathering populations, and such widespread importation of a labour force, that the

> process of peripheralization involved less the *re*construction of economic and political institutions than their construction, virtually *ex nihilo* everywhere (except perhaps in the Mexican and Andean zones). Hence, from the beginning, the mode of cultural resistance to oppressive conditions was less in the claims of historicity than in the flight forward to 'modernity.' The Americas were the 'New World,' a badge and a burden assumed from the outset. But as the centuries went by, the New World became the pattern, the model of the entire world-system."[37]

To raise the question of the relationship between modernity and the colonial experience in Latin America and other parts of the Americas, especially if done by subjects who are sceptical of the promises of modernization and the "redeeming" qualities of the nation-state, is to bring out the relevance of what Quijano and Wallerstein refer to as the long 16th century in the production of modernity. While the imperial adventures of the 19th century certainly introduced new techniques of subordination and colonial control, and thus, rearticulated in original ways the ties between modernity and the colonial experience, the logic that animated the imperial projects was not so different from the patterns that emerged in the context of the conquest of the Americas. Indeed, it would be impossible to understand this logic without reference to them. Awareness of the long-standing patterns of racialization, domination and dependence that were tested and enacted in the context of the conquest of the Americas (but certainly not restricted to the American territory) is what has led some Latin American and US Latino/a scholars, including people involved in indigenous struggles in South America, to enter in a critical dialogue with perspectives such as those of Quijano and Wallerstein, who identify long-term patterns of relations of power in what we have come to call modernity. While post-colonial theory has made a tremendous contribution to the understanding of modernity in its relation to the colonial experience and to the dislocation of the nation-state as the unit of analysis, insights that have yet to be fully assumed from a world-system perspective, it also risks taking for granted the narrative of modernity: with its fixation on secularism, its critique of tradition, and its depiction of the empires of Spain and Portugal and its multiple colonial subjects as insignificant precedents of Western modernity. The idea here is that while it is true that "modern Britain was produced along with modern India", it is impossible to account for the "modernity" of these nations completely without making reference to a larger framework that brings into view the experiences of colonized peoples in the Americas and elsewhere at least from the 16th century on.[38] As Sylvia Wynter insists, particularly relevant is also the relationship between southern Europe first, and northern Europe afterwards, with Africa.[39] Europe's relationship with Africa is constitutive of both the first and the second modernities.

According to Wynter and to scholars like Aníbal Quijano, what emerges in the 16th century is a new way of classifying peoples in the globe.[40] As the medieval *mappae-mundi* turns into the *Orbis Universalis Christianus* there is a significant change in the conceptions of peoples and space. As the maps were drawn, the peoples described, and the relations between conqueror and conquered established, a new model of power emerged. For Quijano,

> "Two historical processes associated in the production of that space/time converged and established the two fundamental axes of the new model of power. One was the codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of 'race,' a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others . . . The other process was the constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources and products. This new structure was an articulation of all historically known previous structures of control of labor, slavery, serfdom, small independent

> commodity production and reciprocity, together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market."[41]

The new pattern of domination and exploitation involved an articulation of race and capitalism in the creation and further expansion of the Atlantic commercial route. Quijano has referred to this complex matrix of power as the coloniality of power. "Coloniality of power" is a specifically modern model of power that links together racial formation, the control of labor, the state, and knowledge production.[42] But this constitutive character of the colonial experience and coloniality are lost in accounts of modernity that dismiss the significance of spatial relations in the emergence of the modern world. To address this situation Mignolo introduces the concept of the modern/colonial world. Concepts such as renaissance and early modern period tend to erase the significance of spatiality and coloniality. For Mignolo:

> "The expression *modern/colonial* has the advantage over *early modern period* of introducing a spatial dimension that the latter lacks. *Early modern period* presupposes a linear narrative ascending from antiquity, to the middle age, the early modern, and the modern and contemporary. Spatially such a macronarrative is confined to the territory extending east and north of the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic and presupposes the Occident as an overall frame. *Modern/colonial world* instead brings the entire planet into the picture, as it contemplates, simultaneously, the emergence and expansion of the Atlantic commercial circuit, its transformation with the Industrial Revolution, and its expansion to the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Furthermore, *modern/colonial world* opens up the possibility of telling stories not only from the perspective of the 'modern' and its outward expansion but from the perspective of the 'colonial' and its constant subaltern position."[43]

The "coloniality of power" brings spatiality into view and demands a concept of the modern that reflects the constitutive role of coloniality in the idea of the modern. As Mignolo puts it in a different context: "Coloniality of power opens up an analytic and critical door that reveals the darker side of modernity and the fact that there never was, nor there can be, modernity without coloniality."[44]

It is out of these reflections on modernity, coloniality and the modern/colonial world that the concept of coloniality of Being first emerged. The relationship between power and knowledge led to the concept of being. And, if there was coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge (*colonialidad del saber*) then, the question arose as to what would the coloniality of being be.[45] Mignolo articulated the relation between these terms succinctly when he argues:

> " 'Science' (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be detached from language; languages are not just 'cultural' phenomena in which people find their 'identity'; they are also the location where knowledge is inscribed. And, since languages are not something human beings have but rather something of what humans beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being [*colonialidad del ser*]."[46]

Like Heidegger, Mignolo relates being to language. But unlike Heidegger, who glorified one specific language and adopted a strong form of epistemic racism, Mignolo points to the locus of the coloniality of being as the *being-colonized* that forms the darker side of Heidegger's reflections. This *being-colonized* emerges when power and thinking become exclusionary in the way that Heidegger's proposals were. To be sure, *being-colonized* is not the result of the work of any one author or philosopher, but the very product of modernity/coloniality in its intimate relation with the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being itself.

Following Fanon, *being-colonized* could otherwise be rendered as the *damné* or condemned of the earth. The *damnés* are

those found in the wastelands of empires as well as in countries and mega-cities which become small empires into themselves—e.g. "fabelas" in Rio de Janeiro, "villa miseria" in Buenos Aires, homeless and extremely poor communities in the Bronx, New York. These are the territories and cities that are most often simply ignored in philosophical diatribes about the location of knowledge. We saw this in the previous section. Heidegger privileged Athens and the Black Forest. Lévinas challenged this Germancentrism by locating true philosophy (the "wisdom of love") in Athens and Jerusalem. The contrast between Heidegger and Lévinas to some extent comes down to that while Heidegger was tormented about the Judification of Europe, Lévinas saw in philosophy an opportunity to combat epistemic anti-Semitism and thus to legitimate the presence of the Jews in Europe and their epistemic contributions to Western civilization. The problem with Lévinas's project is that in the process of redeeming the Hebraic tradition as a significant *root* of the West—Athens and Jerusalem as the two most significant sources for Western thought—Lévinas *forgets* or dismisses the relevance of the colonial experience in reflections on being and modernity. For this reason he was not able to address the question of the colonial aspect of Being.

