

Discourses of Decolonization/Decoloniality

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The decolonization/decoloniality of the twenty-first century should not be confused with postmodernism and postcolonialism, which cascaded from the powerful Euro-North American academies as well as from the influence of South Asian Subaltern Studies collective.¹ In *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory: African Inflections* and *Out of Africa: Post-Structuralism's Colonial Roots*, in fact, Pal Ahluwalia highlights the African roots (Maghreb region) of postcolonialism as he grappled with the writings of Jacques Derrida and Helene Cixous (born in French-colonial Algeria) as well as Michel Foucault (who spent time in Tunisia). What is poignant is that while postcolonialism and postmodernism have multiple valences, the former is used mainly with reference to the “non-Western” world and the later to “Western/white world” (Adesanmi 74). Because of their ubiquity with North American scholarship, Pius Adesanmi depicted postcolonialism and postmodernism as products of “the suffocating influence of North American high theory over the global production of meaning and identity” (74). Postmodernism and postcolonialism not only challenged grand/meta-narratives but also transcendental cultural commonalities and transcendental identities created by such movements as Ethiopianism, Garveyism, Negritude, Harlem Renaissance, pan-Africanism, African nationalisms, and other black consciousness formations and identity-forming projects. Decolonization/decoloniality returns to the violence of Euromo-

¹The canonical texts on postcolonialism and postmodernism include Guha; Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”; Lyotard; Bhabha; and Cook, Glickman, and O’Malley.

dernity and underscores coloniality (the transhistoric expansion of colonial domination and the perpetuation of its effects in contemporary times) as a key problem in the modern world.²

While postcolonialism and postmodernism underscored the “cultural turn,” decolonization/decoloniality is predicated on the “decolonial turn,” which is traceable to the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 that was ranged against enslavement and racism (dehumanization). Its intellectual genealogy embraces Diaspora pan-African movements and continental intellectual-cum-ideological/identity formations such as Garveyism and early black consciousness iterations such as Negritude.³ This is why Nelson Maldonado-Torres defined decoloniality a “family” of thought that identified modernity/colonialism/coloniality as a foundation of some of the major problems haunting in the modern world (“Thinking” 2).

The intention of colonialism was destroying other civilizations rather than blending different worlds, but this failed because colonial encounters became a site not only of contestation but also inevitable blending. This blending is well-articulated by Dipesh Chakrabarty, who demonstrated how European and Indian ideas intersected to reinforce the notion of pluralizing reason and concluded that “To provincialise Europe was then to know how universalistic thought was always and already modified by particular histories, whether or not we could excavate such pasts full” (xiii-xiv). Chakrabarty’s position is that of postcolonialism and its emphasis on the co-invention of the modern world by the colonizers and the colonized. Colonialism predicated on the paradigms of “difference” and “war,” however, engaged in

²See Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui (2) for further discussion of the urgency of decoloniality in treating modern forms of international domination, especially in the context of Latin America.

³For other examples of these movements see my *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization* and “The Cognitive Empire and the Challenges of Decolonizing the Mind.”

a redefinition of the human species, socially classifying and racially hierarchizing rather than inventing common humanity. Inevitably, what emerged were two zones of being—the zone of being for the colonizers and the zone of non-being for the colonized (Fanon, *Wretched*).⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that the return, resurgence, and insurgence of decolonization/decoloniality once again placed the problem of colonialism and coloniality at the center of global studies as that discursive terrain making it impossible for a postcolonial and post-racial world to be constructed.

Besides identifying modernity/colonialism as the fundamental problem, decolonization/decoloniality challenges the present globalization and its pretensions of universalism, which hides the reality of the Europeanization and Americanization of the modern world. While colonialism and imperialism embarked on an aggressive destruction of existing diverse worlds, they were also equally aggressive in denying common humanity as they invented and created all sorts of pseudo-scientific discourses to divide people racially across the planet and notions of stages of developmentalism to push other human beings below the invented “human line” (Fanon *Wretched*).⁵ What is emerging poignantly today is that decolonization is a much more profound activity and process than simply obtaining political independence; it is a condition of possibility to start a new thinking and doing aimed at a re-humanized world (Maldonado-Torres, “Human Rights”).

This article introduces decolonization/decoloniality as both a political and epistemological movement gesturing towards an attainment of ecologies of knowledges and pluriversality. Ecologies of knowledge is a concept introduced by Boaventura de

⁴For further discussion of this concept see Grosfoguel’s “What is Racism?” and Santos’s “Beyond Abyssal Thinking.”

