Learning to Unlearn

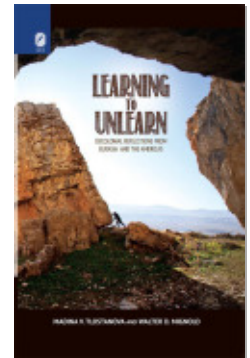Tlostanova, Madina V., Mignolo, Walter D.

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Learning to Unlearn

Thinking Decolonially

I.

"Learning to unlearn" grew out of ten years of conversations and collaborations on issues of common interest. As an Uzbek-Cherkess living in Moscow and of an ethnically Muslim family, Madina was concerned with colonial questions in Central Asia and the Caucasus. As a son of Italian immigrants to Argentina and living in the U.S., Walter was concerned with the colonial question in the Americas. It was clear to us that the Russian/Soviet colonies and colonies in South and Central America and the Caribbean have parallel histories vis-à-vis colonial relations and with regards to imperial control and domination. At the same time, in South America, the history of imperial control is tied to the history of capitalism, in the West, while Central Asia and the Caucasus have a different pedigree, due to the subaltern and non-Western or not-quite-Western nature of the empires that controlled them in the past (the Ottoman Sultanate, Russia, the Soviet Union). From the sixteenth century to today, South America and the Caribbean and the Russian colonies (first, the Volga region, Siberia, the Baltic region, the Crimea; and from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century on, the Caucasus and Central Asia), followed parallel histories vis-à-vis the Western imperial designs (Spain, Holland, France, England, the U.S.) and vis-à-vis the Russian Czardom, the Russian Empire (from Peter the Great onward), the Soviet Union

and the Russian Federation today. The U.S. started its advances toward South America at the beginning of the nineteenth century and has continued to advance until today, while the Russian Federation, its current remaining colonies and newly independent post-Soviet states, also have to confront the interests of the U.S. in Eurasia.

As the conversation and collaboration progressed, it began to turn around two key concepts: imperial and colonial differences and their modulations in the modern/colonial world order from 1500 to 2000. The first modulation was the external imperial difference between the Russian Czardom, and later Russian Empire, in relation to Western empires. Consequently, we asked ourselves, what would be the difference between imperial/colonial configurations in the West framed by Western Christianity, secular Liberalism and Marxism and imperial/colonial configurations in Russia and Eastern Christianity, and later on, in the Soviet Union. More concretely, the question turned to the colonial configurations of Central Asia and the Caucasus under the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and South America and the Caribbean first under the direct Spanish and Portuguese colonization and, after the formation of the "independent" republics, the indirect colonization by Britain and France in collaboration with the local Creole elites, on the other. Once we reached this point, we moved to the internal imperial difference among Western capitalist empires. For example, the so-called Black Legend that England launched against Spain in the second half of the seventeenth century and the making of the South of Europe through which Latin and Catholic countries leading during the Renaissance were demoted to a secondary role in the second modernity (i.e., the Enlightenment). We arrived at a conclusion that had been expressed historically before: the fact that Russia and Spain became two countries at the margins of enlightened modernity. The core of our argument evolves around this set of concepts. We are not "comparing" Central Asia and the Caucasus, on the one hand, with South America and the Caribbean, on the other, but rather analyzing the underlying colonial matrix of power maintaining the illusion that these "areas" are far apart from each other (and they are, as far as local histories are concerned), while in fact they are linked to Western hegemony by the logic of coloniality.

We are not comparing them, because Central Asia and the Caucasus, on the one hand, and South America and the Caribbean, on the other, are two complex "regions" located *in* the colonial matrix of power. They belong to the same universe. It is only from a modern and imperial epistemological assumption that they are seen as "two distinct areas to be compared." They have local histories for sure. But their local histories are interconnected with

the local Western imperial history. This point is crucial in our argument. As both are regions within the colonial matrix, they are entangled with the West. The Central Asia and southern Caucasus entanglement is part of the history of Russia/Soviet Union up to the recent formation of the independent states after the collapse of the Soviet Union. South American and the Caribbean went through a similar process: Spain and Portugal were the imperial countries from which South America and the Caribbean first gained their independence; and later on, the processes continued in the British, Dutch, and French Caribbean. So, what we are looking at here is a complex network of imperial and colonial differences: external imperial differences between the Western empires and the Russian Empire/Soviet Union and internal imperial differences between the South of Europe and the Western post-Enlightenment empires (France, England, Germany), whose intellectuals were responsible for making the European Catholic South an inferior sector of Europe. Furthermore, we take into account the external colonial difference that Europe created in relation to the Indians and Africans. This relation was reproduced by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. We are not dealing in this book with the internal colonial difference, which worked in the classification of the European internal "others": Jews and Romany, mainly.

It is necessary to make it clear from the start that, although the point of origination of the particular conceptual structure (modernity/coloniality/(de)coloniality) was located in South America, its scope is not limited to South America and the Caribbean. To think that way would be similar to believing that, if the concept of "biopolitics" originated in Europe, it is valid only for Europe. It is important to make this clarification, because there is an unconscious tendency to think that theories that originate in the Third World (or among Black or gay intellectuals) are valid only for the Third World (or Black and gay people), while theories that originate in the First World (and created by White and heterosexual people) have a global if not universal validity. This modern and imperial way of thinking is coming to its end. But we know that the belief that the Whites have knowledge and the Indians have Wisdom; the Blacks have experience and the Whites have philosophy; the Third World has culture and the First World has science unfortunately is still well and alive. And what we say is that it is time to start learning to unlearn this assumption among others in order to relearn.

The somewhat coeval imperial beginnings of Russia and Spain in the sixteenth century[1] were followed up by Spain's demise in the eighteenth century and the beginning of Russia's doomed catching up race with the great empires of modernity. Russia and Spain "at the margin of the West" (the first

because it never got to the center no matter how much it yearned to, and the second because it lost its place there) was a metaphor shared by Spanish, Latin American, and Russian historians and philosophers alike (Ana María Schop Soler (1971), Leopoldo Zea (1958), or Vassily Klyuchevsky (2009)). Paradoxically, when Peter changed his title of the Czar to that of the Emperor (early eighteenth century), the "external imperial difference" between Western and non-Western civilizations was consolidated. Simultaneously, in the eighteenth century, Spain lost its former imperial clout, became the South of Europe, and originated the "internal imperial difference." Both Russia and Spain lost the train of the second modernity, that of the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the birth of the secular nation-states.

Consequently, the Russian colonies, on the one hand, and South America and the Caribbean, on the other, were recast according to the new world order dictated by the leadership of England, France, and Germany—the "heart or Europe" in Hegel's metaphor, in politics, economy, philosophy, and sciences. As Russia was getting more and more tightly entangled in the net of intellectual and cultural dependency on Europe, bordering on self-colonization, its methods of conquering the new territories were becoming more and more similar to European ones, and the previous relative tolerance of other religions and ethnicities gave place to open genocide and racism. Ivan the Terrible, three hundred years earlier, was able to have as his second wife a daughter of Cherkess prince Temryuk or a Tatar deputy on the throne, but in the nineteenth century discourses, the inhabitants of the Caucasus or Central Asia were already unequivocally coded as inferior beings. The final conquering of these territories in the middle and the second half of the nineteenth century took place in the context of discourses on racism, Orientalism, and Eurocentrism, which were borrowed from Europe and subsequently distorted by the Russians—due to their own dubious status. The main rival of the Russian Empire then was the Ottoman Sultanate, which shared with Russia its second-rate status, while the Russian inferiority complex with respect to the unattainable Western empires of modernity was compensated in the conquering of the Caucasus and Central Asia, which were racialized in accordance with the notions of the post-Enlightenment Europe in this new colonial period of imperial management.

