Constructing

the

Pluriverse

The Geopolitics of Knowledge   Bernd Reiter, editor

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Part IV. **Rethinking Politics, Democracy, and Markets**

Foreword. On Pluriversality and Multipolarity

Over a fourteen- to fifteen-year span starting in 1995, I used the concept of pluriversality in many instances in my work.[1] I first heard of the concept during the early years of the Zapatista uprising. Franz Hinkelammert introduced the concept, as far as I know, and Enrique Dussel was using it during that period, and it fit perfectly well with the idea of pluritopic hermeneutics that I had borrowed from Raymundo Pannikar—an idea that became central to my argument in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (Mignolo 1995). But it was the Zapatistas' own decolonial political vision of a world in which many worlds would coexist that announced the pluriverse. The ontology of the pluriverse could not be obtained without the epistemology of pluriversity.

Epistemology and hermeneutics, in the Western genealogy of thought, investigate and regulate the principles of knowledge, on the one hand, and the principles of interpretation, on the other. Both strains are embedded in the self-proclaimed universality of Western cosmology and act as its gatekeepers. Together, epistemology and hermeneutics prevent the possibility of pluriversality, with all its internal diversity, and close off ways of thinking and doing that are not grounded in Western cosmology. The way out is the decolonial restoration of gnoseology fueling the march toward pluriversality.

When you—scholar, intellectual, journalist, or some such, trained in Western epistemology—have to navigate two or more cosmologies, as I had to while writing *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, you need a point of reference that is contained in neither epistemology nor hermeneutics. I had recourse to the concept of pluritopic hermeneutics, which I adapted from Raimon Panikkar's (2017) diatopical hermeneutics. Although hermeneutics is retained, it is also reduced to size and to its restricted domain: namely, the provincial, universal assumptions sustaining Western cosmology. Gnoseology came to the rescue and I introduced it later on in *Local Histories/Global Designs* (Mignolo 2012c).

Why did Panikkar need diatopical hemeneutics, and why did I need pluritopic hermeneutics? Because I was dealing with a pluriverse of meaning. Pluriversality became my key argument for calling into question the concept of universality, so dear to Western cosmology. How so? Western epistemology and hermeneutics (meaning the Greek and Latin languages, translated into the

six modern European and imperial languages) managed to universalize their own concept of universality, dismissing the fact that all known civilizations have been founded on the universality of their cosmologies. The West's universalizing tendency was nothing new, but it claimed a superior position for itself. The pluriverse consists in seeing beyond this claim to superiority, and sensing the world as pluriversally constituted. Or, if you wish, pluriversality becomes the decolonial way of dealing with forms of knowledge and meaning exceeding the limited regulations of epistemology and hermeneutics. Consequently, pluriversality names the principles and assumptions upon which pluriverses of meaning are constructed.

There is no reason to believe that the Bible is universal and the Popol Vuh is not. However, delinking from the Western universal is nonetheless a difficult decolonial task. The universalization of Western universality was part of its imperial project. Accordingly, a key idea in *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Mignolo 2000a) was to argue for pluriversality as a universal project. Pluriversality as a universal project is aimed not at changing the world (ontology) but at changing the beliefs and the understanding of the world (gnoseology), which would lead to changing our (all) praxis of living in the world. Renouncing the conviction that the world must be conceived as a unified totality (Christian, Liberal, or Marxist, with their respective *neos*) in order for it to make sense, and viewing the world as an interconnected diversity instead, sets us free to inhabit the pluriverse rather than the universe. And it sets us free to think decolonially about the pluriversality of the world rather than its universality.

Consequently, pluriversality as a universal project means that the universal cannot have one single owner: the universal can only be pluriversal, which also corresponds with the Zapatistas' vision of a world in which many worlds coexist. All of us on the planet have arrived at the end of the era of abstract, disembodied universals—of universal universality. Western universalism has the right to coexist in the pluriverse of meaning. Stripped of its pretended universality, Western cosmology would be one of many cosmologies, no longer the one that subsumes and regulates all the others.

Thus conceived, pluriversality is not cultural relativism, but the entanglement of several cosmologies connected today in a power differential. That power differential, in my way of thinking and doing, is the logic of coloniality covered up by the rhetorical narrative of modernity. Modernity—the Trojan horse of Western cosmology—is a successful fiction that carries in it the seed of the Western pretense to universality. Expanding on this line of reasoning, it was necessary to introduce a concept that could capture the "/" of modernity/

coloniality, that is, the "/" between the entanglement and the power differential. And that concept was rendered as border thinking, border epistemology, border gnosis.

If a pluriverse is not a world of independent units (as is the case with cultural relativism) but a world entangled through and by the colonial matrix of power, then a way of thinking and understanding that dwells in the interstices of the entanglement, at its borders, is needed. So the point is not to study the borders while still dwelling in a territorial epistemology you are comfortable with. Such an approach would imply that you accept that there is a pluriverse someplace out there, but that you observe it from someplace else, somewhere outside the pluriverse.