Forgetfulness of coloniality in reflections on Being is not unique to the phenomenological tradition. We find it, as I suggested above, in many other critical accounts of modernity that tend to interpret the dialectics of enlightenment quite exclusively in terms of instrumental reason or the emergence of totalitarian regimes. These interpretations can lead to a critique of the excesses of Being *qua* generally violent or even as genocidal but not as colonizing. A passage from a recently published work in French and Spanish by Antonio Negri shows clearly what I mean here:

> "The Book of Job is not only a protest against the seduction of reason, but also the phenomenological discovery and the metaphysical intimation of the disaster to which the coherence of instrumental reason leads. Tragedy besieges Being and pain penetrates it deeply. That which can't be measured can't be named. Reason becomes mad and confused if one tries to name it. Tragedy can't be lived and even less manipulated or dominated. Tragedy dominates all views and blocks every possible means of escape. Tragedy demolishes any possible means of salvation. This is what happens to Job. The obstacle that he confronts unceasingly repeats in history: how to believe in reason after Auschwitz or Hiroshima? How to continue being a communist after Stalin?"[47]

In consonance with a theme that became common currency with the work of the Frankfurt School, Negri explains the tragedy of modernity in light of the extreme coherence of instrumental rationality. As his references to Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Stalin at the end of the quote indicate, there is clearly a geopolitics at place in his text. The tragedy to which Negri refers is the most evident failure (for a European) of three projects of modernity: Fascism (Auschwitz), liberalism (US bombing of Hiroshima) and Communism (Stalin in the Soviet Union). Here Germany, the USA and the Soviet Union appear, not as loci of salvation or menaces, like in Heidegger, but as geopolitical sites of crisis. Negri began to write his book on Job in 1982–83, when he was already in jail and when he could only try to come to terms with defeat. Just like Heidegger kept his grounding in Germany through his elaboration of the contacts between German and Greek, Negri cultivates his roots in the West in times of crisis through reflection on Judeo-Christian sources, in this case, the Book of Job. In some ways, the crucial matter for these thinkers is to maintain Western modernity alive. This form of hegemonic identity politics would not be so problematic if it did not assume that the critique of instrumental reason is enough to account for the logic of colo-

niality. There is in much of critical thinking the tendency to recognize critical thought only when it uses the terms of debate that derive from consideration of certain coordinates typically located in crucial spaces for the production of modern and post-modern ideologies. Negri's geopolitics hardly include serious reflection on the condition of racism and sexism as shown in the West's relationship with its colonies. The tragedies of centuries of Western incursions, genocides, impositions and segregation of the greatest part of the planet seem to pass unnoticed in his account of evil. It is as if they only take a secondary role in light of the most obviously malefic expressions (for a European) of modern ideologies. Contrary to this gesture, Fanon attempted to come to terms with forms of evil as they presented themselves in Auschwitz and Algiers, in Hiroshima and the French Caribbean, in the Soviet Union and everywhere where the lives of some human beings appeared to others as dispensable. From this perspective evil did not appear as an event that disturbed the tranquil waters of Being, but rather, as a symptom of Being itself. Similar to Lévinas, Fanon intimated the idea that Being itself may have an evil side to it, that evil may itself be the product of the excess of Being.[48] Fanon made this connection through attention to long-standing processes (coloniality) that make colonized communities feel trapped in a world where even God himself sometimes appears to be an enemy.[49]

Lévinas put forward the idea of the evil side of Being, but he did not relate it to coloniality.

> "What is the structure of that pure being? Is it the universality that Aristotle confers on it? Is it the background and *limit* of our preoccupations, as certain modern philosophers think? Is it, on the contrary, nothing but the stamp of certain civilization, which is installed in the accomplished fact of being and incapable of going out (leaving, escaping, evading) [*d'en sortir*]?"[50]

For Lévinas, the sickness of Western civilization can be related to an investment in Being to such an extent that the West has come to be trapped by it. This notion of entrapment in a limitless realm also appears, interestingly enough, in one of Negri's most recent and influential works. Compare Lévinas's conception of the problem of Being with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's conception of Empire in the work with the same title. Empire

> "is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has *no limits*. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire "civilized" world. No territorial boundaries limit its reign."[51]

In some ways Empire gives consistent expression to Lévinas's depiction of Being. Being and Empire are closely linked in that they are limiting, rather than limited. They give ontological and geopolitical expression to the imperatives for expansion, power and control.

Different from Heidegger's early thematization of Being, the association between ontology and imperial formations brings out the relevance of space in ontology. But the limitless space of Being is hardly one that admits of colonial differentiations, which makes it impossible to account for the selective character of ontological/imperial violence in the modern and post-modern world. This is one of the difficulties with Hardt and Negri's conception of Empire. One of the characteristic features of their proposal is that Empire is in some way a *no-place*. For them,

> "The striaded space of modernity constructed *places* that were continually engaged in and founded on a dialectical play with their outsides. The space of imperial sovereignty, in contrast, is smooth. It might appear to be free of the binary divisions of striation of modern boundaries, but really it is crisscrossed by so many fault lines that it

> only appears as a continuous, uniform space. In this sense, the clearly defined crisis of modernity gives way to an omni-crisis in the imperial world. In this smooth space of Empire, there is no *place* of power—it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia*, or really a *non-place*."[52]

Bringing Lévinas and this conception of Empire together it would seem that Being accomplishes its imperial destiny in the formation of the *non-place* of Empire. But here again the conception of Being that emerges in the works of thinkers *rooted* in the West differs from that which emerges in thinkers who take more centrally into consideration the way in which different subjects with different histories and memories experience modernity and respond to its legacies in the contemporary world. Theorizing in the tradition of W.E.B. Du Bois, at the end of the century that Du Bois conceived as that which would dramatically face the problem of the colour-line, Sylvia Wynter makes the argument that the problem of the colour-line is not only the problem of the 20th century, but the problem of modernity itself, including its latest more global expressions. As Wynter puts it:

> "Nowhere more pronounced [today] than in the still-subordinated and largely impoverished situation of the descendants of the idolators/Human Others, whether indigenous or of African and Afro-mixed ex-slave descent, these inequalities are graphically expressed in the illogic of the present 20/80 ratio of the global distribution of the world's resources. This ratio, as Du Bois also presciently saw, was and is causally correlated with the color line as *the* problem of the twentieth century."[53]

Hardt and Negri, in contrast to Wynter, limit Du Bois's analysis to the 20th century and argue that, "by contrast, looking forward perhaps to the twenty-first century, [imperial racism] rests on the play of differences and the management of micro-conflictualities within its continually expanded domain".[54] The obvious question here is whether the increasing inequality in world's resources, an inequality that seems to follow in many respects a particularly modern horizon of signification regarding who is human and who is not entirely human, can be explained by this emphasis on "play of differences" and "management of micro-conflictualities".

Taking Du Bois and Wynter's lead, I would like to suggest that from the perspectives of the repeatedly racialized groups of modernity, particularly indigenous people and people of African or Afro-mixed ex-slave descent, but also Jews and Muslims, a concept of Being premised on what is often referred to as the dialectics of modernity and the nation, and their supposed overcoming by the emergence of imperial sovereignty or Empire, miss the non-dialectical character of damnation. That is, in short, that what are changes for many, for those whom Frantz Fanon called the *condemned of the earth* seem rather to be perverse re-enactments of a logic that has for a long time militated against them. Space, for them, never becomes smooth, and the prejudice against them cannot be understood through "play of differences" or "management of micro-conflictualities". The non-space of Empire, while it brings to light important dynamics in the structure of sovereignty in the post-modern world, it can also serve an ideological purpose. It hides coloniality or the modern logic of damnation from view.

Coloniality makes reference to race, and thus, to space and experience. Post-modern spaces may be defined in a post-colonial fashion, that is, beyond the strictures of the relationship between empire and colonies, but this does not mean that either race or coloniality have been rendered any less powerful. There could be now, to some extent, an Empire without colonies, but there is no Empire without race or coloniality. Empire (to the extent that there is any of it) operates within the overall logic or watermark of race and coloniality. That is why the walls and boundaries of the West keep reinforcing themselves with such easiness in

so many key places of the modern world; that is also why the USA can explicitly refer to some countries as evil and why, for instance, we see a witch hunt nowadays against Muslim critics of the new right in countries like France.[55] I'll elaborate some of these aspects toward the conclusion of this essay. The point that I want to make here is that this conception of space invites reflection not only on Being, but more specifically, on its colonial aspect, the one that makes some human beings feel that the world is like an inescapable hell.