Meanwhile, in South America and the Caribbean, many countries gained independence from Spain and Portugal in the nineteenth century, just to enter in the first period of imperialism without colonies. England controlled the economy while France had strong political investments (e.g., the name of "Latin" America was a geopolitical move of French imperial expansion; it dominated the intellectual life as well as shaped the state universities). Like

Africa and Asia in the second half of the twentieth century, South American countries gained independence from the former empires, in order to remain dependent on new imperialism.

Thus, while Russia remained and Spain became a marginal empire in the eighteenth century and they were located in the external and internal imperial differences, respectively, the colonies of Central Asia and the Caucasus that were acquired by Russia in the post-Enlightenment phase of modernity were regarded differently from the colonies gained in the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries. The previously existing relations and ways of interpreting the indigenous populations of Central Asia and the Caucasus were completely erased from the Russian memories and replaced with the borrowed Western discourses. This was particularly clear in case of the Circassian genocide and Circassians' subsequent exile to the Ottoman Sultanate in the mid-nineteenth century (Circassian Genocide 2008, Shenfield 2008). As for South America, these ex-colonies were relocated by updating the external colonial difference put in place in the sixteenth century. The colonial difference came into being in the process of debating the humanity of the inhabitants of Anahuac and Tawantinsuyu, renamed "Indias Occidentales" by Spaniards and "America" by a group of intellectuals in northern France and southern Germany, at the suggestion of Martin Waldseemüller. "Indian" as the name of the people and "Indias Occidentales," as that of the place, are two anchors of the colonial difference. Not only was a name that was not theirs imposed onto the people, they were also cast as inferior to Christians and Spaniards. Enslaved Africans transported to the New World were the second group of renamed people: all enslaved Africans became "Black" disregarding their original kingdom of origin in Africa, respective languages, and sacred beliefs.

People of the Caucasus and later Central Asia were also reclassified by the Russian Empire within the frame of the racist logic imported from the West and superimposed onto the existing religious frame. From the "Busurman" of the first modernity (a term originating arguably in the word "Musulman"—Muslim), coming to gradually embrace all non–Orthodox Christian people, the Russian construction of otherness came to the concept of "inorodets" (usually translated as "alien" but literally meaning the one who was born an other), in the early nineteenth century, when the religious difference was replaced with a racial, ethnic, and civilizational one to be essentialized. Thus, in the second modernity, the Muslim confession of Central Asia and partly the Caucasus was turned into the color of skin. So that, on top of the legal term "inorodets" (which included the Pagan nomads, the Muslims, and the Jews alike), there was also the term "Tatar" in use to define all Muslims,

similarly to the West, where the Muslims were called Arabs or Turks regardless of their ethnicity. The topographic and ethnic renamings intensified and acquired a more planned strategic element in Soviet nation building in the remapped borders, invented ethnicities and languages, and erased histories. As a result of the Soviet modernization, the religious difference was completely translated into race and the Caucasus and Central Asian people acquired the common name of "Blacks" that they still carry. The Orthodox Christian commonality of Russians with Osetians (until the war with Georgia over South Osetia), Georgians, or Armenians has been systematically downplayed and replaced with racism and Orientalism from the nineteenth century until now.

All of this was taking place at the time when the European philologists and intellectuals were rebuilding and enacting the colonial difference in their definition of the Orientals and the creation of Orientalism. In this move, Muslims became Arabs and Turks and the original imperial difference between the Spanish Empire and the Ottoman Sultanate lost the religious underpinning, while secular ethnicity entered in the Western redrawing of the external colonial difference. It is precisely at this point that the Caucasus and Central Asia entered the imperial imaginary of Russia in the role of Russia's own secondhand Orient. The internal colonial difference was also remapped during the same period: Jews, as a religious group, became secularized as ethnic Jews, a transformation that had its dramatic consequences in the holocaust.

We do not present a new version of historical grand narrative but rather revisit the local histories of different geopolitical spaces, and always within the colonial matrix of power. We do this not with the simple goal of adding certain crucial facts and notions to the existing historical interpretations, although in many cases this is in itself an important and still unaddressed task. Our goal instead is to look at these seemingly familiar historical events from the position of border thinking and border consciousness, sensitive to the colonial and imperial difference, and to do so necessarily in the context of the rhetoric of modernity based on the logic of global coloniality in its various manifestations (Western capitalism and liberalism, socialism, the discourses of subaltern empires, etc.). Border thinking is theorized in more detail later. Since there is no outside position from which the colonial matrix can be observed and described (we are all within it), border thinking emerges in the process of delinking from the colonial matrix and escaping from its control. Suffice it to say here that, by border thinking, we mean a specific epistemic response from the exteriority of Western modernity, a response from the outside created from the perspective of the inside (that is,

the exteriority in building its own identity as humanitas). This means that while we are all in the colonial matrix, not everyone belongs to its memories, feelings, and ways of sensing. Many of us have been "trapped" in the colonial matrix but do not "belong" to it. Therefore it becomes essential to delink, and border epistemology-cum-decolonial thinking is one way of doing it. Border thinking is the epistemology enacted in the variegated responses, around the globe, to the violence of the imperial territorial epistemology and the rhetoric of modernity with its familiar defects, from forced universal salvation to taking difference to sameness, from subject-object split to naturalization of Western epistemic privilege. Thus, we perform an act of demarcation or delimiting with the previous principles of interpretation of history and modernity, without which it is not possible to enact the decolonization of being, thinking, and knowledge—another crucial notion and goal that runs throughout the book and connects our otherwise divergent local histories, working for the open utopia of the global decolonial move. We, therefore, enact border thinking in building our argument, which means that we do not place ourselves as detached observers (the myth of modern epistemology) but as involved and embodied in the process we describe. We have this particular step in mind when we speak of the necessity of "learning to unlearn"—to forget what we have been taught, to break free from the thinking programs imposed on us by education, culture, and social environment, always marked by the Western imperial reason.

Therefore, when we say that we became interested in the colonial question, we do not mean that we became immersed in the meticulous diachronic study and detached detailed comparison of the conquest of the New World and the imperial march of Russia taking over Eurasia. Rather we felt that, under all their differences and incommensurability, these local histories that we have just sketchily presented, share some kind of common logic in the way coloniality (the logic under all forms of colonialism since 1500) affected the consciousness, subjectivity, economy, gender and sexual relations, thinking, social and political processes of peripheral Eurasia and South/Central America and the Caribbean. This commonality, as we discovered later and try to demonstrate in what follows, was not connected with the histories of concrete empires and their colonies regarded as isolated and well-formed entities to be compared within the Western comparative studies approach, but rather was a result of what can be called "global coloniality" and defined as a model of power relations that came into existence as a consequence of the Western imperial expansion but did not end with the official end of colonialism and colonial administrations. It survives in culture, labor, intersubjective relations, knowledge production, books, cultural patterns, and other

aspects of modern existence (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243). The word "coloniality" has a specific theoretical and historical meaning for us as members of modernity/coloniality international collective (Escobar 2007, Yehia 2006). Historically, coloniality names the darker side of modernity. Conceptually, coloniality is the hidden side of modernity. By writing modernity/coloniality, we mean that coloniality is constitutive of modernity and there is no modernity without coloniality.