To do so is necessarily to maintain the territoriality of the disciplines, grounded in the imperial epistemology of modernity. To think pluritopically means, instead, to dwell in the border. Dwelling in the border is not border crossing, even less looking at and studying the borders from the territorial gaze of the disciplines. Today border studies have become fashionable, even in Europe. Scholars studying borders are for the most part not dwelling in them. The people who dwell in the border are the migrants from Africa, west Asia (the so-called Middle East), and Latin America, predominantly. That's what I learned from Gloria Anzaldúa. Like migrants and queers, Chicanos and Chicanas are always dwelling in the border, whether they are actual migrants or not.

I think the impact that *Local Histories/Global Designs* had was owed to the fact that it was written while inhabiting the border. I did not observe the border; I inhabited it. As a matter of fact, it was my awareness of inhabiting the border that prompted the book. I needed to write from inside the border rather than write about the border while inhabiting the territory (be it a nationality or a discipline).

In the preface to the second edition of the book (Mignolo 2012c), I revealed a secret: that the argument was a rewriting of Hegel's philosophy of history from the position of inhabiting the border. Hegel—as I read him—was well grounded in the territory. For him, there was nothing else but the territory. But I was not there. So border thinking and doing (or, in this case, writing) became the way (as in Buddhism) or the method (as in Western sciences, social or not) of decolonial thinking and doing—a way and a method with infinite possibilities and permutations, to be sure, not constrained or prescriptive in its direction.

This combination of border thinking and border doing was a key point in moving away from the ideological trap that distinguishes theory from praxis. Reflexive praxis is, instead, the founding principle of Amawtay Wasi (Universidad Intercultural de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas Amawtay Wasi). Why? Because its very educational project is built on border epistemology. It relies on

indigenous and Andean cosmology—not rejecting indigenous European cosmology but embodying it within Andean cosmology—thus a cosmovivencia (Huarachi 2011).[2]

I learned from indigenous cosmology what I couldn't learn from Hegel and Western cosmology. However, I was trained (in body and mind) in the latter. Learning from what Western modernity had disavowed, and not observing and describing what modernity disavowed, opened up new dimensions of the border to me. Sensing that border is not a mental or rational experience, I sensed it, and sensing is something that invades your emotions, and your body responds to it, dictating to the mind what the mind must start thinking, changing its direction, shifting the geography of reasoning. Pluriversality for me goes in tandem with the enactment of border thinking, and not with the description of border thinking that happens not in yourself but someplace else.

In *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Mignolo 2011), I returned to pluriversality and the pluriverse of meaning, connecting it with the idea of the multiverse in Humberto Maturana's epistemology. The multiverse is for Maturana a world of truth in parentheses, while the universe is a world built on truth without parentheses—unqualified, unconditional. Universality is always imperial and war driven. Pluri- and multiverses are convivial, dialogical, or plurilogical. Pluri- and multiverses exist independently of the state and corporations. It is the work of the emerging global political society—that is, the sector of society organizing itself around specific projects, having realized that neither the state nor the corporation has room for multi- or pluriverses.

While multi- and pluriverses characterize the essence of the global political society, in the realm of the state and the corporations the vocabulary is that of a multipolar world. The multipolar world of today has been opened up by the economic growth and political confidence of China's interstate politics, together with the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) nations, the growing economics and politics of Indonesia and Turkey, and the Latin American states in Mercosur, following the leadership of Brazil. When Vladimir Putin "stole" Barack Obama's threat of invading Syria, it was evident that the unipolar world that made the invasion of Iraq possible was no longer in place. And it seems obvious, too, that Putin's chess move was enabled by the support of the BRICS alliance, of which he is the current chair. Thus, I would like to use *pluriversity* in the sphere of the decolonial projects emerging out of the global political society (deracializing and depatriarchizing projects, food sovereignty, reciprocal economic organization and the definancialization of money, decolonization of knowledge and of being, decolonization of religion as a way to liberate spirituality, decolonization of aesthetics as a way to liberate esthesis,

etc.) and *multipolarity* in the sphere of politico-economic dewesternization, led by state projects.

Despite their different spheres of reference, these two expressions—pluriversity and multipolarity—are today both used to underscore the disintegration of Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism is synonymous with Westernization (Latouche 1982). Eurocentrism was the partition of the globe by European institutions and actors to the benefit of Europe and the core Western states. The United States followed suit after World War II. By 2000, the signs marking the end of Westernization were no longer possible to ignore. It is not only that there were no more places to expand into: the reemergence of the disavowed was also becoming loud and clear. Indeed, the multipronged struggle for decolonization during the Cold War (and the Bandung Conference of 1955) had been an especially eloquent sign of the end of an era—an era that can be traced from 1500 all the way to 2000, roughly speaking. On the other hand, China's millennial comeback after the humiliation it suffered during and after the Opium Wars was sending strong signs to whoever was paying attention.