⁵Grosfoguel’s “What is Racism?” and Santos’s “Beyond Abyssal Thinking” also address this idea.

Sousa Santos that speaks to the recognition of the different ways of knowing by which people across the human globe provide meaning to their existence and understanding of the world (“Beyond Abyssal Thinking”). The concept of pluriversality directly challenges the “one-dimensional solutions to diverse problems and impositions of universal claims to the very nature of humanity” (Reiter, Introduction 1). Pluriversality underscores a world governed by relationality and transcendence over impositions of bourgeois values, knowledge, economic logics, and political perspectives (Escobar, “Transition”).

The concept of pluriversality is drawn from the indigenous movements in Latin America, especially the Zapatista, who envisioned a world in which many worlds would coexist in a pluriverse (Mignolo, “The Zapatistas’s Theoretical Revolution” 273).⁶ This paper begins by opening the canvas on the triple crises haunting the present world at the systemic, epistemic, and ideological levels as it articulates the importance of decoloniality as an endeavor to create a post-globalist, post-capitalist, and post-neoliberal world. It proceeds to redefine colonialism and colonality so as to enable a deeper appreciation of the convergences of decolonization and decoloniality as transformative forces. At the same time, the complex debates on the differences between postcolonialism and decoloniality are articulated. Finally, besides rebutting the postcolonial critique, the paper ends with mapping a decolonial future beyond post-globalism, post-neoliberalism, and post-capitalism.

FRAMING THE ISSUES AND OPENING THE CANVAS

The modern world is facing a triple crisis that is systemic, epistemic, and ideological in character. At the systemic level, one witnesses a global capitalism that is haunted by a terminal crisis, a planetary ecological/environmental crisis, and exploding so-

⁶Escobar and Reiter also examine the concept of the pluriverse.

cial divisions. It was these realities that led Slavoj Žižek to write about “living in the end times.” At the epistemic level, there is clear exhaustion of a once hegemonic knowledge that has been dominant for over five hundred years. This epistemic crisis was well captured by Immanuel Wallerstein:

I believe we live in a very exciting era in the world of knowledge, precisely because we are living in a systemic crisis that is forcing us to reopen the basic epistemological questions and look to structural reorganization of the world of knowledge. It is uncertain whether we shall rise adequately to the intellectual challenge, but it is there for us to address. We engage our responsibility as scientists/scholars in the way in which we address the multiple issues before us at this turning point in our structures of knowledge. (58)

The epistemic crisis is a product of “epistemicides” (killing and displacement of other knowledges) that made the Global North lose “the capacity to learn from the experiences of the world” as well as failure to learn “in noncolonial terms” (Santos, *Epistemologies* 19). There is a glaring loss of “critical nouns” in conventional Eurocentric critical epistemology, which explicitly signifies an epistemic crisis. This point is delivered more powerfully by Boaventura de Sousa Santos:

There was a time when Eurocentric critical theory “owned” a vast set of nouns that marked its difference from conventional or bourgeois theories. These nouns included socialism, communism, revolution, class struggle, dependency, alienation, fetishism of commodities, and so on. In the past thirty years the Eurocentric critical tradition seems to have lost “its” nouns and now distinguishes itself from conventional or bourgeois theories by the adjectives it uses to subvert the meaning of the proper nouns it borrows from such theories. Thus, for instance, if conventional theory speaks of development, critical theory refers to alternative, integral, inclusionary, democratic, or sustainable development; if conventional theory speaks of democracy, critical theory proposes radical, participatory, or deliberative democracy. (*Epistemologies* 33)

Perhaps Frantz Fanon was seeing this epistemic crisis coming when he urged humanity to “turn over a new leaf,” “work out new concepts,” and “try to set afoot a new man” (*Wretched* 78). With regard to the ideological crisis, Michael Neocosmos’s *Thinking*

Freedom in Africa: Towards a Theory of Emancipatory Politics posed important questions:

How are we to begin to think human emancipation in Africa today after the collapse of Marxist, the Third World nationalist as well as the neo-liberal visions of freedom? How are we to conceptualize an emancipatory future governed by a fidelity to the idea of a universal humanity in a context where humanity no longer features within our ambit of thought and when previous ways of thinking emancipation have become obsolete? (xiii)

It is mainly because of these systemic, epistemic, and ideological crises that decoloniality has emerged as a long-standing but suppressed political and epistemological movement aimed at the liberation of (ex-)colonized peoples from global coloniality. It emerged as a way of thinking, knowing, and doing. Decoloniality is part of marginalized but persistent movements that merged from struggles against the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and underdevelopment as constitutive negative elements of hegemonic Euromodernity. As an epistemological movement, it has always been overshadowed by hegemonic intellectual thought and social theories. Decoloniality speaks to the resurgence and insurgence of decolonization movements in those spaces, sites, and locales that experienced racism in its most detestable forms—the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and underdevelopment.