By using the concept of "global coloniality," we want to avoid such terms as "alternative" or "peripheral modernities," at the same time underlying the hidden agenda of modernity, alternative or peripheral. We also intent to go beyond the British colonial history on which postcolonial studies were largely built and attempt to reinscribe the forgotten colonial history of the Spanish empire and take into account the enormous significance of the surfacing of the Atlantic economy (the western coasts of Africa, the western coasts of Europe and the eastern coasts of the Americas), displacing the weight that the Mediterranean had for the Western confines of the world until 1500. Furthermore, we take into account the Russian colonial history, and the split of the Enlightenment project into two modernities (the liberal and the socialist) after 1917. Subsequently, with the fall of the Soviet Union, today's neoliberalism is running wild, creating the conditions for the emergence of what we describe here as polycentric capitalism.

Whether the historical foundation of modernity is located in the sixteenth century, the "discovery" of America, and the European Renaissance or in the European Enlightenment and the French Revolution, modernity has been explicitly and implicitly linked with Western Christendom, secularization, Western types of imperialism (i.e., Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, England, the U.S.), and capitalist economy. In that Eurocentric version of modernity, fashioned from the very imperial history of Europe, coloniality had to remain silenced. But the triumphal march of modernity cannot be celebrated from the imperial perspective without bringing to the foreground that religious salvation implied the extirpation of idolatry; civilization meant the eradication of non-European modes of life, economy, and political organization; and a development within capitalist economy and market democracy in Western political theory. In that version of history, two major issues are left in the background that helps in enhancing the idea of modernity and hiding the logic of coloniality.

The first was the triumphal conceptualization of modernity and its hidden complicity with the spatial and temporal "differences" and with coloniality. Modernity, to be conceived as such, needed (and still needs) a break with the past within internal European history. Therefore, it colonized time

and invented the idea of the Middle Ages thus putting in place the historical foundation of modern time. Almost simultaneously, the very concept of "discovery of America" contributed to the historical foundation of modern space. It was a discovery of a continent that did not yet exist, as there was no such a thing as America when Columbus landed in the Caribbean islands. Furthermore, the Christian conceptualization of the "discovery" of a continent that has been inhabited for about thirty thousands years, according to current estimates, was marked by the efforts of Christian intellectuals in the sixteenth century to make the "new" continent and people fit biblical history and the Christian Tripartite geopolitical order. It was from and in Europe that the classification of the world emerged and not from Asia, Africa, or America. The Middle Ages were integrated into the history of Europe, while the histories of Asia, Africa, and America were denied as history. By the eighteenth century, when the "barbarians" in space where transformed (e.g., Lafitau 1724) into the "primitives" in time, the colonization of the world by the European Empire brought together and distinguished the time/space of modernity from the time/space of non-modern Europe and non-modern America, Asia, and Africa.[2] "Modern" imperialism and, therefore, colonialism (as distinct from Roman, Islamic, and Ottoman) rests on two basic and interrelated pillars: the internal colonization of time in the internal history of Europe (i.e., the Middle Ages) and the external colonization of space in the external history of Europe (of the Americas first, by Spain and Portugal; of Africa and Asia since the nineteenth century by England and France; and of strategic places of the globe, mainly since the second half of the twentieth century by the U.S.).

Thus, we make the distinction here between imperialism/colonialism as singular, historical processes, on the one hand, and the rhetoric of modernity/the logic of coloniality, on the other. From the biblical macro-narrative, we inherited the idea that there is a linear history from the creation of the first man and the first woman by God until the final judgment. From Georg W. F. Hegel, we inherited the secular version of the sacred narrative: the idea that History is a linear process that began in the East many centuries ago, then moved West and, at the time Hegel was writing, History was dwelling in Germany, although its future was already destined to move further West to the United States of America (Hegel [1822] 1991). From Frances Fukuyama (1992), we inherited the idea that History has arrived at its end. Although these macro-narratives are Christian and Western, the expansion of the West all over the globe has made these narratives the points of reference (not necessarily of conviction) for the entire world—similar to the way Hollywood and Wall Street are also global reference points. The concepts of

colonial and imperial differences alter significantly the calm waters of a linear history that has arrived at its end with the collapse of the Soviet Union, as Fukuyama has it. The rhetoric of modernity (i.e., the Renaissance idea of "les ancients et les modernes") was founded and expanded, in the internal history of Europe and the U.S., in the language of progress and newness. To be modern, people or countries had to be at the tip and the top of history, at the tip and the top of "human" evolution. With regards to the Muslims in the North of Africa, the Indians in America, the Africans in Africa and in the Americas, and the Ottomans, to be "modern" meant to be civilized and distinct from the barbarians (and after the Enlightenment, distinct from the primitives). Thus, the foundation of the rhetoric of modernity consisted of affirming the point of arrival of the societies in which the men who were telling the story and conceiving modernity were residing; it provided and still provides the justification for the continuing colonization of time and space: "bringing" modernity to the world (in terms of conversion to Christianity, to civilization, to market democracy), became a "mission" that, in the name of progress and development, has justified colonization, from the conquest of Mexico to the conquest of Iraq.

II.

Why did we decide to write this book? Several reasons motivated our decision. First and foremost, we did it as a contribution to shifting the geography of reasoning, in Lewis Gordon's formulation (Gordon 2006) and to disengage from the assumption that certain "areas" (Central Asia and the Caucasus; South/Central America, the Caribbean), or certain "minorities" in a developed country (e.g., Latinos and Latinas in the U.S.) are "objects" to be studied. We ask first not what has to be studied but *who* is doing the study and for what? In other words, why has the world been divided into areas of investigation? Who benefits from such investigations? Argentinean philosopher Rodolfo Kusch devoted all his "thinking life" (as a thinker and a philosopher within and outside of the academy) to arguing that we can make no form of affirmation without being involved and transformed in our act of affirming (Kusch 1978).

The argument of our book consists in a sustained effort to shift the geography of reasoning from the enunciated (or object/area to be described and explained) to the enunciator (the subject doing the description and explanation). This is of fundamental importance because there is an ideological assumption in mainstream epistemology according to which subjects who

are not Euro-Americans are mere tokens of their own culture. This presupposition implies that knowledge is located in a given "area" (Western Europe and the U.S.) and controlled by certain people (the secular White quantitative minority). The second reason for writing this book is to disobey such taken-for-granted assumptions. We posit ourselves as epistemic subjects who take on the world from our own lived experiences and education. And rather than being tokens of our culture, we take "as our object of study" the Western imperial formations and the Western Christian and secular elites who created institutions of knowledge that became, imperially, the measure of all possible knowledges.

We just wrote "knowledge's" in plural but it came out automatically (Microsoft Word did it) as a possessive case. Word's thesaurus does not accept it. It does not admit the plural of "knowledge," because knowledge is supposed to be singular: It is the singularity of agents and institutions who control and dictate what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. We disobey; we delink from all totalitarian epistemology and claim epistemic equity. Therefore, this book should not be read as a ¨comparative study¨ of Central Asia and the Caucasus, on the one hand, and South/Central America and the Caribbean, on the other, because both are located within the colonial matrix of power. How can one compare entities that belong to the same system? Comparing would mean to assume that the two regions are delimited by their local histories and ignore that they are interconnected by global designs: the very constitution of the modern/colonial world and the formation and transformation of the colonial matrix of power.