Now we, on the planet, are experiencing the consequences of decoloniality after decolonization and the consequences of dewesternization after the Cold War (Mignolo 2012b). Dewesternization (led by BRICS, Iran) has already mapped the multipolar world of the twenty-first century. This multipolar world is capitalist and decentered. As a result of this decentering, the United States, seconded by the European Union, is having more and more difficulty imposing its will and desires on the rest of the planet. Strong states have emerged whose leaders refuse to have bosses and receive orders (e.g., Ukraine, West Asia, the China Development Bank and the BRICS bank, and China and Russia's military affirmation). Therefore, the multipolar world arises out of the conflicts between dewesternization and the response to it being mounted by the West: namely, rewesternization, the effort to not lose the privileges acquired over the past five hundred years.

Westernization was defined by a coherent set of global designs. Intramural wars (the Thirty Years' War, World War I, and World War II) emerge from intramural conflicts in the process of Westernization. Dewesternization, on the other hand, is a heterogeneous set of responses disputing the unipolar management of the world's population and natural resources. If Westernization was unipolar, dewesternization is multipolar. Unipolarity was successful in enacting the global designs associated with Westernization. Multipolarity, on the other hand, can no longer be controlled by global designs; it fractures them, by definition. Indeed, multipolar processes are processes of de-designing. Dewesternization is the de-designing of Westernization.

Decoloniality, on the other hand, does not compete with dewesternization and rewesternization, but rather aims to delink from both—that is, to delink from state forms of governance, from the economy of accumulation, and from the ego-centered personalities that both enacted and reproduced Westernization: the modern subject forcing the formation of colonial subjects. Crucially, decoloniality is not a master plan or a global design. It is, above all, a diverse horizon of liberation for colonial subjects, constructed by the colonial subjects themselves. There cannot be a decolonial global design, for if that were the case, it would merely be the reproduction of ego-centered personalities who claim to hold the master key of decoloniality. Decoloniality starts with the transformations and liberations of subjectivities controlled by the promises of the state, the fantasies of the market, and the fears of armed forces, all tied together by the messages of mainstream media.

While ego-centered personalities and modern subjects are subjectivities formed in and by the processes of Westernization and Eurocentrism, decolonial processes emerge from an analysis and awareness of the promises of modernity and the disenchantments of coloniality. If, then, state-led dewesternization is forcing the formation of a multipolar world order, decoloniality is opening the horizon of a pluriversal world. Pluriversality, contrary to de- and rewesternization, focuses not on the state, the economy, or the armed forces, but on delinking from all of these forces. Decolonial delinking, however, should benefit from and draw on dewesternization, to the extent that dewesternization is fracturing the ambitions of Westernization—of which the process of neoliberalism was its last desperate attempt (Mignolo 2002).

Modern ego-centered personalities are driven by competition; decolonial and communal personalities are driven by the search for love, conviviality, and harmony (Mignolo 2000b). For this reason, decoloniality cannot aim to take the state, as was the aim of the decolonization movements during the Cold War. And so decoloniality also delinks from Marxism. Indeed, it withstands alignment with any school or institution that would divert its pluriverse back into a universe, its heterogeneity back into a totality.

NOTES

1. The first time I introduced *pluriversity* into my argument was in a series of lectures delivered between 1996 and 1998. Later, in 2002, I published an essay on the subject in Binghamton University's *Review: A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center*, under the title "The Zapatistas' Theoretical Revolution: Its Historical, Political, and Epistemological Consequences." The essay appeared, slightly revised, as a chapter in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Mignolo 2011).

2. In a similar strain, Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997) rejects the idea of a world "view" as a European way of favoring the visual. Oyewumi instead proposes the concept "world-sense."

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Acknowledgments

Introduction

Sooner or later, the time will have to come to draw attention to the manner in which the exclusion of other traditions of knowledge by reductionist science is itself part of the problem that has led to myriad failed development initiatives all around the world. —ODORA HOPPERS, *Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems*

This book seeks to move beyond the critique of colonialism and Western (thought) hegemony toward the construction of what Raewyn Connell calls a "mosaic epistemology" (chapter 1, this volume). While it is still necessary to first offer a thorough critique of Western, or Northern, domination, it is equally pressing to move beyond the critique of such "paradogma" (chapter 9, this volume) as *development*. It is high time to elaborate different ways to perceive and explain the world and find solutions for the many pressing problems of the Global South, many of which, after all, were created by adhering to the development recipes sold wholesale by Western and Northern development specialists and their organizations. The common thread that brings all the contributions assembled here together is the effort to move beyond one-dimensional solutions to diverse problems and the imposition of universalist claims about the very nature of humanity toward the construction of the pluriverse. Given the centrality of pluriversality in the endeavor, the foreword allows for an extended definition and short genealogy of this term.