Latin America and Africa are good examples of those sites currently experiencing resurgences and insurgencies of decoloniality. This is so mainly because coloniality continues to wreak havoc in the domains of culture, the psyche, the mind, language, aesthetics, religion, and many others. At one level, decoloniality calls on intellectuals from imperialist countries to undertake “a deimperialization movement by re-examining their own imperialist histories and the harmful impacts those histories have had on the world”; at another level, it urges critical intellectuals from the Global South “to once again deepen and widen decolonization movements, especially in the domains of culture, the psyche and knowledge production” (Chen vii).

This takes us to the discussion of colonialism and coloniality, making clear their differences and convergences.

MODERNITY/COLONIALISM/COLONIALITY

The Latin American modernity/coloniality school of thought departs from the premise that the colonization of the Americas laid the foundation for the rise of Euromodernity and the existing capitalist world economy. This view is well expressed by Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein: “The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas” (549). Colonialism/coloniality constitutes the discursive terrain within which many forms of domination and exploitation rest. Thus, as concepts, colonialism and coloniality have to be clearly understood. Without the reality of colonialism and coloniality there would be no need for decolonization and decoloniality.

For analytical purposes and to gain a deeper understanding of colonialism and coloniality, I discuss in *Epistemic Freedom in Africa* the notion of three empires: the physical empire, the commercial non-territorial empire, and the cognitive empire. The physical empire is the easiest to identify and known because it concretized itself through physical conquest and open administration of conquered territories. Even the “direct” and “indirect” modes of rule left the physical empire exposed.⁷ Mahmood Mamdani’s *Citizen and Subject* examines the details of how Europe ruled Africa, and Walter Rodney previously explained how Europe underdeveloped Africa. The commercial non-territorial empire was named by Kwame Nkrumah as operating through “neo-colonialism.” It was one of the earliest names for the continuation of domination after the end of direct administrative

⁷On “direct” and “indirect” rule see Mamdani’s *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* and *Define and Rule: Native As Political Identity*.

colonialism. The concept of neo-colonialism underscored the continued economic exploitation of resources of the newly “independent” African states by the empires within an undecolonized world economic order. The commercial non-territorial empire and the cognitive empire are inextricably intertwined. The cognitive empire/metaphysical empire operates through the invasion of the mental universe of its victims, in the process emptying and removing the very hard disk of previous African memory and downloading into African minds the software of European memory.⁸ To borrow a concept from Ashis Nandy, the cognitive empire lives and subsists within the victim’s body and mind as “the intimate enemy.”

Besides theorization, African scholars have historicized colonialism as they endeavored to highlight its depth and pervasiveness. Ali A. Mazrui argued that the long-term impact of colonialism on Africa can be understood from two perspectives. He designated the first perspective as the epic school, which underscored the fact that colonialism amounted to “a revolution of epic propositions” (12). Mazrui identified six deep implications and consequences of colonialism. Firstly, colonialism and capitalism forcibly incorporated Africa into the world economy, beginning with the slave trade, “which dragged African labour itself into the emerging international capitalist system” (12). African labor contributed immensely to the economic rise of a Euro-North American-centric trans-Atlantic commerce. Secondly, though it had been excluded from the post-1648 Westphalian sovereign state system and physically partitioned after the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, Africa was incorporated into the post-1945 United Nations sovereignty state system.⁹ Thirdly, Africa

⁸See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*; and Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us*.

⁹One can add that the fragmented and weak African “postcolonial” states were admitted into the lowest echelons of the Euro-North American dominated state system of the world (Clapham).

was incorporated into a Eurocentric world culture with European languages as well as, fourthly, a heavily Eurocentric world of international law. Fifthly, as a consequence of colonialism, Africa was incorporated into the modern technological age and was “swallowed by the global system of dissemination of information” (Mazrui 12). Finally, Africa was dragged into a Euro-North American-centric moral order dominated by Christian thought. Mazrui’s conclusion, therefore, was that “What Africa knows about itself, what different parts of Africa know about each other, have been profoundly influenced by the West” (13).