As we stated, we do not offer a comparative study of Central Asia, the Caucasus, South/Central America, and the Caribbean or Latinos as in the U.S.: We take our experience (not the disciplines) as an epistemic guide. Disciplinary apparati (concepts, narratives, debates, etc.) are tools to build our arguments, addressing problems and issues not framed in the disciplines. This does not mean that we want to represent (describe or speak for) the regions or the people. We just claim that we (Madina and Walter) belong to those regions and not to South Asia, France, or the U.S. Thus, our thinking is in-formed geo- and body politically. No essences are invoked. What is invoked is how we inhabit the colonial matrix and respond to it. Therefore we claim epistemic rights grounded in local histories and in the bodies instead of being grounded in disciplinary principles established in local histories and by body agents with whom we do not identify. A common dictum says that Native Americans have wisdom and Whites have science, that Blacks have experience and Whites have knowledge. We do not recognize such common assumptions. We disobey and delink from them. And we are

not claiming for recognition of the right to exist. Our claim is stronger: We claim that future epistemologies are being and will be constructed with their "back" toward the West, not competing with the West but delinking from it. For, if decolonial epistemology engages in competition with Western epistemology, the war is lost before the first battle: "Competing" means playing by the same rules of the epistemic game. We instead conceive the decolonial as an option. By so doing, all "competing" alternatives become merely options. Those options could be at the level of system of ideas (Christianity, Islamism, Judaism, Liberalism, Marxism) or disciplinary formations (Social Sciences and the Humanities, Professional Schools, Natural Sciences). When one looks at a system of ideas or disciplinary formations as options, one realizes that there is no single truth to be defended or imposed. There are only options to be engaged with. The road to pluriversality begins when we accept that there are options to be engaged and no universal truth to defend. The rules of the epistemic game are precisely what we are contesting and disengaging from. At the same time, we look for networking and building solidarity with projects moving in the same direction around the world. "Solidarity" should not be confused with "charity." You can be "in solidarity" with people struggling for food in the world, meaning that you are sympathetic and justify their fight. But they would not care much about your "solidarity," which is indeed a "paternalistic charity." "Solidarity" in decolonial terms is reciprocal: If you are in solidarity, you have to be a partner and be considered as a partner by the institutions and agencies with which you are in solidarity. In sum, we are not claiming recognition, inclusion, or the right to exist—we know that we belong to global trajectories that do not pretend to compete with modern Western epistemology—rather we intend to move in a different direction, to delink, to shift the geography of reasoning.

The third reason for writing this book is in revolt against the organization of the world in boxes, in areas to be studied or their natural resources to be exploited. In such an obviously imperial order of knowledge, what has the Caucasus and Central Asia to do with South America and the Caribbean and with Latino/as in the U.S.? A lot, we sustain, because they all are connected through the logic of coloniality (or the colonial matrix of power) that has guided the world order and Euro-American leadership. What we are saying is that the mentioned areas and people are not linked as objects but through the logic of imperial enunciation.

"Learning to unlearn in order to relearn" is a crucial principle in the curriculum of Amawtay Wasi [The Intercultural University of the People and Nations of Ecuador],[3] aimed at the development of reflective and intuitive practices of wise people rather than Western style professionals, by orga-

nizing various "learning environments where the building of knowledge is interrelated with research, dialogue and projects and services" (García 2004: 329). We need to make several clarifying points to explain why our book is titled after the Amawtay Wasi project of higher education and not after some model that Harvard, Cambridge, Le College the France, or Heidelberg (to mention just a few possibilities), may offer.[4]

Amawtay Wasi is a project lead by indigenous intellectuals and activists in collaboration with non-Indians (Ecuadorians of European descent of mixed blood and mind). The project emerges after a long series of claims, from land claims in the 1970s, to bicultural education, from the right of political interventions argued through the concept of "interculturality" (which we explain later), to the right to create institutions of higher education under indigenous leadership. This leadership does not mean that it is an Indigenous university exclusively for indigenous people, as was the case with the national Ecuadorian university created by creoles of European descent and mestizos, which indeed, at the beginning, was meant only for high-class mestizos and European descent students. In 1987, the Constitution of Ecuador was reformed and one of the changes allowed Indians to register at national universities. It should be added that the creation of Amawtay Wasi is part of the political processes led by Indigenous Nations that forced numerous claims into the new Constitution of Ecuador, including reconceptualizing "nature" as life to which we, as humans, also belong, and having done with the four hundred years of Baconian principles according to which "nature" is outside of us to be exploited and dominated. However, Indigenous actors (epistemic and political) soon realized, on the one hand, the disadvantages they had in competing with students who were born and raised in the same spirit that the national university was reproducing. On the other hand, they realized that, whatever effort they make to fulfill the university requirements, they will be learning "how to be according to national expectations regarding the indigenous population" but not learning to "be themselves." For this reason, Amawtay Wasi is open to all Ecuadorians, and not only to indigenous people. The concept of "interculturalidad" was created to highlight the emergence of political and epistemic rights that both the colonial and nation-state administration had denied to indigenous nations.

In addition to that, the institution was conceived as a pluriversity although the Minister of Education did not accept such a denomination. The concept of inter-culturalidad was connected with the indigenous project, working toward the constitution of a pluri-national state; a claim that is also made in Bolivia and has been reinforced by the government of Evo Morales. Clearly

then, an institution such as Amawtay Wasi has significant implications in higher education, public policy, and international relations.[5]

The philosophy and conceptual curricular structure is clearly delinking from the history of Western university as an institution, from its origins in the Middle Ages to the corporate university that dominates today in the U.S. and is gaining ground in Europe and other parts of the world (Tlostanova 2004b, Mignolo 2003). "Delinking" does not mean that the university will be driven by "Indian cosmology" or that its curriculum will be structured and based on some ideal perennial "Indian" knowledge modeled before the conquest and colonization, when there was no "Indian" as a concept and the territory of today's Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia were a part of Tawantinsuyu [the world in four parts] and the major languages there were Aymara (mainly in what is today Bolivia), Quechua (mainly in what is today Peru), and Quichua (mainly in what is today Ecuador). "Delinking" means basically shifting the geography of reason[6] and planning and organizing knowledge from the "Indigenous" American point of view instead of having only one option, that is, the university organized from the point of view of "Creoles and Mestizos," who adopted the model created by the "Indigenous" Europeans of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Amawtay Wasi does not reject the existing knowledge (in science, technology, medicine, social sciences, etc.), but it subsumes it within the vision, needs, and life style of Indigenous nations. Amawtay Wasi is founded and grounded not in an authentic or essentialist concept of knowledge, but in border thinking or border gnosis. "Interculturality" is precisely an expression of that epistemic and hermeneutic foundation based on cross-cultural dialogue, a transdisciplinary approach, and an imparative philosophy (from the Latin imparare—to learn in a pluralistic environment) (Panikkar 2000).

In the center of the cognitive and educational matrix of Amawtay Wasi stands a deeper fundamental principle (Kawsay) shared by the Indigenous people—the inextricable link between the "being," the "existence," and the "doing" (the human agency), or the principle of relational-experiential rationality and building knowledge not outside the essence and existence of being, not by presenting a problem outside of its context, but by practicing community learning as an ongoing and never-ending open process, based on complexity and relationism, complementarity and reciprocity, the shift from the subject-object relations to the subject-subject model instead of the dominant fragmentation, to the learning-unlearning-relearning path, and from accumulating knowledge to its critical and creative understanding and integration in wisdom.