Escaping colonial mind-sets and frameworks is difficult (Mbembe 1992). It seems even more difficult to construct different, that is, counterhegemonic, analytical frameworks and approaches for the social sciences. Authors such as Jìmí Adésínà (2002) and Paulin Hountondji (1997) have already engaged in the presentation and critical evaluation of "endogenous knowledge" (the title of Hountondji's 1997 edited volume) with important contributions in the fields of non-Western ontologies, epistemologies, and technologies. Both of these authors write from a West African (Nigerian and Beninese) standpoint, introducing non-Western ways to think about, analyze, and manipulate the world. Given that the central critique of Western, colonial epistemologies and analytical frameworks is that they claim to be universalist and explain it all

while in fact being biased and limited, the approaches discussed by Adésínà and Hountondji self-consciously avoid making such sweeping claims. They instead offer partial knowledge that is context specific and limited. If we take the critique of the coloniality of knowledge and power seriously (Quijano 2000), then all knowledge production must henceforth be partial, context specific, and limited, leading us away from parsimonious schemata that explain the (social) world toward a much more complex and mosaic construction of the bases of different and competing scientific knowledges. This is what Raewyn Connell refers to in chapter 1—and it is also what guides this volume. The consequence of embracing such a mosaic epistemology is that the search for alternative and place-bound epistemologies and approaches is potentially endless, and it opens the doors to a sort of epistemological relativism, where one approach to explaining the world is as good as the next. Adding random non-Western epistemologies from different places of the world is, however, not what this volume seeks to achieve. Instead, I follow Sandra Harding, who has argued that "we need realistic reassessments of both Western and non-Western knowledge systems" (2008: 6). For Harding this means that "if we are to take seriously the achievements of another culture, we have to talk about it in our terms, rather than theirs" (2008: 16).

The ontologies, epistemologies, and alternative, non-Western approaches to democracy presented in this volume all live up to this claim in that they talk directly to the current canon of accepted approaches in the social sciences. All of them explicitly offer a new and different way to approach questions that are at the core of most social sciences: development, economic growth, identity, democracy, political power, and self-rule. While some contributions focus on highlighting the problems and pitfalls created by the coloniality of power and knowledge (Quijano 2000), the majority of contributions assembled here point at ways to conceptualize the core questions and answers of the social sciences differently. By doing so, this volume proposes a recalibration of the Western compass that so far is providing guidance to most of the social sciences in most places of the world. We all need to rethink what development, growth, political power, democracy, nationalism, and self-rule mean and can mean— but the traditional, Western approaches of European science do not contain the tools to ask different questions and find new and different answers. The chapters assembled here do.

Feminism and a Successor Science

During the 1970s, American feminist scholars started calling for a successor science. For Sandra Harding (1986), one of the central proponents of this claim, such a science needs to recognize its own standpoints and limitations, thus embracing partiality. All knowledge production is embodied and conditioned by the researcher's situatedness. We cannot see it all, and we cannot know it all. However, most traditional scientific production has pretended just that, thus "playing the God trick," as Donna Haraway (1988) argued so eloquently. Those who played the God trick were mostly metropolitan male intellectuals. They relied on the concepts and categories of their own, limited, world—and yet they applied them to explain the whole world (Connell 2007).

These intellectuals were also involved, directly or indirectly, in the construction and institutionalization of academic departments and associations, and their journals and annual meetings and conferences. As a result of such limitlessness, European ontologies, epistemologies, and research programs have thoroughly conquered the world, suffocating all other approaches to make sense of, explain, and control the natural and social environment (Chakrabarty 2007). Science, however, is the structured and systematic production of knowledge—and by that account, all societies and all groups, everywhere and anytime, are engaged in scientific endeavors, even if not all of them are institutionalized to the same degree (chapters 1 and 2, this volume).

Colonialism, however, erased many local scientific traditions by declassifying them as primitive and folklore and substituting what was perceived as Southern superstition with Northern science. To some authors, the very power of colonialism rested on its ability to name and categorize the world according to its own heuristic schemata and interest, thus inventing, and enforcing, such binaries as modern/traditional, progressive/backward, and civilized/primitive (Escobar 2011; Oyewumi, 1997; Lugones 2007).

In postcolonial times, this situation of Western, or Northern, colonial hegemony lived on as political elites from the Global South continued to send their offspring to be educated in London, Paris, Leiden, Brussels, Berlin—and, after World War II, in New York, Boston, or Los Angeles. The educational meccas erected in these places continued to reproduce the colonial traditions they inherited from the former colonizers, and the students trained there returned to their homelands—if they returned at all—with European, and later American, mind-sets. The theories and methods they learned made many of them strangers in their native lands. Even worse, the concepts, categories, and approaches they learned abroad did not help them in the analysis of their own countries

or in the solving of the very specific problems they encountered once they returned and assumed positions of influence.