Countering the perspective known as the epic school is that of the episodic school. It posits that “the European impact on Africa has been shallow rather than deep, transitional rather than long-lasting (Mazrui 13). In fact, it was the Nigerian historian Jacob F. Ade Ajayi of the Ibadan nationalist school who depicted colonialism as “an episode in African history” (“Colonialism”). He previously elaborated that,

In any long-term view of African history, European rule becomes just another episode. In relation to wars and conflicts of people, the rise and fall of empires, linguistic, cultural and religious change and the cultivation of new ideas and new ways of life, new economic orientations [...] in relation to all these, colonialism must be seen not as a complete departure from the African past, but as one episode in the continuous flow of history. (“Continuity” 78)

This argument amounts to a very complacent view of colonialism as a system of power. African institutions and African leadership were destroyed by colonialism, and the colonialists invented their own versions and called them African institutions, tradition, and customs.¹⁰ However, the episodic school was correct in underscoring the longevity of African history pre-dating the time of colonialism and articulating the African factor in the making of human history; the danger lies in its decoupling

¹⁰See Ranger for a history of the European traditions invented and injected into the relations of domination in Africa beginning in the final decades of the nineteenth century .

of colonialism from the broader wave of Euromodernity that radically transformed human history. Understood from this perspective, colonialism does not refer to an event/episode. Colonialism was a major part of what Walter D. Mignolo termed “global designs” that became entangled with “local histories” (*Local Histories/Global Designs*).

At the University of Ibadan itself where Ajayi was based, the episodic school was heavily challenged by Peter P. Ekeh. He understood colonialism to be “a social movement of epochal dimensions” (4). He noted that colonialism “constitutes an epochal era in Africa” introducing “massive and enduring social formations” (5, 8). According to Ekeh, colonialism directly transformed pre-colonial indigenous social structures, making them serve the colonial capitalist project of domination and exploitation. Even more profoundly, colonialism introduced what Ekeh described as “migrated social structures and constructs” “literally parceled from metropolitan centres,” and these were “engrafted onto the new colonial situation” (9). Institutionally, colonialism invented what Ekeh described as “emergent social structures” that were “not indigenous to Africa” or “brought from outside”; rather, “There were generated, born that is, from the space-and-time span of colonialism” (9).

The introduction of the concept of coloniality by Latin American theorists to name the continuation of colonialism beyond its physical dismantlement has effectively countered the episodic school. The thesis of the advocates of the coloniality perspective even argues convincingly that the decolonization of the twentieth century failed to destroy colonialism as a system of power. What was delivered was far from being a “postcolonial world”; rather, as noted by Ramon Grosfoguel (“Epistemic”), global coloniality ensued. Global coloniality cannot be separated from Euromodernity. Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui write about “colonialism and its replicants”:

In the particular case of Latin America, a discussion of *post*- or *neo*-colonialism—or that of *coloniality*, a term that encompasses the transhistoric expansion

of colonial domination and the perpetuation of its effects in contemporary times—is necessarily intertwined with the critique of Orientalism and modernity, a critique that requires a profound but detached understanding of imperial rationality. (1-2)

For Grosfoguel, Euromodernity has to be broadly defined as a racially hierarchized, patriarchal, sexist, Christian-centric, heteronormative, capitalist, military, colonial, imperial and modern form of civilization. Grosfoguel used the term “heterarchies” of power to underscore the complex vertical, horizontal, and crisscrossing invisible entanglements in the configuration of the modern global power structure that emerged from colonial encounters (“Epistemic”). The epic impact of colonialism led the leading decolonial theorist and poet Aimé Césaire to pose this question: “what, fundamentally, is colonialism?” He understood colonialism to be a disruptive, “decivilizing,” dehumanizing, exploitative, racist, violent, brutal, covetous, and “thingfying” system (32).