Coloniality of Being suggests that Being in some way militates against one's own existence. Lévinas, a racialized and persecuted subject, had an intimation into this reality. Being was not something that opened to him the realm of signification, but something that seemed to make him the target of annihilation. It is this racial experience that partly explains why what for Nietzsche, a son of a protestant minister in Germany, was expressed as ascetic mystification, for Lévinas, a Jew from Lithuania, plainly appears as evil and violence. He experiences a different aspect of Western modalities of being. But even though Lévinas begins to depart radically from European conceptions of Being, his commitment with the West's as a civilization project and as an epistemic formation ultimately drives him away from articulating a view of being that explained the logics of damnation. That is why his view of Being appears to collapse so easily into a conception such as that of Hardt and Negri.

The limits of Lévinas's account of Being come to the surface clearly if one compares it with figures who also responded critically to Western ideals from the perspective of racialized subjectivities. In his classic *Is God a White Racist?* William Jones argues that the suffering of black people legitimates introducing the question of divine racism. That is, the enormity, non-catastrophic or natural, and above all the maldistribution of suffering should lead one to raise the question whether God himself or herself is a White Racist.[56] The feeling of being trapped in a centuries-old paradigm of violence and the experience of seeing how changes for everybody hardly represent changes for oneself or one's community naturally lead to the question of whether being is inherently colonizing or whether God is racist. Now, there is an important difference between these two. While God can, through his agency and autonomy, select the object of his divine prejudice, it is not clear how the violence of Being as such can be focused on a particular group or population. In short, while ontological violence may lead to Empire, that is to an impersonal and transnational form of sovereignty, it is not clear how it is tied with colonialism and racism. What we do not find here is an explanation of the preferential character of violence; that while Being is oppressive, it is not equally oppressive to everybody. We could therefore refer to a general ontological violence, but not necessarily to the coloniality of Being.

Coloniality of Being would have to refer not only to an originary event of violence, but to the unfolding of modern history in terms of a logic of coloniality.[57] I suggest that in order to do this we would need to follow Heidegger in connecting Being with historicity and tradition—a movement that undergirds much of Gadamer's hermeneutics. The difference with Heidegger and Gadamer would be that instead of historicity and tradition, what would best explain the unfolding of Being and the coloniality of Being would be the colonial difference and the logic of coloniality. That is, I suggest that Being is to history and tradition, as coloniality of Being is to coloniality of power and colonial difference. The coloniality of Being refers to the process whereby common sense and tradition are marked by dynamics of power that are preferential in character: they discriminate people and target communities. The preferential character of violence can be spelled out by the coloniality of power, which links racism, capitalist exploitation, the control of sex and the monopoly of knowledge, and relate them to modern colonial history.[58] This is my suggestion then:

that to define and unveil the coloniality of Being we could follow Heidegger and Gadamer's track, but only, as Lévinas himself partially did, by transgressing its boundaries and Eurocentred perspectives. We would need to introduce ideas that emerge from the experience of colonization and persecution of different subjectivities. Coloniality of Being could become one possible way to theorize the basic fundaments of the pathologies of imperial power and the persistence of coloniality. Coloniality of Being would allow one to bring up connections between Being, space and history that are missing in Heideggerian accounts and that would also be lost by associating Being with Empire. Furthermore, coloniality of Being would introduce the question of *being-colonized* or the *damné*, who would appear not only as an alternative to Heidegger's *Dasein* but also to the modern concept of "the people" and to Hardt and Negri's concept of the "multitude".[59] While it is not possible for me to develop these ideas here, I do want to pursue the question of why is it that Lévinas, who reflected critically about ontology with so much originality and sophistication, did not pursue the path that I just mentioned.[60] This will lead me to explore the question of the connections between the search for ethnic roots (in Athens) and the search for religious roots (in Jerusalem).

Between New York and Baghdad or blindness to damnation: Christianity, Judaism and the renewed search for roots

I would like to begin this section with the question of why Lévinas did not feel that he had to account for the complex but selective character of violence that is clearly shown in colonialism? In some way at least the answer to this question lies in that while Lévinas was very suspicious of European goodness, particularly when it was premised exclusively on liberal terms, he was not either interested or aware of the legacies of liberal and non-liberal European empires, and much less of the logic of damnation that undergirds modernity. Going through many of his writings it becomes clear that Lévinas's critique of ontology is premised more on his experience as a European Jew and his interest for redeeming the epistemic value of Judaism, than on the links between his position and those of colonized peoples interested in projects of decolonization and in the articulation of decolonial cosmopolitanisms. That is, Lévinas's intellectual project is heavily circumscribed by the interest in showing the pertinence of Judaic sources to Western thought, and by demonstrating the ontological roots of anti-Semitism. Lévinas does this very well. But when it comes to showing how Western civilization is partial against the many colonial others Lévinas responds simply by stating the idea that these others are the victims of the same anti-semitism, the same hate of the Other man.[61] For Lévinas the Jew denotes both the possibility of epistemic transformation, and the more general category of oppression. In their suffering and marginalization all the colonized are Jews. Now, why is it that Western civilization persecutes the Jews? Persecution is connected to religion and the possibility of epistemic transformation. What the Jew introduces in Western culture is for Lévinas what makes the Jew unique as Jew, that is, an ethics of ultimate responsibility for the other human being. The Jew has been elected by God to serve others, and thus to remind others of their responsibility to others.[62] For Lévinas the problem with Western civilization does not reside in the forgetfulness of Being, but in persecution against the Jews. Such persecution is natural in a context where the demands for preservation and conservation overshadow those of ethics and radical responsibility for the other, or so argues Lévinas.

At the end, thus, Lévinas addresses the selectivity of domination, but his account is severely limited by his philosophical and religious vision as well as by the more or less exclusive concern with the identity of the Jews, particularly European Jews and those

in Israel.[63] Unfortunately, ethnic affiliation and religious commitment take the place of careful socio-historical analysis. There is a heavy investment on the idea of the West that blinds Lévinas to the various forms of oppression, colonial experiences, imperial legacies, sites of struggle and epistemic change. To be sure, this blindness is not unique to Lévinas. I suggest that it is best understood as a constitutive feature of modernity and postmodernity as such. For this reason, it is not surprising to see a similar logic in place in other texts that I have discussed such as Negri's *Job* and Hardt and Negri's *Empire*.

Negri's search for answers in the Book of Job and his particular interpretation of the text also show how a commitment with the West, in this case through Western Christianity, can blind an intellectual in regard to the logic of coloniality. In the introduction to *Job* Negri writes,

> "Since *we were* like Job, who fought against the powers that enslave and dominate the world and against the misery that the strongest and cruelest create, there was a need to insist on a relation between one body and another similar to that which Job had with God.
>
> From this point of view it is easy to understand the importance of the belief of the Christian Fathers of antiquity, who saw Job as a prefigurement of Christ: like *us*, he crossed the desert so that he could achieve a higher level of life, an absolutely materialist redemption, which means the happiness of revolutionizing the world."[64]

Peculiar in this passage is the way in which Negri substitutes a vague "we" with subjects who are in inescapable positions of suffering like Job. This gesture contrasts sharply with other readings of Job who see in Job's answers to God a discovery of the innocence of the suffering of others and a commitment with the plight of those who seem to be condemned by a situation that they did not create nor called for.[65] In his critical engagement with Hardt and Negri, Timothy Brennan has also pointed out the strangeness and peculiarity in the substitution of this vague "we" of a certain European left with subjects in manifold positions of subordination:

> "Each time any of the new Italians speak of workers they see an image of themselves, although that image is necessarily blurred into constructs that transcend Mexican day laborers, fast-food deliverymen, secretaries, maids, and auto mechanics. That kind of specificity tarnishes the aura of the 'multitude'—a term redolent of the New Testament, embraced by the authors for evading the guilty telos of the working class. But the term *multitude* betrays a reverse teleology, as it were, an etiology that is religious in form: their designated 'multitude fidelium' (429). Negri's political and intellectual formation in 1950's Catholic radicalism in Italy may be worth some mention in this context, although it has received almost no commentary. Most reviewers have had very little to say about Negri's early inspirations in Catholic radicalism—not entirely unrelated to the universal harmony of his later vision."[66]