The curriculum, very complex indeed, is basically structured—spatially—in the four spheres or spaces of learning and—chronologically—in five years of schooling. Spatially, it is framed in four corners or houses of learning and modeled on the Southern Cross, which in its turn was the spatial model for the territory of Tawantinsuyu (the "map" of the Incanate). At the center stands the house of Wisdom, wisdom being the ultimate goal of the university. In each corner, Western knowledge is detached from Western cosmology and "incorporated" and subsumed in Indigenous cosmology. Obviously, we cannot expect to find here genomic or nanotechnology institutes, not just at Amawtay Wasi but not even in South/Central America and in the Caribbean in general.[7] What we should expect from a project such as Amawtay Wasi is to shift the geography of reasoning and the very goals of knowledge and understanding. Learning is related to doing and experience. From the viewpoint of Indigenous leaders, Western knowledge, both in the colonial and the national period, was an instrument of (epistemic) colonization. As a result, the aim of such a shift is not destruction but rather creation of another model of knowledge and understanding of the world and human beings.

If the spatial structure is organized in four corners or houses of knowledge and a center, the chronological process of learning has five levels. The center of space coincides with the present in time. The first level is devoted to "learning to think doing things as a community." The second level aims at "learning to learn," the third strives for "learning to unlearn and relearn," and the fourth- for "learning to undertake." The last, fifth level, which is also at the center (similarly to Cuzco, the capital of the Incanate, which was at the center of the world but also the present of four previous eras, or "Suns" as the Incas counted each era), is devoted to "Learning throughout life." The university aims at decolonizing knowledge and being and promoting communities of "buen vivir," or "the fullness of life." "Sumak" is better translated into Spanish as "plenitude" or "fullness" in English. "Sumak Kawsay" would be better understood as precisely living the fullness of life rather than "buen vivir" or "living well," where "buen" and "well" are too attached to the materiality of life, to living as possessing things, to surrounding oneself with objects transformed into commodities, and feeling "happy" when life allows us to buy. Living well rather than living better than the other or better than my neighbor means a life in fullness that cannot be achieved within a capitalist economy. This concept necessarily presupposes the assumption that humans, nature, and the entire cosmos are alive to the extent that they are fully related and ontologically existing in this relational dynamic. According to Amawtay

Wasi vision, "education is viewed as learning to achieve relationalism, symbolized experience, symbolic language as a way to advance towards wisdom and to approach an understanding of living well" (García 2004: 288–89).

Such a model of education and cognition is possible to imagine in other locales of the world that have retained the indigenous knowledges (be it India, China, or Central Asia). However, the question is not only to reorganize universities according to the principles similar to Ecuador University and based on local histories and cosmologies but also to go beyond the university and shift the geography of reasoning and the approach to the interpretation of reality, history, philosophy, or politics of intellectuals worldwide. The basic questions are these: What kind of knowledges are produced and transformed? Who produces and transforms them, why, and for whom? What knowledge contributes to management for the benefit of the few, and what knowledges contribute to the liberation of the many from the management of the few? We are not always capable of changing the dominant power machines that run the systems of education or disciplines, in the same way we do not always have simple access to and the invigorating link with the communities and their knowledge and learning practices as with Amawtay Wasi. However, this does not mean that we cannot create the volatile communities of critical decolonial thought, the global coalitions of thinkers who chose as their main principle the Abya Yala's "learning to unlearn in order to relearn."

We take "learning to unlearn in order to relearn" as a guiding principle of this book and assume the goals and consequences of the radical proposal of Amawtay Wasi. We are not Indigenous Americans, but that does not mean that we cannot learn from them in order to unlearn what we have learned through our education or cultural environment and to relearn from the point of view of knowledge and understanding generated by the people and communities that have been disavowed in their participation in education, in the state and public policy, and in international relations and whose view of economic administration has been cast as "traditional" and troublesome for "development" proper. We are not appropriating Indigenous categories to the benefit of non-Indigenous intellectuals and scholars employed by public or private universities. This caveat would have not been necessary, if instead of Indigenous thinkers, we relied on the Frankfurt School or French postmodernism. Would a trans-diasporic multiethnic scholar living in Moscow and an Argentinean living in the U.S. be accused of appropriating Adorno or Baudrillard? If that were the path we had followed, it would have seemed "natural" that a Caucasus-Central Asian scholar in Moscow and an Argentine in the U.S., who became a Hispanic or Latino, learned from critical

imperial scholarship. But, to learn from Indigenous thinkers could be rendered as "appropriation." Such biased interpretations are a result of remaining within the limits and blindness of modern epistemology.

III.

What do we mean by "thinking decolonially"? And, how does it relate to the title, *Learning to Unlearn*? Is it an expression parallel to many already existing ones: thinking philosophically, thinking economically, or thinking politically, where invariably, an action is invoked ("thinking") and a field in which the act of thinking is performed (economy, philosophy, politics)? There is a clear difference in the fields invoked here and in the way they can be used: economics, philosophy, politics can refer to academic disciplines; but they can also refer to a wider range of activities, not necessarily academic. The CEO of a corporation thinks economically and politically, too. The next presidential candidate thinks politically and economically as well, albeit not within the disciplines but within a larger field of social actions and discourses, the political field, and so forth.

"Decolonial thinking" is formulating the epistemic, political, and ethical basis for global decolonial options *in* the existing world order, which we all witness or take part in today. Where do "we" (scholars, intellectuals, journalists, activists) operate? Not in the sphere of the state or the market but in the public sphere, in the domain and terrain of the civil and political society, which we explain here. What is the "decolonial field" in relation to which "thinking decolonially" can have a meaning then? "Decolonial" presupposes first that there is another field, the field of coloniality (that is, the colonial matrix of power), from which it is assumed one should delink or disengage: This is the first meaning of decolonial, not anticolonial, but moving away from the colonial. The term "colonial" has a specific meaning in decolonial thinking. It refers not to the Roman Empire's understanding of a colony as a polity built or ruled by imperial order but to the modern meaning of "colonial" as a "conquered and managed territory" linked to the process of European "colonization," grounded in destroying the existing social order and imposing one responding to the needs and habitus of the conquerors. By "colonies," we refer in this book to the type of imperial-colonial interconnections between the imperial core countries of Europe (Spain, Portugal, France, England, Holland, and to a lesser extent Italy and Germany) from approximately 1500 onward. This is a particular type of imperial-colonial relations, classified mainly by the emergence of "capitalism" (as defined by

Max Weber (1904/05) and "imperialism" (as defined by J. A. Hobson ([1902] 2002), later appropriated and altered by Marxist popularizes such as V. Lenin ([1917] 1963), R. Luxembourg (1913), and others). Hence, by the early twentieth century, the legacy of the term "imperium" was translated into modern English as "imperialism" and connected to the already flourishing new type of economy, "capitalism." We ask, at the same time, what kind of imperial-colonial relations characterized the Russian Czardom/Empire and the Soviet Union? How did the colonial matrix "translate" from the Atlantic to Eurasia?