Coloniality, therefore, names the various colonial-like power relations existing today in those zones that experienced direct colonialism. The concept of coloniality was introduced by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano and was further elaborated by the Argentinean decolonial semiotician Walter D. Mignolo and others such as Nelson Maldonado-Torres. In “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” Quijano identified four key levers of coloniality: control of the economy, control of authority, control of gender and sexuality, and control of knowledge and subjectivity (173). Mignolo emphasized “colonial difference” as a central leitmotif of coloniality. Coloniality is a name for the “darker side” of modernity that needs to be unmasked because it exists as “an embedded logic that enforces control, domination, and exploitation disguised in the language of salvation, progress, modernization, and being good for everyone” (*The Idea of Latin America* 6). Building on the work of Quijano and Mignolo, Maldonado-Torres formulated a very useful definition of coloniality:

Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day. ("On Coloniality of Being" 243)

This definition converges with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's understanding of the psychological/epistemological as well as cultural and linguistic impact of colonialism on Africa. Ngugi wa Thiong'o posited that "The present predicaments of Africa are often not a matter of personal choice: they arise from an historical situation." He elaborated that "imperialism is not a slogan," explaining that "It is real; it is palpable in content and form and in its methods and effect" (*Decolonizing the Mind* xii, 2). Ngugi wa Thiong'o detailed the workings of colonialism on the minds of its targets:

The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces which would stop their own springs of life. It even plants serious doubt about the moral rightness of struggle. Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish. Amidst this wasteland which it has created, imperialism presents itself as the cure and demands that the dependent sing hymns of praise with the constant refrain: "Theft is holy." Indeed, this refrain sums up the new creed of neo-colonial bourgeoisie in many "independent" African states (*Decolonizing the Mind* 3).

If understood this way, it would seem that colonialism and coloniality tend to refer to the same situation. At the center of coloniality is race as an organizing principle, which not only hierarchizes human beings according to racial ontological densities, but sustains asymmetrical global power relations and a singular Eurocentric epistemology that claims to be universal, disembodied, truthful, secular, and scientific (Grosfoguel, “Epistemic” 303). Coloniality created what Frantz Fanon depicted as the “wretched of the earth.” According to Mignolo,

The wretched are defined by the colonial wound, and the colonial wound, physical and/or psychological, is a consequence of racism, the hegemonic discourse that questions the humanity of all those who do not belong to the locus of enunciation (and the geo-politics of knowledge) of those who assign the standard of classification and assign to themselves the right to classify. (*Local Histories* 16).

This takes us to the analysis and explication of decolonization and decoloniality as efforts to transcend the present historical interregnum and registers of a post-globalist, post-neoliberal, and post-capitalist pluriversal future.

DECOLONIZATION/DECOLONIALITY

The decolonization of the twentieth century failed to deliver the expected postcolonial and post-racial world. Because of this failure, Latin American theorists such as Quijano, Mignolo, and Grosfoguel introduced the concept of decoloniality to capture not only the continuation of colonialism beyond dismantlement of juridical colonialism but also its “planetarization” into global coloniality. Decoloniality is, therefore, different from the anti-colonialism that dominated the twentieth century. Anti-colonialism was largely an elite-driven project in which indigenous elites mobilized peasants and workers as foot-soldiers in a struggle to replace direct colonial administrators. African anti-colonial struggles of the twentieth century did not produce a genuine “postcolonial” dispensation marked by the birth of a

new humanity as demanded by Fanon, for instance. What was produced was a complex situation that Achille Mbembe termed “the postcolony,” Gayatri Spivak described as “postcolonial neo-colonized world” (*Post-Colonial Critic* 166), and decolonial theorists understood as “coloniality.” What characterized this situation is what I have termed the “myths of decolonization.” But decoloniality materialized at the very moment in which the slave trade, imperialism, and colonialism were being launched. It materialized as resistance, thought, and action.

As introduced at the opening of this article, decolonialization/ decoloniality is a broad church or family of all those initiatives formulated by the colonized, including intellectual-cum political-cum cultural movements such as Ethiopianism, Negritude, Garveyism, the Black Consciousness Movement, and many others. Nelson Maldonado-Torres is correct in defining decoloniality this way: “By decoloniality it is meant here the dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geo-political hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world” (“Thinking” 117). Decoloniality “struggles to bring into intervening existence another interpretation that brings forward, on the one hand, a silenced view of the event and, on the other, shows the limits of imperial ideology disguised as the true (total) interpretation of the events” in the making of the modern world (Mignolo, *Idea of Latin America* 33).

What distinguishes decoloniality from imperial versions of history is its consistent push for shifting of the geography of reason from the West as the epistemic locale from which the “world is described, conceptualized and ranked” to the ex-colonized epistemic sites as legitimate points of departure in describing the construction of the modern world order (Mignolo, *Idea of Latin America* 35). Decoloniality names a cocktail of insurrectionist-liberatory projects and critical thoughts emerging from the ex-colonized epistemic sites like Latin America, the Caribbean,

Asia, the Middle East, and Africa and seeks to make sense of the position of ex-colonized peoples within the Euro-America-centric, Christian-centric, patriarchal, capitalist, hetero-normative, racially-hierarchized, and modern world-system that came into being in the fifteenth century.