It is indeed high time for a postcolonial successor science, particularly in the social sciences and the humanities, where academic prestige is construed on the knowledge of a broadly accepted canon of thought. When I write these lines, this canon can no longer consist of the Western tradition alone. The analytical toolboxes created by Weber, Marx, and Durkheim do not contain the tools that are necessary to understand the whole world. Neither do those of Beck, Coleman, Bourdieu, Foucault, or Latour—as Sandra Harding (2008) and Raewyn Connell (2007) have made abundantly clear. If we are seriously interested in understanding the different problems of the Global South, we need much larger and more specific toolboxes.

Beyond Eurocentrism

Walter Mignolo (2015) argues that the time is ripe to debunk the idea that there is one truth and one law to be discovered, able to capture and explain all human behavior and culture. In the foreword to Luisetti, Pickles, and Kaiser's *The Anomie of the Earth*, Mignolo dwells on the work of Carl Schmitt (2003), who argued that the current *nomos* of the world was preceded by a previous, first *nomos*. Instead, argues Mignolo (2015), the universalist claims of today were preceded by many different *nomoi*, each one responding to different, place-bound environments and challenges. These *nomoi* were destroyed by colonialism.

Ramón Grosfoguel (2013) has made a similar claim, showing, in more detail, how European colonization has destroyed not only people and their cultures, but also their diverse knowledge systems. Genocide thus went hand in hand with "epistemicide" (Santos 2014). Grosfoguel's (2013) analysis, which relies on the extensive work of Enrique Dussel, shows how the universalist truth claims of white European males from five countries (Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States) were made possible only after conquest and extermination—first of Jews and Muslims during the Spanish Reconquista, the enslavement of indigenous people and Africans, and finally the genocide/epistemicide of women. For Grosfoguel, quoting Dussel, "the arrogant and idolatric God-like pretention of Cartesian philosophy is coming from the perspective of someone who thinks of himself as the center of the world because he has already conquered the world" (Grosfoguel 2013: 77).

The claim that the time is ripe to abandon the search for universal laws guiding human behavior resonates strongly with Immanuel Wallerstein's (1991, 1998) assessment that the twenty-first century is a century of crisis, leading

either to a consolidation of U.S. imperialism and the corresponding hegemony of Western thought or to a breakdown of this system, which has lasted for some five hundred years, and its replacement with a plurality of fairer and more egalitarian local systems.

Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José Saldávar (2005) argue that if Wallerstein is correct, then we face an urgent need to search for new and different utopias, able to inform our thoughts and actions toward constructing better, fairer, and more equitable democracies and economies. This book is dedicated to contributing to precisely this effort.

Jìmí Adésínà (2002) has offered an example, and an explanation, of how exactly this search for new utopias can be conducted. First, Adésínà takes on the idea that the social sciences need to produce nomothetic knowledge, showing that all knowledge is bound by the place, time, and positionality of the knowledge producer and hence ideographic. He then sets out to elaborate a different epistemology, based on the work of Nigerian sociologist Akinsola Akiwowo (1922–2014), who grounded his epistemological proposals on Yoruba ontology. Adésínà shows that Yoruba ontology and cosmology contain an element of "mutual self-embeddedness of contradictory states of being" (Adésínà 2002: 105), which is fundamentally different from the Aristotelian logic of discrete and exclusive binaries. As such, the Yoruba logic of multivalence, which Adésínà calls "fuzzy logic," allows for the construction of an entirely different analytical apparatus and, it demands a different kind of research methodology. Adésínà's efforts thus resemble those of Raewyn Connell (2007) to construct Southern theory. It is also in tune with Oyeronke Oyewumi's (1997) recognition that the binary categories of male/female, modern/premodern, and human/nonhuman were invented and enforced by colonial power, constituting, to this day, a "coloniality of power" (Quijano 2000).

The call for decolonization, issued by such authors as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010, 2012), Janet Conway and Jakeet Singh (2011), Cristina Rojas (2015), Sylvia Wynter (2003), Wiebke Keim (2008), Rhoda Reddock (2014), and Sujata Patel (2014), to name but a few, thus points to the need to move beyond the critique of colonialism and toward the active construction of the pluriverse through the systematic elaboration of different ontologies and corresponding epistemologies. The efforts by Jìmí Adésínà (2002), Raewyn Connell (2007), Silvia Cusicanqui (2010), Gyan Prakash (1994), Sharmila Rege (2003), and many others already provide a map others can use and follow in this effort. This map points at the need to discuss different, non-Western epistemologies in connection to their corresponding ontologies and to embrace partial, place-bound knowledges. These authors also highlight the need to operationalize

these epistemologies so they can be applied in concrete research projects and become research questions and designs. One immediate consequence of doing this is the question of what kinds of research methods correspond to this project. Once the legitimacy of nomothetic research is lost, the question of what a decolonial research project, design, and corresponding methodology look like emerges with urgency. From the onset, it seems clear that statistics is the method par excellence linked to the project of binary categorizing and thus is deeply implicated in the colonial construction of Western, male superiority (Harding 2008). It is also worth noting that Adésínà's proposal to consider the fuzzy logic of Yoruba cosmology as an epistemological anchor for analyzing social realities outside of binary and mutually exclusive categories resonates strongly with fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), as proposed and elaborated by the American sociologist Charles Ragin (2008).