Like in Lévinas, there is in Hardt and Negri's work a "veiled theology" that takes the place of careful elucidation of the varieties of struggles and existential conditions of subjects with different imperial legacies, different cosmologies, and different aspirations for world and ego transformation. Lévinas's case is most interesting, for while he defies the strictures of the Western philosophical canon, and thus reactivates lessons from the Talmud and the Hebrew Bible in a critical way, he still falls short of observing the coloniality of knowledge at work. Therefore, he does not connect his struggle with that of many other racialized subjects of modernity in a significant way. These are subjects whose bodies and epistemic contributions have been marked, like Lévinas, by the evil of racism. Scholars who specialize on Lévinas typically focus on his contributions to the linguistic turn, reading him in dialogue with Heidegger, Derrida and other figures in continental

philosophy. By approaching Lévinas's work strictly in relation to the genealogy and discipline of Western philosophy, they tend to leave questions about spatiality and coloniality entirely out of their reflections. They thus tend to repeat the same kind of problems that one finds in Lévinas's work. Spatiality, coloniality and the struggle for epistemic diversity are also left aside in Hardt and Negri's conceptualization of Empire and the formation of the "multitude". Accounts such as those of Lévinas and Hardt and Negri fail to recognize the imperative for epistemic and ethical pluriversality in the world. One reason for this is that the metanarratives of Judaism and Christianity are heavily privileged in their writings. While Lévinas identifies racism with anti-Semitism, Hardt and Negri (much more Negri than Hardt, to be sure) can only find St Francis of Assisi as the most adequate example of a communist militant.[67] Hardt and Negri in some way want to vindicate Rome (a Roman [Catholic] rendering of communist utopia), when others insisted on the Black Forest, and yet others in Athens and Jerusalem.

Re-rooting communist hope in Western Christianity became very important for the European left after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Without being able to find a home in the Soviet Union or the traditional communist party, there were not too many choices opened to maintain alive the communist project. There was thus the need for a reconciliation of the European Marxist left with Europe and with Western Christianity. By the time in which such need became urgent, the very idea of Europe had been strongly contested by scholars who, following Fanon's insight about the roots of Europe, turned to criticize heavily the project of European civilization. Like anyone desperately in the search for roots, the left has tended to turn increasingly reactionary, to the point of embracing orthodoxy as an emblem of criticism.[68] The Lacanian Marxist Slavoj Žižek represents the highest expression of the anxiety for roots that has characterized the leftist project in Europe and the USA as well.[69] His search for roots is not totally different from Heidegger's. Like in Heidegger, there is in Žižek's project an extreme critique of Western modernity and an equal attempt to save the West at the same time. The difference is that where Heidegger turned to fascism and Germancentrism, Žižek vindicates Marxism, Eurocentrism and an orthodox version of Western Christianity.[70] This difference, however, only grounds the highest commonality between Heidegger and Žižek: their epistemic racism. For while Heidegger could not think about genuine philosophy out of the German language, Žižek cannot see political radicalism out of the Marxist-Christian diad. As he puts it in *The Puppet and the Dwarf*:

> "My claim here is not merely that I am a materialist through and through, and that the subversive kernel of Christianity is accessible also to a materialist approach; my thesis is much stronger: this kernel is accessible *only* to a materialist approach—and vice versa: to become a true dialectical materialist, one should go through the Christian experience."[71]

Žižek's conservatism is radical, and because of that, it challenges the complacency of conservatives and non-conservatives alike. The radicalism, however, does not hide the amount of epistemic racism; just like Heidegger's suggestive analyses of the problem of technology and nihilism did not hide it either. This racism is evinced in the above passage. Since it does not surface in Žižek's work that there could be truly radical political options beyond the horizons of dialectical materialism then it follows that Christianity is the one and only source of true radicalism. This explains, among many other things, his view of Buddhism. Žižek's views about Christianity and the left gives him licence to engage in a new form of Orientalism that knows no boundaries. After a few pages dedicated to the analysis of the statements of a few Zen Buddhists and a portion of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Žižek assumes enough authority to observe:

> "This means that Buddhist (or Hindu, for that matter) all-encompassing Compassion has to be opposed to Christian intolerance, violent Love. The Buddhist stance is ultimately one of Indifference, of quenching all passions that strive to establish differences; while Christian love is a violent passion to introduce Difference, a gap in the order of being, to privilege and elevate some object at expense of others."[72]

Žižek reifies Buddhism and Christianity and then assigns them intrinsic logics that help to discriminate one from the other just as easily as Heidegger was able to differentiate between philosophical and non-philosophical languages. For Žižek, Oriental spirituality is indifferent to the world and its logic of non-distinction leads its adherent to become complicit with military powers, if not even openly endorse them. Monotheists, are, on the contrary, either tolerant of differences or intolerants of love.[73] The search for roots inhibits the capacity for careful examination of the ways in which that which we call religion never operates in a vacuum. The extremism of Žižek's epistemic racism is manifest in that while he dismisses "Oriental spirituality" because of its affiliations with militarism, he keeps Hegel in his sanctuary even though Hegel remains one of the strongest supporters of war in the Western world.[74]

In contrast to Žižek, who tries to discriminate between discreet entities called religions or spiritualities, I would suggest that the problems with intellectuals such as Lévinas and Negri, who heavily invest in religious visions, is, not so much the religious visions alone by themselves, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, their desire to root themselves in the West. It is an impetus and a project, rather than a discreet religio-ideological source, that blinds them to the darker side of modernity. References to ethics as first philosophy or to nomadic experience do not hide the tautological tendencies that lead many critical thinkers to remain within the strict limits of the Western canon. To be sure, the problem with Christianity and to some extent Judaism is that they have helped to define the West, and thus find themselves implicated in their corrupted roots. This awareness should not lead necessarily to defeatism or despair, but to a heightened sense of responsibility that helps to bring into view that which the project of European modernity has made invisible in Europe and elsewhere. One of the most obvious missing elements in their reflections is the other less prominent face of the West and monotheism: Islam and the Muslim people.

There are several reasons to introduce the theme of Islam and Muslim peoples here. First, because any talk nowadays of the nature of selective violence on the part of imperial powers or even Empire cannot proceed without at least mentioning them. This is hardly new, but is becoming prominent in post-Cold War years. Now, while it is clear why it won't be adequate to subsume Muslims under the general idea of the multitude (today, the Muslims would be like the dying multitude, the targeted multitude in post-Cold War), why should we expect Lévinas to mention or think about the condition of the Muslims? The first answer to this question is that Lévinas not only lived in times of the Holocaust, but also in times of the cruelly and bloody Franco-Algerian War, which culminated with thousands and thousands of Muslims killed. The second is that the state of Israel has had from its very beginning a sort of imperial relationship with the Palestinians, the majority of whom are Muslim. Today three Palestinians have died for every single Israeli. The third reason is more intriguing. What Lévinas fails to mention, but what Primo Levi does not forget is that Musselman, Muselmanner or Muslim was a term "that inmates of the Nazi camps gave to a certain category of Jews in the camps who were ready to die". Primo Levi writes:

> "But with the Musselmans, the men in decay, it is not even worth speaking . . . Even less worthwhile is it to make friends with them, because they have no distinguished acquaintance in camp, they do

> not gain any extra rations . . . in a few weeks nothing will remain of them but a handful of ashes in some near-by field and a crossed out number on a register. Although engulfed and swept along without the rest by the innumberable crowd of those similar to them, they suffer and drag themselves along in an opaque intimate solitude, and in solitude they die or disappear, without leaving a trace in anyone's memory."[75]