It is the core task of decoloniality to unmask, unveil, and reveal coloniality as an underside of modernity and to problematize its rhetoric of progress, equality, fraternity, and liberty. It is a particular kind of critical intellectual theory as well as political project that seeks to disentangle ex-colonized parts of the world from coloniality. What distinguishes decoloniality from other existing critical social theories is its locus of enunciations and its genealogy—which is outside of Europe. Decoloniality can be best understood as a “pluriversal epistemology of the future”—a redemptive and liberatory epistemology that seeks to “de-link from the tyranny of abstract universals” (Mignolo, “Introduction: Coloniality” 159). Decoloniality informs the ongoing struggles against the inhumanity of the Cartesian subject, “the irrationality of the rational, the despotic residues of modernity” (Mignolo, *Western Modernity* 93).

Born out of a realization that the modern world is an asymmetrical world order that is sustained not only by colonial matrices of power but also by pedagogies and epistemologies of equilibrium that continue to produce alienated Africans who are socialized into hating the Africa that produced them and liking the Europe and America that rejects them, decoloniality addresses the key issues of consciousness. Schools, colleges, churches, and universities in Africa are sites for the reproduction of coloniality. We so far don't have African universities. We have universities in Africa. They continue to poison African minds with research methodologies and inculcate knowledges of equilibrium. These are knowledges that do not question methodologies or the present asymmetrical world order. In decoloniality, research methods and research methodologies are never accepted as neutral but are unmasked as technologies of subjectivation if not surveil-

lance tools that prevent the emergence of another-thinking, another-logic, and another-world view. Research methodologies are tools of gate-keeping.

One of the key concepts/units of analysis in decoloniality is *coloniality of power*. It helps in investigating how the current “global political” was constructed, constituted, and configured into a racially hierarchized, Euro-American-centric, Christian-centric, patriarchal, capitalist, hetero-normative, hegemonic, asymmetrical and modern power structure (Grosfoguel, “Epistemic”). The concept of coloniality of power enables delving deeper into how the world was bifurcated into a zone of being (the world of those in charge of global power structures and beneficiaries of modernity) and zone of non-being (the invented world that was the source of slaves and victims of imperialism, colonialism, and apartheid) maintained by what Boaventura de Sousa Santos termed invisible, “abyssal thinking.” Abyssal thinking, according to Santos, is informed by imperial reason and manifests itself in the bifurcation of the world into “this side” (the side of complete beings governed according to dictates of emancipation, law, and ethics) and “that side” (the side of incomplete beings governed according to expropriation and violence) (“Beyond Abyssal Thinking” 45-46). In short, coloniality of power is a concept that decolonial theorists use to analyze the modern global cartography of power and how the modern world works.

Coloniality of knowledge, which focuses on teasing out epistemological issues and politics of knowledge generation as well as questions of who generates which knowledge and for what purpose, is another key unit of analysis of decoloniality (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality”). Coloniality of knowledge is useful in enabling us to understand how endogenous and indigenous knowledges have been pushed to what became understood as “the barbarian margins of society.” Africa is today saddled with irrelevant knowledge that serves to disempower rather than empower individuals and communities. Claude Ake, in *Social Science as Imperialism*, emphasized that Africa had to

seriously engage in struggles to free itself from “knowledge for equilibrium,” that is, knowledge that serves the present asymmetrical power-structured world. On the sphere of knowledge, decolonial theorists are at the forefront of decolonizing what they have termed “Westernized” universities built throughout the world (Grosfoguel, “Structure of Knowledge” 74).

The third concept is that of *coloniality of being*, which gestures to the pertinent questions of the making of modern subjectivities and issues of human ontology (Wynter “Unsettling”). African scholars engaged with the question of coloniality of being from the vantage point of what they termed “African Personality” and “Negritude” among many other registers used in the African decolonial search for restoration of denied ontological density, sovereign subjectivity, self-pride, and self-assertion (Blyden). Both “African Personality” and “Negritude” were concepts developed in the struggle by Africans as they tried to make sense of their predicaments within a context of dehumanizing colonialism. Coloniality of being is very important because it assists in investigating how African humanity was questioned as well as the processes that contributed towards “objectification”/“thingification”/“commodification” of Africans (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Coloniality of Power*). One of the continuing struggles in Africa is focused on resisting the objectification and dehumanization of black people on a world scale. It is a struggle to regain lost subjecthood and eventually citizenship as well as many other questions to do with being and humanism as politicized states of existence.