While it is beyond the scope of this book and the capacity of the editor to address all these issues, this book nevertheless is firmly committed to constructing the pluriverse by highlighting some different, non-Western, and non-Western-centric ontologies and epistemologies. Some of the authors assembled here have also taken steps to outline the analytical and methodological consequences of decolonizing the social sciences, but much more needs to be done in this regard.

The contributors represent the very diversity I seek to achieve. They are writing from their specific standpoints and are aware of the partiality of their views—but embrace limitation as a positive contribution to theory development and the construction of itinerary research programs. The proposals, theories, models, questions, frameworks, concepts, and analytical tools they develop and propose are introduced so they can be applied to the examination of restricted local realities—but they also allow for a critical evaluation and reassessment of traditional and hegemonic viewpoints, worldviews, and ideologies, and the research programs connected to them. I believe that such new ideas and frameworks not only allow for a better understanding of poor countries, North-South relations, and the world system. I also believe that an intensive engagement with the countries of the South will produce new insight into the interactions of agency, institutions, and structure. To be sure: instead of working out the contradictions of universalism and coloniality, I propose, in this volume, to take an initial step from analyzing problems to their solution, where I perceive the solution to be the consideration of other approaches to the world and to science, that is, other ontologies, epistemologies, and political ideologies.

All authors writing for this volume have responded to calls sent out by the editor in 2014 and thereafter. I have asked them: What would an Indian/(West)

African/Colombian/Brazilian/Islamic/Malaysian/Iranian political philosophy look like? What sort of questions would it ask? What kinds of ontologies and epistemologies would it be based on? What kinds of research questions could be developed from it and what sorts of research programs or designs? How could it be operationalized? The answers were, as expected, as broad and diverse as they should be. Some authors have also given their own interpretation to this call and focused on what they perceive as the most relevant aspect of this call and the political philosophy they wanted to write about.

The World Reified according to Colonial Knowledge

Reification might be the biggest hindrance to scientific advancement. Reification refers to the act of attributing ontological status to epistemological and analytical tools. Put simply: we cannot know with certainty that the world truly is the way we think it is. Even worse: what we think is real certainly is not the only reality out there, as different people access the same reality from different places and thus either see, or experience, a different slot of the same reality, or they perceive a different reality altogether.

The problems do not end here, unfortunately. There is a well-founded suspicion that not only do different people perceive different realities, or at least different facets of the same reality—but different people create different realities through their different, discursive interactions with it and with each other. This is not to say that the material world exists only in our minds. This just says that we cannot know anything about how the world really is, as it is our own naming, categorizing, and ordering that gives it meaning—to us. Hence, as an inevitable consequence, our perception of the world is influenced by us, who we are, and what we know. Or, put even simpler: who we are will influence what we know, and what we know will influence what is real to us.

Any theory, model, or explanation is thus underdetermining, and this world has space for many different ways of explaining it and making sense out of it. It has no space for fixed recipes for the future. To think that the Western way of thinking about and explaining the world is the only one is ignorant. To think that the European way of explaining the world is somehow closer to the way the world really is is naive. To explain the world without unveiling, or even being aware of, the purpose for this explanation makes for an incomplete and biased explanation, often dressed as universal. There simply are no universally valid explanations of and about the world. Offering Western recipes to the entire world achieves first and foremost a further spreading of Western ideology and a delegitimization of non-Western thought.

All of this highlights the urgent need to do a better job, produce "stronger objectivity" (Harding 1993) and a more sympathetic and engaged science that is less pretentious about knowing the truth and more aware of its own limitations, its partiality, its interests and motivations, and its positionality (Henderson 2011). This need becomes apparent every time a class is taught, anywhere in the world, on world ideologies, globalization, or development, as even most first-semester students intuitively know that there must be more to world ideology than capitalism, socialism, and fascism. Classes on globalization and development do not fare much better, as the costs of these growth strategies have become all too clear to almost everyone, so that no longer can we argue that pollution is simply a side effect of economic development, or that progress consists of the ability to buy more stuff. Consumerism cannot be the only goal of development.

This book presents the kind of answer we, as academics, are able to provide. It seeks to present different voices, speaking from different locations and different positionalities about their conceptions of the world, of development, of progress, and the role science can and should play in it. The emphasis is on constructing the pluriverse, as I agree with the assessment of such authors as Immanuel Wallerstein (1998) and Ramón Grosfoguel (2013) that the knowledge produced by white males from only five countries has lost its legitimacy to explain the whole world by formulating universal statements about human behavior and interaction. Such authors as Enrique Dussel (2002) and Anibal Quijano (2000) have long pointed at the coloniality of power that made this knowledge production possible—and demanded a thorough decolonization of the social sciences and the construction of a "transmodernity" (Dussel 2002).