Decoloniality means projecting decolonial thinking over the colonial matrix of power. The latter is an analytic concept, but its very creation already implies decolonial thinking. Liberal and Marxist thinkers, political theorists, and economic experts all accept that the current global economy is capitalist. The only difference is that some of them are happy and want to maintain it (even during and after the crisis and legal corruption of Wall Street in 2007–2008) and others are unhappy and want to dismantle it. A decolonial thinker is with neither of them, and the reason is that "capitalist economy" is not the core analytic concept of decolonial thinking, whereas the "colonial matrix of power" is.

Polycentric capitalism made the modern idea of "revolution" obsolete for two reasons. One is that, in polycentric capitalism, in spite of the competition for control of authority (current conflicts between capital and state and between non-Western states embracing a capitalist economy, like China and Russia), there is no more room for an idea of revolution that consists in taking control of the state (like the bourgeoisie did in Europe over the monarchy; the Bolsheviks over the Russian Czars; like the Creole of European descent (except in Haiti) did in the Americas since the end of the eighteenth century; or the natives did in Asia and Africa, during the era of decolonization, after World War II). The second reason is that all the revolutions we have mentioned were revolutions within the same cosmology, within the same rules of the game. And the word "revolution" itself is meaningful only in the ideology of progress and development within the realm of sameness. At the moment when the colonial matrix of power reached a global scope, from the U.S. and European Union to China, India, and Brazil, one can argue that the very idea of revolution (a keyword in the vocabulary of modernity) lost its historical possibilities. Decolonial thinking offers an essentially different approach—the decolonial option. What is the grammar of decoloniality that could help advance transformative projects beyond the "revolutionary" language and expectations of modernity? Instead of digging into Western archives to find a Saint Paul or a Spinoza who would get us out of the impasse, we would like to dig into derogated archives, abased authors, concepts, and dissenting

initiatives, which grew out of dissenting energies and minds that thought the world otherwise, that is, on the basis of a non-Western or not-quite-Western genealogy of knowledge. However, since the West is all over and in all of us, non-Western does not mean outside. It means residing in exteriority, that is, the outside created by the inside, by the imperial reason of Western control of knowledge (i.e., coloniality of knowledge and of being). The historical and logical foundation of exteriority is a Western epistemic construction of racism and the patriarchal control of knowledge and understanding.

Decolonial thinking and decolonial options are projects led and created by the people whom Frantz Fanon called "les damnés de la terre" (1967): all those humiliated, devalued, disregarded, disavowed, and confronting the trauma of the "colonial wound,"[8] a trauma that no modern psychoanalyst can cure, as Fanon himself experienced in Algeria (1967, Chapter V). "Damnés," in the colonial matrix, is a scalar category pervading all spheres of the social and not only the dispossessed. We believe that Fanon (a professional educated in France) placed himself among the damnés. The damnés should not be understood in economic terms (poverty) but mainly in racial terms (inferior human beings). Living experience generates knowledge to deal with the very foundation of a system of knowledge and subjectivity that constructed the damnés. Decolonizing knowledge and being means to generate knowledge to solve the problems in which the damnés have been placed as damnés. "Ending poverty" means maintaining the colonial matrix of power that produced and reproduced the dispossessed damnés. The decolonial intellectual and the decolonial political society link epistemology, politics, and ethics in the process of decolonizing knowledge and being. Radical "social movements" like La Via Campesina and Food Sovereignty are good examples of transnational projects decolonizing knowledge and being (La Via Campesina 2008, Abergel 2005, Desmarias 2007). Still another case is the Indigenous projects across the Americas, which have lately congregated in the annual Americas Social Forum. The project of Evo Morales's government has generated a significant and clear discourse about what it means to decolonize the state and the economy.

These are, in a nutshell, some of the questions that decolonial thinkers ask. By asking these kinds of questions, we start thinking decolonially and engage ourselves in a transdisciplinary analytic in which the problems precede the method. Our approach departs from the canonical scholarly assumptions in the humanities and social sciences and has implications for other areas of knowledge, in natural sciences as well as in professional schools.[9] By switching the emphasis from method to problems, a scholar, intellectual, or researcher is thrown into the world rather than remaining

within the discipline. Instead of the study or analysis of the existing post-colonial and neocolonialist phenomena and processes, be it diaspora, exile, nationalism, biopolitics, etc., and maintaining the divide between the known object and the knowing subject, for the decolonial approach to study a phenomenon (idea, social event, art work) is only the first step toward a project, toward *solving a problem, toward answering a question.* The decolonial approach departs from the canonical distinction, in the humanities and social sciences, between explanation and understanding; between nomothetic and idiographic sciences. Studying and investigating are only preliminary steps in formulating decolonial arguments in public policy or education. The problems the decolonial thinkers explore are problems emerging from the modern-colonial matrix of power, that is, from the modern rhetoric of salvation hiding the colonial logic (coloniality) of oppression, control, and domination. Knowledge and understanding for decolonial thinkers overrule and overcome expert knowledge. While expertise is necessary, it is, at the same time, dangerous, for it forecloses dialogue, as the expert is the Deus absconditius, the observer who cannot be observed because, precisely, he or she is An Expert! While disciplinary knowledge in the social sciences and the humanities focuses on objects (culture, society, economy, politics), decolonial thinking shifts the politics of knowledge toward problems and questions that are hidden by the rhetoric of modernity.

To what problems do we refer and explore further later? They are problems emerging from the modern-colonial matrix of power, that is, from the modern rhetoric of salvation hiding the colonial logic (coloniality) of oppression, control, and domination. Thus, the analytic of coloniality is the necessary condition for prospective decolonial arguments—the decolonial option presupposes the analytic of the colonial matrix, in the same way as psychoanalysis presupposes the analytic of the unconscious or the international proletariat revolution presupposes the analytic of the logic of capital. Therefore, while disciplinary knowledge in the social sciences and the humanities focuses on objects (culture, society, economy, politics), decolonial thinking shifts the politics of knowledge toward problems and questions that are hidden by the rhetoric of modernity. For example, the general concern to fight poverty demands from the social sciences to study the conditions under which poverty could be eliminated, while decolonial thinking focuses on the hidden reasons that created and naturalized poverty. Decolonial public policy and education start from this premise.

Decolonial thinking can and should work effectively at any level and sphere of education (schools, colleges, higher education), as is manifested in case of Amawtay Wasi; and it can be very effective in another area of educa-

tion: the media (particularly independent media, because mainstream media reproduces and perpetuates—in different scale and to a different degree—the coloniality of knowledge and of being) (Decolonizing the Digital 2009). Decolonial thinkers will not be listened to in Davos or among the G8; they will not be invited to a dialogue in the UN (and a wide range of similar subordinate institutions). But decolonial thinking works within the global political society, confronting the consequences of the colonial differences because "imperial international law and corporations are there" and "immigration is here."

"Political society" is a concept introduced by Indian historian Partha Chatterjee (Chatterjee 2004). He refers to a wide range of collective activities that no longer belong to the sphere of the civil society that expresses itself mainly through voting every two, four, or six years. The liberal model of society then begins to crack and distinct spheres emerge between the civil society and the state and between the civil society and the market. Furthermore, the political society no longer keeps the relative homogeneity of the Europe-American civil society, but it is emerging in the non-West and transforming the West through massive migrations from the non-West. Briefly, political society is not a modern concept but a decolonial one. If, within the liberal model of social organization, we can imagine a triangle with "the state," "the economy," and the "civil society" as its angles, in the colonial matrix of power, we have to imagine a tetragon, consisting of the modern/colonial state, the imperial/colonial market, the civil colonial society formed by European migrants, and the political society emerging out of the imperial/colonial history in which these four domains are the sites of struggle for control, domination, and liberation. One of the basic components of the civil society, in the liberal model (modern and Euro-American), which feeds the state and the market, is "education." Education, from a decolonial perspective, is located in the domain of "knowledge and subjectivity" and can be divided between "instruction" (skill, knowledge for practical purposes, as is clear today in the "universities" created in the corporate world) and "nurturing" (knowledge and understanding for personal and collective well-being).