Therefore, one grand proposition of decoloniality is that modernity unfolded as a Janus-headed process understandable on the basis of the locus of enunciation of the person trying to understand the fruits and heritage of modernity (Mignolo, *Local Histories*). In decolonial thought, modernity is said to have unfolded as a phenomenon that colonized *time*, *space*, and *being* and was constituted by a rhetoric of progress, civilization, emancipation, and development on the one hand and by the reality

of coloniality on the other (Wynter “Colombus”). This reality has taken decolonial thinkers into historical and philosophical mediations, which are beginning to reveal the “under side” of modernity (Mignolo, *Western Modernity*).

Transcendence over narrow conceptions of being and consistent gesturing towards liberation from coloniality as a complex matrix of knowledge, power, and being is the core task of decolonial struggles. In this case, decoloniality consistently reminds decolonial thinkers of “the unfinished and incomplete twentieth century dream of decolonization” (Mignolo, *Local Histories* 221). The “decolonial turn” as a long existing “turn” standing in opposition to the “colonizing turn” underpinning Western thought is what decoloniality pushes for. The “decolonial turn” involves the “task of the very decolonization of knowledge, power and being, including institutions such as the university” (Maldonado-Torres, “Thinking” 1).

As noted in the introduction, decoloniality is often confused with postcolonial theory. Decoloniality and postcolonial theory converge and diverge. On the convergence side, they both aimed at dealing with the colonial experience. Ahluwalia posited that “Post-colonial theory has been characterised as being epistemologically indebted to both post-structuralism and postmodernism,” and he elaborated that “Such a reading denigrates the authenticity of post-colonial theory and renders it subservient and theoretically venerable to charges levelled at post-structuralism and postmodernism” (*Politics* 1). While Ahluwalia invites us to “differentiate between post-colonialism and other ‘post’ phenomena,” Sabine Broeck and Carsten Junker effectively delineated converging and diverging positions, approaches, and trajectories of decoloniality and postcoloniality in *Postcoloniality-Decoloniality-Black Critique: Joints and Fissures*. Decoloniality and postcoloniality provide a range of critiques of modernity, but they diverge in their intellectual genealogy, trajectories, and horizons. Ahluwalia insisted that “postcolonialism is a counter-discourse that seeks to disrupt the cultural hegemony of

the West, challenging imperialism in its various guises, whereas post-structuralism and postmodernism are counter discourses against modernism that have emerged within modernism itself” (*Out of Africa* 3).

Genealogically, decoloniality, just like postcoloniality, emerges “from the receiving end of Western imperial formations” (Mignolo, “Further Thoughts” 22). Decolonial theory, however, is traceable to those thinkers from the zones who experienced the negative aspects of modernity such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, William E.B. Dubois, Kwame Nkrumah, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and many others, whereas postcolonial theory is traceable to post-structuralists and postmodernists such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault and was then articulated by scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha (Grosfoguel, “Epistemic”). Postcolonial theory and decolonial theory also differ in terms of where they begin their critique of modernity/coloniality. Decolonial theorists begin their critique as far back as 500 years covering the Spanish and Portuguese colonialism. While it is clear that postcolonialism has different temporalities in its rendition of the impact of colonialism and imperialism, what emerges poignantly is its critique of the British colonization of India in the nineteenth century, in the process ignoring some 300 years of the unfolding of modernity/coloniality (Mignolo, *Local Histories*; Grosfoguel, “Epistemic”). Of course, there is Latin American postcolonialism, which does not begin with the British colonization of India.

Because of this, postcolonial theorists somehow try to decouple modernity and colonialism, in the process missing the fact that modernity and coloniality are inextricably intertwined paradoxically. While postcolonial theorists are concerned with dismantling meta-narratives, decolonial theorists push forward an analysis predicated on questions of power, epistemology, and ontology as foundational questions in the quest to understand the unfolding and operations of the modern Euromodernity (Maldonado-Torres, “On Coloniality of Being”). The postco-

lonial “cultural turn” is different from the “decolonial turn” because the former is located in and revolves around a Euro-North American-centric, modernist, discursive, historical, and structural terrain, and the latter is born at the borders of Euro-North American-centric modernity and fuelled by a decolonial spirit of epistemic disobedience and delinking (Amin; Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience”). Whereas the postcolonial theorists’ horizon is universalism and cosmopolitanism, decolonial theory gestures towards pluriversality and new humanism. In short, one can say that postcoloniality and decoloniality converge and diverge across genealogies, trajectories, and horizons.