While most authors writing in the decolonization tradition agree that the time to move beyond the critique of colonialism and offer new and different ways to make sense and explain diverse (social) worlds has arrived, the endeavor to actually do so has proven difficult. While book titles such as Gyan Prakash's (1994) *After Colonialism* promise to do just that, most contributions in that book and similar others still focus mostly on critique. This is so, I suspect, because colonialism has so thoroughly destroyed and delegitimized non-Western thought and has committed not just genocide, but epistemicide (Chakrabarty 2007; Santos 2014). The institutional requirements to produce knowledge outside of the world's capitalist metropolitan centers are precarious at best, thus suffering today from the very marginalization colonial rule has cast them into (Adésínà 2005; Cusicanqui 2012). In addition, academic traditions, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, are built on critique

and critical exegesis, thus making it difficult, even for those of us working in metropolitan universities, to venture into the unknown and not yet accepted. The disciplinary power of zealous academics, exercised in the form of blind peer review, tends to punish anything perceived as transgressing the boundaries of the already accepted canon—even if this canon is decolonization itself (Kuhn 2012).

The contribution this books seeks to make is to actively engage in such a transgression by showcasing academic work that does not fit neatly into the established canon of thought and approaches in the social sciences. It is a book written for social science students and researchers in that it proposes texts that might be helpful when analyzing specific problems of different non-Western and nonmetropolitan societies and cultures. Each chapter is written with a clear commitment to producing situated and partial knowledge and as such they all offer ideographic knowledge, grounded in specific ontologies and lifeworlds. The epistemological possibilities each contribution contains are elaborated more by some authors than by others, and the same is true for the methodological implications each contribution contains.

This is reflective, I think, of the early stages where we find ourselves in this effort to decolonize the social sciences. Much more work needs to be done here so that we can all move beyond the patchwork efforts this book and similar others are currently able to provide. This is particularly true for elaborating the operational steps that can be taken to transform non-Western ontologies and epistemologies into research programs, with corresponding designs and methodologies.

However, this book is not trying to identify and promote a new Karl Marx, Max Weber, or Emile Durkheim, simply because I believe that the universalist claims these authors formulated are part of the problem we face today. Instead of searching for the Indian Foucault, I suggest reining in the analytical reach of the French Foucault and putting him in conversation with the Indian Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. It is worth reading the fourteenth-century Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun, not because he can substitute for the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, but because both Kant and Khaldun offer epistemologies and analytical tools worth considering when seeking to understand different, place-bound phenomena. I do think, however, that we have to carefully reevaluate the reach of the universalist claims someone like Kant has formulated—so that Ibn Khaldun might work as a remedy for the universalism of Immanuel Kant.

This book locates itself as a postcolonial contribution to the production of knowledge and the conditions, as well as the consequences, of such knowledge production. The authors showcased here represent a narrow sliver of what is

out there—and they reflect, to a great extent, my own positionality and cultural context as a political science professor working, and trained, mostly in Northern, metropolitan universities. As someone who has lived, worked, studied, and taught in Brazil and Colombia, I am fully aware that each country has its own intellectual and academic traditions that have not been entirely wiped out, but rather suppressed and transformed, by colonialism. As Sujata Patel (2014) has argued, colonialism imposed a format to which local thinking and theorizing had to—and still has to—conform. It also imposed a language—English—as the only language able to reach broad circulation. As a result, the great contributions by such Brazilian authors as Jacob Gorender (2001), who elaborated a (neo-Marxist) theoretical framework for colonial slaveholding societies claiming and demonstrating that slave societies represent a different, sui generis, type of society, do not fit into the available societal categories developed by Max Weber and Karl Marx. Similarly, the important work of Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda is known to a broader audience only insofar it has been translated into English, whereas the pioneering contributions by his colleague, cultural anthropologist Manuel Zapata Olivella, remain largely unknown outside Colombia. Every colonized country can count on a series of native intellectuals whose contributions remain unknown and unused. Jìmí Adésínà (2005) has explained in detail how difficult it is to overcome the coloniality of power and create, in his case, an African university.

This book is the direct result of my own frustration when teaching university seminars on such topics as development, modernization, world ideologies, and globalization, as the available textbooks are all unduly narrow, biased, and Eurocentric, while claiming to cover and explain the whole world. This frustration is shared by most of my students, who wonder, ask, and at times demand the inclusion of Muslim thinkers, Indian philosophers, and Native American conceptions of markets, democracy, and development in the syllabi. This book represents my effort as a comparative political scientist, who is not a postcolonial scholar and yet teaches classes about the world, to learn about, and from, different ways of making sense of the world and with that diversify my own teaching. Engaging with the texts I have been able to assemble has allowed me to question my own positionality as a comparativist and Latin Americanist, making me more aware of the unconscious assumptions and biases that underlie my own thinking and analysis. It is my hope that the texts I have been able to assemble achieve the same for each reader.

This volume only presents a start for many possibilities for pluralizing the social sciences and humanities.