In the liberal model, education and instruction communicate with "the state" and "the market" and are geared toward the instruction of experts, on the one hand, and the education of citizens (in which experts are included), on the other. Consumption is part of the educational process at the moment in which education itself becomes a commodity and sustains the corporate university (see Chapter 7). So we can imagine double arrows connecting the citizens in the civil society with the state and the market. However, the arrows connecting "the state" and "the market" confirm the domain of "the

untouchable," to which members of the civil society have little access. The media plays precisely, the role of a "mediator"; in fact, more than a mediator, it is an agent of economic and authority control by the market and the state. In the colonial matrix of power, the liberal model is contested by the emergence of national and global political societies (often referred to as "social movements"). The coming into being of indymedia, filling the gaps and uncovering the silences of official TV channels and newspapers, becomes part of the political society. The role of the decolonial intellectual, in the academia and in the media, is then defined by his or her task in the process of decolonizing knowledge and being. Although the entire sphere of the political society could not be described as decolonial (e.g., the sphere of the political society that makes claims to improve living conditions without questioning the colonial matrix of power is not), we can define a growing sector of the political society as decolonial—the decolonial political society. "Learning to unlearn" describes the future of decolonial education and the problems it has to face. "Education" is not one and universal. It is always entangled with projects of regulation, assimilation, transformation, conservation. Learning to unlearn the imperial education is the starting point of decolonial education (Candau 2009).

Instruction and education, which went hand in hand in both the liberal model and the socialist version of modernity, have as their goal the training of the skillful professionals and the nurturing of either liberal or socialist subjects. In the corporate university, the role of education is the formation of "experts." "Scientific communism" in the Soviet Union was no less compulsive than the presumable liberties in Western liberal societies. After the fall of the Soviet Union, neo-liberalism strengthened its philosophy of education by making the central role of education that of an "expert." In so doing, neo-liberalism merged in the figure of the "expert," both in instruction and in nurturing. Decolonial thinking, instead, follows the philosophical principle set by the planners of Amawtay Wasi described previously, where decolonization of knowledge and being, from an Amerindian perspective, does not mean inclusion in the existing social system, governed by the colonial matrix of power, but instead unlearning what imperial/colonial designs have naturalized as the only way to know and the only way to be. Decolonial thinking and decolonial option are akin and conversant with these transforming processes taking place in the sphere of the "civil society." And, partly, they are an attempt to contribute to both—the conceptual formations for instruction and the transforming of subjectivities in nurturing. But the decolonial option projects itself as an intervention in the sphere of "political society" as well.

As the examples of Fanon and Amawtay Wasi suggest, there is a corridor

between the profession, the academy, and the decolonial political society. Decolonial thinking is then transdisciplinary (not interdisciplinary), in the sense of going beyond the existing disciplines, of rejecting the "disciplinary decadence" and aiming at undisciplining knowledge. Thinking decolonially in the academy means to assume the same or similar problems articulated in and by decolonial political society. This is a change of terrain, a shift in the geography of reason: Instead of an object of study determined by disciplinary and academic demands, we face problems identified by les damnés acting in the decolonial political society. Living experiences (which I. Kant identified as preconditions of abstract knowledge) cannot be universalized. The type of living experience that Kant underwent is not the same as those experienced by Fanon. That is why geo- and body politics of knowledge is of the essence in decolonial thinking. And this knowledge is generated in the process of transformation enacted in decolonial political society. Hence, decolonial thinking in the academy has a double role:

a. Its contribution to decolonize knowledge and being.
b. Its joining the processes initiated in and by the actors of the political society.

Decolonial projects in the mid-twentieth century were at first built into the existing system of two modernities. What we encounter in postcolonial countries, after the second wave of decolonization, is mostly neocolonialism. The collapse of the Soviet system, even if incomplete (as Russia retains several of its colonies and clings to the symbolic tokens of its former imperial grandeur), was the next act in this global show of the imposing of the new form of coloniality onto the world. In today's conditions of the tectonic change from one power system, linked to the U.S. as its center, to a new polycentric one, it is crucial that the colonized or better, the damnés, the nodes of border thinking in the world, could establish a dialogue and create networks globally. What is crucial here is not to try to find a better place in the existing global coloniality but to destroy this coloniality and create an other world. It is an unavoidable process because coloniality carries in it the seeds of the decolonial agency.

Decolonial options orient the acts of delinking (at the same time being constituted by them) from the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality. Today's global coloniality has slipped out of Western imperial hands. As a consequence, it becomes a terrain of disputes between Western and non-Western countries (and unions, such as the EU and UNASUR), disputes already at work between the G8 and the G5 (China, India, Brazil, Mexico,

and South Africa). The emerging decolonial political society, therefore, faces a situation that goes beyond each nation-state. In this regard, La Via Campesina and Indigenous projects across the Americas, associated with New Zealand and Australian aboriginals, as well as the World Social Forum, are creating conditions for delinking from the colonial matrix of power, at the moment when the colonial matrix of power is "uniting in conflict" the G8, G5, and BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China). If, then, these countries and unions are operating within the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality, the decolonial political society is working toward the mutation of the colonial matrix of power into different forms of communal (not communist) social organization, in which the role of the economy will not be that of accumulation and the economy will not be the site of competitiveness and exploitation but the site in which human beings work to live rather than live to work for others who accumulate.

The control of the economic sphere in the colonial matrix of power (referred to as "capitalism" in liberal and Marxist terminology), is now disputed by several countries (U.S., China, Japan, the formation of oil-based Middle East countries, etc.). As the control of the economy (and therefore the control of labor and natural resources) is disputed by several countries, the spheres of the control of authority (political and military) become contested and off-centered as well. Instead of liberalism versus socialism, the rivalry over the control of authority in a polycentric capitalism has multiple orientations and leads to the re-inscription in the political arena of the conceptions of society and life that have been pushed aside, disavowed, or marginalized by imperial expansion of Western Christianity and liberalism (South America, India, North and Sub-Saharan Africa) and by Orthodox Christianity and socialism (Central Asia, the Caucasus). The dispute for the control of knowledge is also at work: The geopolitics and body politics of knowledge are the emerging sites contesting the Western imperial hegemony of theo- and ego-politics of knowledge (we come back to these categories).

Networking across the globe, across languages and religions, and across institutions is one of the major tasks of decolonial thinkers and doers working toward global futures no longer controlled by the colonial matrix of power, once in the hands of Western empires but today being disputed by different centers grounded in a capitalist economy. Even though the government of Evo Morales, in Bolivia, introduced decolonial thinking in the sphere of the state and the economy, a series of events around the highway across the Amazon prompted a protest by the Indigenous communities living in the area. Such a heatedly debated march against Evo Morales as the "TIPNIS case" demonstrated the limits of decolonization in the sphere of the

State (Friedman-Rudovsky 2011). For the time being decoloniaity remains exclusively a project of the political society. Recently, it authorized the creation of three universities led by indigenous leaders and geared toward an education that brings the needs and interests of indigenous people to the curriculum. These kinds of experience, added to Amawtay Wasi, are the prime examples of thinking decolonially, that is, delinking from the liberal model of education and the growing corporative values invading higher education.