The Musselmans are "those who have no story, they follow the slope down to the bottom, like streams that run down to the sea".[76] In fact Levi is more haunting when he says that the Musselmans are "non-men who march and labor in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand".[77] As the scholar of Medieval Islam and Islamic Law Ebrahim Moosa puts it following Levi's insights, in this context the meaning of Muslim takes the connotation of "the weak, the inept, those doomed to selection, the truly damned of history".[78]

The demonization of Muslim subjects is not the exclusive result of 19th-century European imperial enterprises. The forgetfulness of the epistemic contributions of Islam and its exclusion as a relevant source of the West goes well beyond Lévinas's Judaism, Negri's Roman Catholic background or Žižek's orthodoxy. If Mignolo is right that the imaginary of the modern/colonial world "arose in the process of establishing the colonial differences on the southern frontier of the Mediterranean (with the Arabic world) and on the western frontier of the Atlantic (with the Amerindians)" then these features may be very much part of the very idea of the modern West.[79] They have defined and continued to define the horizon of modernity, and with it, legitimate intellectual work, policy and common sense. This is evinced in geopolitical dynamics today when the Western world (the USA and Europe) is once more in conflict with the Middle East. The "war against terror" has also led to inter-occidental dynamics, which seem to corroborate Heidegger's concern about the "threat" of US Americanism to the European world.

Today, just like Europe in the 16th century, the emerging empire is remaking the boundaries and borders that will define the new imperial order. Similar to Europe itself the new empire is raising "in the process of establishing the colonial differences on the southern frontier of the Mediterranean [and the Middle East] (with the Arabic world) and on the [South-] western frontier of the Atlantic". That the reassertion and rearticulation of these differences break in some ways the political model of the relationship between empire and colony does not reduce their significance and power. The logic of coloniality helped not only to interpret terrorist attacks as acts of war, but also to provide the moral authority for a political leader to publicly map an "axis of evil". The attack to the Empire's city (or city of the Empire State) led to the creation of the Office for Homeland Security, which came to target not only people coming to the USA from abroad but also all those foreigners within who are seen as threats to the Homeland. Following a similar logic to that which led to interpreting acts of terror as acts of war, the border between the USA and Mexico has gradually become militarized.[80] Both Iraq and the US–Mexico border have become death zones. Borders appear in our world as death maps of empire. Discourse around the idea of defence of the Homeland, which echoes Heidegger's beloved *Heimat*, furthers racist geopolitics and leads to the justification of military aggressions, which are conceived as missionary work. America has to be defended from evil men who come from evil places. The Middle East and Latin America are first in line, along with those other liminal subjects of Western modernities (Africans, blacks, indigenous peoples and people of colour more generally).

US discourse on evil is simultaneously articulated with a prayer for the Homeland ("God bless America"). US Americanism

grounds the logic of coloniality on the old and traditional onto-theology which assigns a primary role to God, goodness and evil. From this perspective one can understand Heidegger's fear of the USA. While his Germancentrism is ontological and anchors Europe at its very centre, US Homeland metaphysics represents a regression back to onto-theology and a relocation of the heart of the West from Europe to America. It is from this re-located centre of the West that new global designs are being produced. The American Dream today, as it is adopted by the state, is expressed by the desire to achieve the global *pax Americana*, one in which US ideals of sociality, government and life become regulative ideals for the people of the globe. Islam is acceptable when it rather looks like the kind of Christianity that US Americans practice. Islam is recognized as a "religion of peace". Multiculturalism hides in this way a deeper multiracism that only recognizes the right for difference when peoples are well domesticated by capitalism, the market economy and liberal ideals of freedom and equality. Policy (both foreign and national) follows the contours of a division between blessedness and evil, the site of God on the earth (Western civilization that has found its reach in American soil) and the sites of evil. This is the new face of the logic of coloniality; a face that, as Heidegger feared, was not going to leave Europe intact.

As I discussed earlier, the idea of Europe emerged not only through the production of colonial differences, but also, as Mignolo indicates, through imperial differences between Northern and Southern Europe. Heidegger's Germancentrism and the metaphysics of *Mitteleuropa* were the reflection of a political project that sought to reconstitute imperial differences. Hitler showed very clearly how societies with an imperial past respond to their marginalization. He responded with a vengeance: he sought to redraw imperial differences in favour of Germany. Heidegger was one of the most sophisticated intellectuals who helped to advance this cause by formulating a similar project at the epistemic level. When Heidegger talked in front of audiences in France or Italy, he emphasized the need for European unity in front of the Asiatic and the American menace. Europe was between Asia and America, just like Germany was in the middle of Europe. A call to defend Europe followed the same logic as his Germancentrism.

Today, there is no longer an Asiatic menace—or rather, perhaps, it has now a Middle Eastern rather than a Soviet face. Gradually, as the USA asserts itself as the only uncontested hegemon on the globe, Heidegger's nightmare begins to become a reality. Europe begins to fade in the shadow of irrelevance. Instead of achieving salvation through an intimate association with a strong Germany, Europe, regarded by many for so long as the beacon of Western civilization and the climax of human rationality, loses its previous envious geopolitical relevance. An *ad hoc* "coalition of the willing" (or as some have put it, coalition of the billing) proved to be enough to gain the artificial moral and political authority that the USA needs to advance its imperial excursions. Southern Europe (particularly, Spain and Portugal) has joined sides with the USA. This move helps to address the logic of internal European imperial differences that rendered Southern Europe irrelevant in the geopolitics of the last 200 years. Now they form part of what the USA has referred to as the New Europe, which also consists of Eastern European countries that have come to form part of the European Union. The USA is reinforcing colonial differences (with Latin America and the Middle East) and redrawing imperial differences (with Europe and the Soviet Union). The North of Europe/South of Europe divide is also being reconstituted as the Old Europe/New Europe binary. New Europe refers to those who favour the uncontested hegemon; old Europe is the name of those in Europe who do not conform to their position in the new world order.

The rearticulation of imperial geopolitics by the USA, which has led to certain

instability in the European Union, explains why Europeans have had to reformulate their own metaphysics of the Homeland. Very recently, a German and a French philosopher, Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, joined to call for common foreign policy "beginning in the core of Europe". As the threat that Heidegger feared became real these two thinkers joined forces in the effort to resist their now obvious political subalternization. Habermas and Derrida attempt to show "what binds Europeans together" by articulating the "historical *roots* of a political profile".[81] Heidegger would probably be both happy and dissatisfied if he were alive today: happy because the project of searching for roots is still alive in Europe; dissatisfied because Germany has succumbed to France and has included it as part of the "core" of Europe.

Bypassing the much relevant divide for German romanticism between French ideas of civilization and Germany's *Kultur*, the figure that bridges France and Germany is the most renown German figure of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant. Kant's work brings France and Germany together while also promoting global institutions of authority, which, translated into the present, would counter US unilateralism. Habermas and Derrida do not interrogate the ties of Kant with the imperial mentality of his times or the way in which their "plea for a common foreign policy, beginning in the core of Europe" has all the problematic ties with a tradition of searching for roots in Europe.[82] In a very condescending gesture Habermas and Derrida write that Europeans "could learn from the perspective of the defeated to perceive themselves in the dubious role of victors who are called to account for the violence of a forcible and uprooting process of modernization. This could support the rejection of Eurocentrism, and inspire the Kantian hope for a global domestic policy".[83] In their reference to "victors" called to account for the "uprooting process of modernity" it would seem that Habermas and Derrida have more Heidegger in mind than former colonized peoples. It is also as if they are responding more to the complaints of German romantics who were very critical of the Enlightenment, than to colonized peoples everywhere. They reduce the challenges of Europe's imperial past to the "uprooting of modernity", a process to which Europeans, among others, have being victims. They cannot see the peculiarity of the challenge that emerges in the colonial world. That is why they posit the search for roots at the core of Europe as a response to the marginalization of Europe. Fanon's statement remains as significant today as it was when Heidegger was forging his mythical project of searching for roots:

> "For centuries [Europeans] have stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience. Look at them today swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration . . . Europe now lives at such a mad, reckless pace that she has shaken off all guidance and reason . . . It is in the name of the spirit, in the name of the spirit of Europe, that Europe has made her encroachment, has justified her crimes and legitimized the slavery in which she holds four-fifths of humanity. Yes, the European spirit has strange roots."[84]

Until figures like Habermas and Derrida come to terms with this statement, I believe that it will be impossible for them to overcome the epistemic racism that continues today through so many different means.