Chapter Overview

In the foreword, Walter Mignolo provides a genealogy of the term *pluriverse*, from how he has first used it to how it continues to influence his work today.

In part I of this book, all five authors provide the foundations for what is to come. First, Raewyn Connell identifies the problem of epistemic violence caused by the global economy of knowledge. She explains how other knowledges were, and continue to be, marginalized by colonialism and imperialism—and she offers ways out of this marginalization based on feminist theory. She thus locates the problem this book seeks to tackle and initiates the search for solutions by introducing different Southern theoretical approaches. In her assessment, moving toward a feminist democracy of theory, which relies on a mosaic epistemology and tackles the issues of power and the state, identity, methodology, and land, offers a way to realize the full potential of gender analysis.

Sandra Harding revisits her long-standing efforts to make feminist standpoint theory an integral part of scientific endeavors; then she elaborates on her second scholarly contribution to this field—the recognition of different, non-European scientific traditions and their importance for creating a better, more just, and more inclusive successor science.

Arturo Escobar, like Walter Mignolo and Sandra Harding, is a pioneer in the effort to decolonize the Western scientific tradition and its underlying ontologies and epistemologies. In chapter 3, Escobar lays out the foundations for a more relational approach to reality, which is inspired by his knowledge, and research, in the Colombian Pacific.

In chapter 4, Walter Mignolo first elaborates on the crises of hegemonic, Western models of thought, science, and technology—and proposes a new and different way to approach the world, inspired by Humberto Maturana's philosophy of cognition and his politics of love. Chapter 5, by Aram Ziai, elaborates a critique of development understood in its traditional way and argues for free cooperation, based on the recognition that most social problems are specific and local in nature and thus cannot be solved with recipes conceived in different, Northern or Western contexts.

Part II takes us to other ontologies. In chapter 6, Ulrich Oslender launches the effort of detecting, describing, capturing, and understanding other ontologies by introducing the aquatic epistemologies of the Colombian Pacific. These are based on a peculiar and local perception and understanding of the world—hence a local, Colombian Pacific aquatic ontology.

Issiaka Ouattara takes us deep into the reality of West Africa and its oral traditions. Writing from his vantage point as an educator and researcher in the Ivory

Coast, Ouattara is able to highlight and explain the importance of the West African griots and pinpoint their centrality in the making of West African modernity.

In chapter 8, Manu Samnotra elaborates the ontology of Mahatma Gandhi—particularly his thoughts and writings on autonomy, self-rule, and village democracy (*Hind Swaraj*). Chapter 9, by Catherine Walsh, is the final contribution to this section and introduces the concept of *buen vivir*, which was anchored in the new Ecuadorian and Bolivian constitutions. While buen vivir offers an alternative and more holistic way to conceptualize development, it is still wedded to the core tenets of development and economic growth, as Walsh demonstrates.

Part III focuses more directly on science and epistemology. Manuela Boatcă, in chapter 10, proposes to conceptualize Europe without excluding the European overseas department in the Caribbean. A conceptualization of Caribbean Europe allows for a creolization of the very notion of Europe, which includes its colonial dimensions. Hans-Jürgen Burchardt argues in chapter 11 that an approach to politics that focuses narrowly on rational action cannot capture all the irrational, emotional, and group-oriented actions that characterize all our lives, particularly in the realm of politics. To move beyond this analytical dead end, Burchardt rereads the writings of Baruch Spinoza and Norbert Elias, both of whom have proposed systematic ways to take emotions and irrational behavior into analytical account.

Chapter 12, by Zaid Ahmad, then advances this critique by probing into the epistemology of Ibn Khaldun, a Muslim scholar and traveler of the fourteenth century, and his writings about the centrality of religion in human affairs.

Venu Mehta, in chapter 13, introduces Jain epistemology, particularly the Jain concept of *anekāntavāda*, and demonstrates how closely Jain philosophy is related to feminist standpoint theory and decolonial literature, thus highlighting once more that much of what is broadly perceived and claimed as Western has deep and old roots in non-Western thought and religious practice.

Part IV of this book pushes this effort further by offering different, that is, nonhegemonic and noncolonial, ways of thinking about and analyzing politics, democracy, and markets.

In chapter 14, I highlight the crises of democracy, citizenship, and politics that are so widely bemoaned everywhere today—and introduce solutions elaborated by some Native American groups over the past centuries. This chapter argues that Native Americans have long understood the epistemic thread coming from colonial European approaches to explaining the world for the sake of ruling it—and they have formulated very clear formulas for breaking away from colonial domination.

In chapter 15, finally, Ehsan Kashfi shows how the Iranian prerevolutionary intellectuals Ali Shariati and Abdolkarim Soroush elaborated ways to break away from Western domination and formulate an independent path of development and modernity, based on their interpretation of Islam.

In the conclusion, I revisit this book's achievements and shortcomings. I end with a call for more research into the plentiful and heterogeneous efforts to explain the world, politics, democracy, and science that are present and alive among different societies and groups all over the world.

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