Postcolonial theorists, in particular Achille Mbembe, are very critical of some forms of critique of modernity, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism such as Afro-radicalism and nativism. Mbembe’s critique is that these forms of resistance tend to be locked in what he termed the “neurosis of victimization” (“African Modes” 252) and narcissism of minor difference. These analyses in Mbembe’s critique are based on and informed by nationalism and Marxism, which he reduces to “faked philosophies”. These “faked philosophies” have been elevated into “dogmas and doctrines” that have been “repeated over and over again” by Afro-radical nationalists and Afro-Marxists (“On the Power” 629). Those Mbembe depicted as Afro-radical nationalists are accused of promoting a “false belief that only autochthonous people who are physically living in Africa can produce, within a closed circle limited to themselves alone, a legitimate scientific discourse on the realities of the continent” (“Getting Out” 3). Such African scholarship that blames colonialism is said to be also informed by “a lazy interpretation of globalization” (269).

Mbembe’s critique provoked powerful responses from scholars like Paul Tiyambe Zeleza. Zeleza critiqued Mbembe for an uncritical celebration of the globalization and cosmopolitanism that underpin Eurocentric hegemony. Mbembe’s call for the “internationalization” of African scholarship that he presented as a way of “getting out of the ghetto” was equated

with “globalizing tendencies of neo-liberal economic policies of liberalization” (Zezeza). Zezeza reminded Mbembe that the domain of knowledge generation in and on Africa has never been “ghettoized” as it has always been excessively exposed to external and imported Eurocentric paradigms.

Decoloniality is related to but also different from Afro-radical nationalist and Afro-Marxist thought. It is not only critical of these but also against facile essentialism and all forms of fundamentalisms. This point is stated clearly by Grosfoguel:

This is not an essentialist, fundamentalist, anti-European critique. It is a perspective that is critical of both Eurocentric and Third World fundamentalisms, colonialism and nationalism. What all fundamentalisms share (including the Eurocentric one) is the premise that there is only one sole epistemic tradition from which to achieve Truth and Universality. (“Epistemic” 212)

Decoloniality is ranged against what Césaire termed the European fundamental LIE: Colonization=Civilization (32). Thus, it enables the colonized peoples a space to judge Eurocentric conceit, deceit, and hypocrisy.

Coloniality is the core source of most modern problems and of the present historical interregnum. As a way forward, decolonial theorists present the “decolonial turn,” predicated on the recognition of ecologies of knowledges, as essential for pluriversality (a world in which many worlds exists un-hierarchized). To realize this utopic imaginary called pluriversality, decoloniality lays out a multipronged attack on coloniality: in the domains of knowledge, power, and subjectivity (being/ontology). It proceeds through the effective and consistent unmasking of what is hidden behind the rhetoric of Euromodernity as it exposes the fact that Eurocentric epistemologies are exhausted. It introduces what has been dubbed variously as theory from the South, epistemologies from the South, or decolonial epistemologies from the South in an endeavor to attain cognitive justice as a pre-requisite for other forms of liberation—political, cultural, ontological, economic, and social. Santos defined the epistemologies of the South as “a set of inquiries into the construction and validation of knowl-

edge born in struggle, of ways of knowing developed by social groups as part of their resistance against systemic injustices and oppressions caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy” (*Epistemologies*x).¹¹ In terms of its horizon, decoloniality gestures towards the construction of the pluriverse as another possible world. The Global South is underscored as rich in resources for pluriversality. If one brings into the domain of knowledge the suppressed and displaced knowledges from the Global South and general human life, a “mosaic epistemology” conducive to ecologies of knowledge begins to be constructed (Connell 2). Mobilization and deployment of non-Western ways of thinking, doing, and acting is at the core of the construction of the pluriverse. Different ontologies and epistemologies would be the order of the pluriverse. The problem constitutive of the present historical interregnum is not that of a lack of ideas but that of taking ideas from a singular “province” of the world and making it into universal knowledge.

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¹¹See also Comaroff and Comaroff 1-2.

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