Habermas and Derrida at most gesture toward a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism. Instead of challenging the racist geopolitics of knowledge that have become so central to Western discourse, they continue it by other means. Why not engaging seriously Muslim intellectuals?[85] Why not trying to understand the deeply theoretical claims that have emerged in contexts that have known European coloniality? Why not breaking with the model of the universal or global and furthering the growth of

an epistemically diverse world?[86] Fanon did not do all these things, but in some ways he set a mark below which theorists and intellectuals should not allow themselves to go. His radicalism was about a critique of the roots, which was inspired by the need to respond to the *damned of the earth*. The concepts of coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being follow Fanon's radicalism. Yet they also can become problematic if they do not make space for the enunciation of non-Western cosmologies and for the expression of different cultural, political and social memories. Radical critique should take dialogical forms. It should also take the form of radical self-questioning and radical dialogue. The project of searching for roots would be, in this regard, subordinated to the project of criticizing the roots that maintain alive the dominant topology of Being and the racist geopolitics of knowledge. Radical diversality would involve the effective divorce and critique of the roots that inhibit dialogue and the formulation of a decolonial and non-racist geopolitics of knowledge. Part of the challenge is to think seriously about Fort-de-France, Quito, La Paz, Baghdad and Algiers, not only Paris, Frankfurt, Rome or New York as possible sites of knowledge. We also need to think about those who are locked in positions of subordination, and try to understand both the mechanisms that create the subordination and those that hide their reality from view to others. There is much in the world to learn from others who have been rendered invisible by modernity. This moment should be more about examining our complicity with old patterns of domination and searching for invisible faces, than about searching for imperial roots; more about radical critique than about orthodox alignments against what are persistently conceived as the barbarians of knowledge.

In an essay written in 1955 in response to Ernst Jünger's attempt to map nihilism and responses to it, Heidegger wrote:

> "Certainly a *topography of nihilism* is required, of its process and its overcoming. Yet the topography must be preceded by a *topology*: a discussion locating the locale which gathers being and nothing into their essence, determines the essence of nihilism, and thus lets us recognize those paths on which the ways toward a possible overcoming of nihilism emerge."[87]

Through an analysis of Heidegger's implicit topology of Being, which is inscribed in his geopolitics, I have suggested that the apparent neutrality of philosophical ideas can very well hide an implicit imperial cartography that merges race and space. Racism—in the form of the *forgetfulness of damnation*, epistemic racism and many other forms—is more widespread than often thought. It is inscribed into the cartography of what is often considered to be consistent philosophical work and critical thinking. Beyond biological justifications of racism, or justifications based on differences in culture or manners, one can find in some influential trends in Western thought a more subtle ontological and epistemological justification. The implications are nefarious since the merging of race and space is behind imperial and military conceptions of spatiality that tend to give new meaning to Augustine's classical account of the earthly and heavenly cities: the difference between the City of God and the Earthly City of Men is translated into the divide between the imperial cities of the human gods and the cities of the damned. Unfortunately, the search for roots in Europe and racist geopolitics often go hand in hand.

The project of searching for roots in Europe also leads, or so I have argued in this essay, to dismissal of the larger geopolitical relations at work in the very formation of modernity. Against this systemic amnesia, Fanon proposes an-other geopolitics. While Heidegger attempts to find roots in the earth, and Lévinas grounds philosophy in two cities (Athens and Jerusalem), Fanon opens up a path of reflection that takes colonial differences as a point of departure for critical

thinking. A critical account of the European topology of Being and its geopolitics of knowledge should lead, or so I have attempted to make clear here, to render visible what has remained invisible or marginal so far and to uncover how categories of damnation work—e.g. the black, the Jew and the Muslim. It is for this purpose that concepts such as modernity/coloniality, coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of Being have been formulated. These are only a few of the concepts that would have to become part of a decolonial grammar of critical analysis which would recognize its own vulnerability by being open to critical accounts based on the experiences and memories of peoples who have confronted modernity/racism in any of its forms.

Notes and references

1 I presented an earlier version of this essay under the title "Imperio y colonialidad del ser" at the Annual Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association in Dallas, Texas on 29 March 2003. I would like to thank the members of the Dialogical Ethics and Critical Cosmopolitanism Group at Duke University for offering a wonderful context to test alternative ideas in radical political thought. I also thank Eduardo Mendieta for comments on a second version of the essay and for crucial recommendations for further expansion. I would like to dedicate this essay to the group of young philosophers who 30 years ago put forward in an explicit form some of the ideas that appear here concerning the location of Being and knowledge. They were Osvaldo Ardíles, Hugo Assmann, Mario Casalla, Horacio Cerutti, Carlos Cullen, Julio de Zan, Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Fornari, Daniel Guillot, Antonio Kinen, Rodolfo Kusch, Diego Pró, Agustín de la Riega, Arturo Roig and Juan Carlos Scannone. See their collective work, Osvaldo Ardíles *et al.* (1973) *Hacia una filosofía de la liberación latinoamericana*. Buenos Aires: BONUM. This work formulates original critiques and advances alternatives to the racist geopolitics of knowledge and the topology of Being that will be critically investigated in this essay. It is to a great extent a testament to such problematic geopolitics that their work has remained unknown to many for so long.

2 de la Riega, A.T. (1973) 'América fuera del centro: del privilegio y de la culpa', in Ardíles *et al.*, p. 216, my translation. The original reads "Hasta hoy, fundamentación filosófica a través del ser, ha significado fundamentación a través del Centro. 'El ser' ha sido, en verdad, el Centro. Y 'el pensar' ha sido el Pensar Central. En el Centro se han unido. Fuera del Centro: lo ente, lo contingente, lo subdesarrollado, que sólo a través del Centro pudo ser reconocido. Toda la metafísica viene imponiendo una fundamentación a través del Centro. Toda la teoría del conocimiento viene imponiendo un Centro Iluminador. Toda la ética, un Centro por el que los valores valgan."

3 Of course, there are exceptions to this. Perhaps the most obvious of which is Hegel who combined temporality and spatiality in his account of Spirit. To be sure, such Spirit reached a climax in Europe and had America as a future horizon. See Hegel, G.W.F. (1991) *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books. For a critical analysis of Hegel's views on America see Casalla, M. (1992) *América en el pensamiento de Hegel: admiración y rechazo*. Buenos Aires: Catálogos. For an alternative account of world history from an "American" point of view see Dussel, E. (1995) *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. M.D. Barber. New York: Continuum.

4 There are other modalities of this. With an acute perception of the undergirding commitment of the discipline of philosophy with Europe as an epistemic site, a group of young Latin American philosophers met in Argentina during the 1970s to discuss the relevance of space for philosophy and the possibility of grounding philosophical reflection in Latin America, not Europe (see Note 1). In a similar vein, US philosophers in the late 1980s turned to pragmatism as a way to articulate a US philosophy. While these two projects share with European philosophy a particular tendency to search for roots that are not without problems, the Latin American group has tended to be more cosmopolitan than the US one—this is particularly evinced in the work of Enrique Dussel. The Latin American group was also more critical of liberalism than its US counterpart. I discussed some of these issues in 'Envisioning postcolonial philosophies in the Americas: the cases of pragmatism and Latin American liberation thought', presented in the Plenary Session of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, Denver, Colorado, 15 March 2003. Some of the ideas presented are included in Maldonado-Torres, N. (forthcoming) 'Toward a critique of continental reason: Africana studies and the decolonization of imperial cartographies in the Americas', in L.R. Gordon and J.A. Gordon (eds) *Companion to African-American Studies*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

5 See Heidegger, M. (1996) *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. J. Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press.
6 For reflections on Heidegger's turn see Risser, J. (1999) *Heidegger Toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
7 Bambach, C. (2003) *Heidegger's Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism, and the Greeks*, p. 6. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
8 *ibid.*, p. 137.
9 *ibid.*, p. 52.
10 *ibid.*, p. 116.
11 Bambach's account of Heidegger's *Heimat* metaphysics contrasts with the vision of spatiality and existence that according to Alejandro Vallega can be located in Heidegger's work. Unlike Bambach's, Vallega's project is more constructive and philosophical than historical or archaeological. But given Bambach's meticulous search for the Heideggerian conception of "roots", Vallega clearly has to demonstrate the extent to which he can truly attribute to Heidegger a concept of "exilic grounds". He also has to show with precision how this conception of space is ultimately not complicit with Heidegger's racist geopolitics. See Vallega, A. (2003) *Heidegger and the Issue of Space: Thinking on Exilic Grounds*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University.
12 Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, p. 112.
13 *ibid.*, p. 117.
14 Heidegger, M. (1993) ' "Only a God can save us": *Der Spiegel's* interview with Martin Heidegger (1966)', in R. Wolin (ed.) *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, p. 113. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.
15 Césaire, A. (1972) *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. J. Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press.
16 For an elucidation of the imperial difference between Northern and Southern Europe see Mignolo, W. (2000) *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
17 See Heidegger, M. (1993) 'Europa und die deutsche Philosophie', in H.H. Gander (ed.) *Europa und die Philosophie*, p. 31. Frankfurt: Klostermann. Quoted in Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, pp. 167–168.
18 Heidegger, M. (1996) *Hölderlin's Hymn 'The Ister'*, trans. W. McNeill, p. 54. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Quoted in Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, p. 177.
19 Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, p. 163.
20 *ibid.*, p. 5.
21 Quoted in Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, p. 53.
22 Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, p. 53.
23 Lévinas, E. (1969) *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
24 I have developed this point in my unpublished manuscript 'Against war: views from the underside of modernity'.
25 Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, pp. 177–178.
26 Fanon, F. (1991) *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. C. Farrington, p. 312. New York: Grove Press. Quoted in Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, p. 178.
27 Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, p. 178.
28 See, on this point, Fanon, F. (1968) *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. C.L. Markmann. New York: Grove Press.
29 See Fanon, F. (1965) *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. H. Chevalier. New York: Grove Press; Fanon, F. (1988) *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*, trans. H. Chevalier. New York: Grove Press.
30 *Fanonian Meditations* is the title of my book project in progress.
31 Scholars who have formed part of these conversations include Santiago Castro-Gómez, Fernando Coronil, Enrique Dussel, Arturo Escobar, Ramón Grosfoguel, Edgardo Lander, Eduardo Mendieta, Walter Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano, Ana Margarita Cervantes-Rodríguez, José David Saldívar, Freya Schiwy and Catherine Walsh among others. Walter Mignolo originally suggested the concept of coloniality of being. All the participants in the conversations do not necessarily share the same enthusiasm with the concept.
32 See Dussel, E. (1996) *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. and ed. E. Mendieta. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities; Quijano, A. (2000) 'Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America', *Nepantla: Views from South* 1(3), pp. 533–580.
33 I am referring here to Habermas's proposal in Habermas, J. (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. F. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT, among others.
34 Blaut, J.M. (1993) *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*, p. 15. New York: The Guilford Press.
35 See Mignolo, *Local Histories*.
36 This is true of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, among others. I examine some of the limits of post-colonial criticism in Maldonado-Torres, N. (forthcoming) 'Secularism and religion in the modern/colonial world-system: from secular postcoloniality to postsecular transmodernity', in M. Moraña, C. Jauregui and E. Dussel (eds) *Postcoloniality at Large*.

37 Quijano, A. and Wallerstein, I. (1992) 'Americanity as a concept or the Americas in the modern world-system', *International Social Science Journal* 134, pp. 549–550.

38 References to modern Britain and India appear in van der Veer, P. (2001) *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, p. 7. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

39 See Wynter, S. (1995) '1492: a new world view', in V. Lawrence Hyatt and R. Nettleford (eds) *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press; Wynter, S. (2000) 'Africa, the West, and the analogy of culture: the cinematic text after man', in J. Givanni (ed.) *Symbolic Narratives/African Cinema*. London: British Film Institute. See also Mudimbe, V.Y. (1988) *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; London: James Currey.

40 While Wynter's conceptions of modernity, race and power emerge from the tradition of W.E.B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon, Quijano's theorizing of these concepts can be traced back to Latin American dependency theory and the work of José Carlos Mariátegui. Wynter and Quijano are "heretics" of post-structuralism and Marxism, respectively. More dialogue among these "heretical" traditions of criticism is much needed. I use the concept of heresy in the sense that Anthony Bogues develops it in Bogues, A. (2003) *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals*. New York: Routledge. Among Quijano and Wynter's works see especially Quijano, 'Coloniality of power', and Wynter, '1492'. Further references to the emergence of race in the 16th century can be found in Mignolo, W. (2003) 'Second thoughts on *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*: afterword to the second edition', in *Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, pp. 428–433. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

41 Quijano, 'Coloniality of power', pp. 532–533.

42 See Quijano, A. (2001) 'Globalización, colonialidad y democracia', in Instituto de Altos Estudios Diplomáticos 'Pedro Gual' (ed.) *Tendencias básicas de nuestra época: globalización y democracia*, pp. 25–28. Caracas: Instituto de Altos Estudios Diplomáticos 'Pedro Gual'.

43 Mignolo, W. (2002) 'José de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*: Occidentalism, the Modern/Colonial World, and the Colonial Difference', in *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* by José de Acosta, Ed. Jayne E. Morgan p. 452. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, italics in original.

44 Mignolo, W. (2003) 'Os esplendores e as misérias da "ciência": colonialidade, geopolítica do conhecimento e pluri-versalidade epistémica', in Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.) *Conhecimento Prudente para uma Vida Decente: Um Discurso sobre as Ciências' revistado*, p. 632. Porto, Portugal: Edições Afrontamento.

45 For explorations of the coloniality of knowledge see Lander, E. (ed.) (1993) *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

46 Mignolo, 'Os esplendores', p. 633.

47 See Negri, A. (2003) *Job: la fuerza del esclavo*, trans. A. Bixio, p. 33. Buenos Aires: Paidós. I am translating from the Spanish translation of the text: 'Porque el libro de Job no es solo una provocación contra la seducción de la razón, sino también el descubrimiento fenomenológico y la declaración metafísica del desastre al que conduce la coherencia de la razón instrumental. La tragedia sitia al Ser y el dolor se introduce en sus fibras más íntimas. Lo desmesurado no puede nombrarse, y si uno intenta hacerlo, la razón, encerrándose sobre sí misma, se confunde y enloquece. La tragedia no puede ser vivida y mucho menos manipulada, ni dominada, pues domina todas las perspectivas, bloquea todas las vías de escape, demuele todos los instrumentos de salvación. Esto es lo que le sucede a Job y se trata de un obstáculo realmente difícil de superar. Un obstáculo que se renueva incesantemente en la historia, exasperado por el presente: cómo creer en la razón después de Auschwitz e Hiroshima? Cómo continuar siendo comunista después de Stalin?' (p. 33).

48 I have worked through the concept of the limits and the excess of Being in relation to evil in the Conclusion of my doctoral dissertation. Maldonado-Torres, N. (2001) 'Thinking from the limits of Being: Lévinas, Fanon, Dussel and the "Cry of Ethical Revolt" ', PhD dissertation, Brown University.

49 See Jones, W.R. (1998) *Is God a White Racist?: A Preamble to Black Theology*. Boston: Beacon Press.

50 Lévinas, E. (1982) *De l'évasion*. Fata Morgana, p. 99, translation and italics mine.

51 Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2000) *Empire*, p. xiv. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

52 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 190.

53 Wynter, '1492', p. 40.

54 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 195.

55 The case of Tariq Ramadan is of relevance here. See, among recent others, relevant articles in *Le Monde*, 23 December 2003 and Sciolino, E. (2003) 'A Muslim scholar raises hackles in France', *New York Times*, 16 November. Ramadan's works include Ramadan, T. (1999) *Muslims in France: The Way Towards Coexistence*.

Marksfield, Leicester: Islamic Foundation; Ramadan, T. (2004) *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Among his critics count "nouveau philosophes" like Bernard-Henri Lévy who, in so many respects, reproduce some of the most problematic aspects in the project of some other French Jewish thinkers, such as Lévinas.

56 See Jones, *Is God a White Racist?*

57 I owe the concept logic of coloniality to Walter Mignolo.

58 See Quijano, 'Coloniality of power'.

59 Hardt and Negri develop the comparison between the idea of the "people" and that of the "multitude" in Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2003) 'Globalization and democracy', in S. Aronowitz and H. Gautney (eds) *Implicating Empire: Globalization and Resistance in the 21st Century World Order*. New York: Basic Books.

60 I elaborate these ideas in 'On the coloniality of Being', unpublished lectured delivered at the Center for Global Studies in the Humanities at Duke University on 5 November 2003.

61 See dedicatory in Lévinas, E. (1998) *Otherwise than Being or, Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press (translation of *Autrement qu'être ou, Au-delà de l'essence*, 1974).

62 See Lévinas, E. (1990) *Nine Talmudic Readings*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

63 Alternatives to these exclusivist tendencies are found in projects of Jewish figures from the Caribbean, Latin America and the USA like Jane Anna Gordon, Lewis Gordon and Santiago Slabodsky.

64 Negri, *Job*, p. 20, italics mine. The Spanish translation reads: "Ahora bien, Spinoza comienza donde termina Job: comienza viendo a Dios, es decir, en el punto en que Job termina su recorrido. Se trataba, pues, de insistir en un cuerpo a cuerpo semejante al que Job había tenido con Dios, ya que *nosotros éramos*, en efecto y nuevamente, como unos Jobs que luchaban contra los poderes que dominan el mundo y lo esclavizan, contra la miseria a la que lo someten los mandatos de los más fuertes y los más crueles. Bien se comprende entonces hasta qué punto fue importante la prefiguración de Cristo que los Padres Cristianos de la antigüedad reconocieron en Job: también el, *como nosotros*, atravesó el desierto a fin de reconquistar la vida en un nivel más elevado, en una redención absolutamente materialista, lo cual significa la alegría de revolucionar el mundo" (p. 20).

65 See Gutiérrez, G. (1987) *On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books; Nemo, P. and Lévinas, E. (1998) *Job and the Excess of Evil*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

66 Brennan, T. (2003) 'The empire's new clothes', *Critical Inquiry* 29, pp. 364–365.

67 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 413.

68 See the chapter 'The "Thrilling Romance of Orthodoxy" ', in Žižek, S. (2003) *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, pp. 34–57. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Žižek's views on orthodoxy are related to his conversations with John Milbank and other thinkers of the radical orthodoxy project. For a general view on the project of radical orthodoxy see Milbank, J., Pickstock, C. and Ward, G. (eds) (1999) *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*. London: Routledge.

69 In the USA it has been more patriotism, than Christianity itself, which has served as the bedrock for pragmatist liberalists of leftist leanings like Richard Rorty and Cornel West. See particularly Rorty, R. (1998) *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-century America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; West, C. (1989) *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press. I critically analyse these trends in Maldonado-Torres, N. (forthcoming) 'Toward a critique of continental reason', in *Companion to African-American Studies*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

70 See, especially, Žižek, S. (2000) *The Fragile Absolute or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting for?* London: Verso; Žižek, S. (1998) 'A leftist plea for "Eurocentrism" ', *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 24.

71 Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, p. 6. This thesis complements ideas that Žižek had already explored in Žižek, S. (1999) 'The politics of truth, or Alain Badiou as reader of Paul', *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, pp. 127–170. London: Verso.

72 Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, p. 33.

73 Žižek writes "[T]rue monotheists are tolerant: for them, others are not objects of hatred, but simply people who, although they are not enlightened by the true belief, should nonetheless be respected, since they are not inherently evil" (Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, p. 27).

74 Žižek's double standard concerning his critique of the "Orient" and the soft treatments of figures like Hegel become clear in reflections on Zen Buddhism in *The Puppet and the Dwarf* and his defence of Hegel in Žižek, S. (2002) 'I plead guilty—but where is the judgment?', *Nepantla: Views from South* 3(3) pp. 579–583. See also William D. Hart's critical engagements with Žižek in Hart, W.D. (2002) 'Slavoj Žižek and the imperial/colonial model of religion', *Nepantla: Views from South* 3(3), pp. 553–578. See also Hart's rejoinder in Hart, W.D. (2003) 'Can a judgment be read? A response to Žižek', *Nepantla: Views from South* 4(1) pp. 191–194.

75 Levi, P. (1986) *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, p. 89. New York: Touchstone Books.
76 Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, p. 90.
77 *ibid.*
78 E-mail communication on 2 December 2003.
79 Mignolo, 'José de Acosta's *Historia*', p. 466.
80 On the problem of the rebordering of the US Homeland see Andreas, P. and Biersteker, T.J. (eds) (2003) *The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context*. New York: Routledge. I thank José Palafox for the reference. See also the video *The New World Border* (2001), produced and edited by Casey Peek, associate producer José Palafox (Berkeley, CA: Peek Media, 28 min).
81 Habermas, J. and Derrida, J. (2003) 'February 15, or what binds Europeans together: a plea for a common foreign policy, beginning in the core of Europe', *Constellations* 10(3), p. 295, emphasis mine.
82 For critical analyses of Kant that take into consideration some of these issues see Coles, R. (1997) *Rethinking Generosity: Critical Theory and the Politics of Caritas*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Eze, E.C. (1997) 'The color of reason: the idea of 'race' in Kant's anthropology', in E.C. Eze (ed.) *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, pp. 103–140. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
83 Habermas and Derrida, 'February 15', p. 297.
84 Fanon, *The Wretched*, p. 312.
85 To their credit the mostly European- and Latin American-based Academy of Latinity, whose members include Candido Mendes, Mario Soares and Gianni Vattimo, among several others, has begun to focus on questions of intercultural dialogue. The group has already met in Tehran and will meet in Alexandria, Egypt to exchange ideas on this topic with Muslim scholars. Important moves in this direction also include Buck-Morss, S. (2003) *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*. London: Verso. Buck-Morss has participated in meetings of the Academy of Latinity. The Academy of Latinity has forged in this way a refreshing relationship among European, Latin American, Middle Eastern and US scholars.
86 References to diversality appear in Glissant, E. (1998) 'Le divers du monde est imprevisible', Keynote address at the conference Beyond Dichotomies, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, 8–10 May. See also Mignolo, *Local Histories*, pp. 26, 244, 273.
87 Heidegger, M. (1998) 'On the question of being', in McNeill, W. (ed.) *Pathmarks*, pp. 311–312. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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