We take the lead from these experiences and link "learning to unlearn" to "thinking decolonially." Thinking decolonially means to feel and live beyond competition and hatred, which nourish each other. However, moving beyond both means delinking from the hegemonic vision of society grounded in corporate values with the support of state regulations. Competition and hatred prevents caring for each other. The Christian ideal of love (love yourself as you love your neighbor) and national state ideal of love (monolingual and monocultural) work in tandem with competition and its consequence, hatred (Mignolo 2000, Chapter 6). Learning to unlearn is basically pedagogical. And although learning to unlearn could be thought out and practiced in a non-decolonial project, there is already a genealogy of thought in which both are closely connected. It is in this genealogy of thought that we place our argument in the following chapters.[10]

IV.

The first part of the book opens with two jointly authored chapters. In the first chapter, "The Logic of Coloniality and the Limits of Postcoloniality: Colonial Studies, Postcoloniality, and Decoloniality," we aim at demarcating decolonial thinking from postcolonial studies and theory. Acknowledging the contributions made by postcolonial studies and theories in bringing the "colonial" into critical debates, we depart from it in two points. We start from the modern/colonial formation, in the sixteenth century, of the colonial matrix of power (Quijano 1992, 2000). The experience of British India and Orientalism, in which postcolonial studies and theories are grounded, is only part of the picture, imbedded in the already existing colonial matrix. Occidentalism, which is the necessary condition for the emergence of Orientalism, is left out in postcolonial studies. And the Russian/Soviet Union history and their respective colonies are also not accounted for.

In the second chapter, "Theorizing *from* the Borders; Shifting *to* the Geo- and Body Politics of Knowledge," we attempt to conceptualize border thinking as a manifestation of today's epistemic shift from the theo- and

egopolitics of knowledge to the geo- and body politics of knowledge. The basic idea is that the gradual expansion of Western (Euro-American) concepts of knowledge and life has created borders with the so-called non-Western world at all levels of the colonial matrix. "Theorizing from the borders" is, in our view, a way of dwelling, being, and thinking in the borders. While it is not possible to do away with Western conceptual apparatus and its implementation, it is far from obvious that it should be adopted and adapted by the rest of the world. Hence comes the "double consciousness," as the famous African-American sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois described his experience of being Black and American, a condition under which lives the majority of the world population.

Parts II and III are devoted to exploring these issues in further detail. In other words, our respective histories, languages, memories, sensibilities, academic training, and the like do not correspond to the imperial/colonial legacies of the British Empire and French colonialism in Asia and Africa. Russia and the Soviet Union, and the imperial Iberian histories in South America and the Caribbean (topped at a later date by British and French imperialism without colonies), depart from both European Marxism and postmodernity and the corresponding postcoloniality. In a nutshell, if postmodernity is the internal and imperial overcoming of modernity, postcoloniality is the corresponding version of overcoming modernity/coloniality translated into postmodernity/postcoloniality.

Part II opens with Madina's chapter entitled "Transcultural Tricksters in between Empires: 'Suspended' Indigenous Agency in the Non-European Russian/Soviet (Ex-)Colonies and the Decolonial Option." It starts with a brief critical assessment of the existing area studies research on Central Asia and the Caucasus, taking into account the coloniality of knowledge, with its persistent Orientalism and progressivism and the geo- and body politics of knowledge as the most important yet often neglected defining factors of delinking from Orientalism and progressivism. The chapter argues that a more promising positioning is to be found in research produced by the local scholars themselves, provided they delink from the rhetoric of modernity with its underlying logic of coloniality. One of the basic elements of this sensibility in the making is the vital link with the specific negotiating subjectivity of a trickster that is to be found in such border locales as the Caucasus and Central Asia—the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious crossroads. Being multiply colonized in an epistemic as well as economic and political sense, these regions have developed their strategies of survival, resistance to various regimes, and re-existence through border, transcultural, and transmodern models, which can constitute a way out of the contemporary opposition of

the post-Christian West and Islam and find parallels in other instances of border epistemology unfolding in the world.

This chapter briefly traces the complex history of both locales in modernity, trying to understand, under the influence of which factors they turned into, the threatening images of paradigmatic antispaces, fallen out of time, for the West, and how the distorting influence of modernization and modernity endangers the transcultural continuum of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Further on, the chapter focuses on the specific position of Indigenous epistemic and political protest in the Caucasus and Central Asia, contemplating why such movements often remain unheard. It juxtaposes Indigenous movements and epistemologies in the Caucasus and Central Asia with those in South America, striving to understand the internal and global reasons for their failure in Eurasia. This failure is connected with the ways modernity has been manifested in these locales, with the specific influence of the subaltern empires and the imperial difference, with the multiple colonization, and with the brutal experience of the Soviet modernity.

Chapter 3 also touches on the nation-building processes in contemporary Central Asia and the Caucasus and the specific internal neocolonialism as an important agent of indigenous movements' stagnation, repression, or commodification. A crucial complicating factor here is Islam, which has gradually moved into the center of indigenous movements, contrary to the South American indigenous agency. The complex relation of Islam and indigenous decolonial epistemologies is also touched on, as well as the importance of deconstructing developmentalist logic to make the renaissance of indigenous movements possible in the newly independent Eurasian states. Specific attention is paid to the aesthetic and creative ways of resistance and re-existence in various art forms in Central Asia and the Caucasus today as possible preliminary venues for the future political agency.

Chapter 4, "Non-European Soviet Ex-Colonies and the Coloniality of Gender, or How to Unlearn Western Feminism in Eurasian Borderlands" continues to elaborate on the same problematic and epistemic locale but with yet another additional dimension—that of coloniality of gender. It starts and departs from the concept of the modern colonial gender system introduced by María Lugones and interprets racialization/genderization in the non-European former and present colonies of Russia based on the mutant forms of gender discourses. In the Caucasus and Central Asia a successful Soviet zombification of the political and social imaginary has continued until now and has been accompanied by the influence of neoliberal ideologies of globalization. In the focus of the chapter stand the contemporary gender discourses of the Caucasus and particularly Central Asia that have

been developing within the well-known frame of coloniality of knowledge and being and within the simplified opposition of modernity vs. tradition, which results in the tripartite scheme or vector of gender development presented in the majority of feminist works written in and about the Caucasus and Central Asia. This scheme moves from local traditionalism through the Soviet half-tradition and half-modernity to today's ideal of Western gender emancipation as an epitome of modernity. Here, we can clearly see how the Eurocentric discourses of Western feminism and its Russian clones dominate in the gender studies of Eurasian borderlands. At the same time, the chapter concentrates on several examples of successful alternative gender discourses coming from China, South America, Africa, and so on. A dialogue with them could be fruitful for the Eurasian gender studies in the future.

Part III is composed of three chapters written by Walter. The first, "Who Speaks for the 'Human' in Human Rights? Dispensable and Bare Lives," takes the questions of subalternity and humanity to the limits. In the last analysis, subalternity, knowledge, and humanity are connected by racial and class hierarchies in the modern world. And, both are hierarchically connected with values placed on knowledge and the question of who can produce legitimate and sustainable knowledge. "Learning to unlearn" is tantamount to thinking decolonially about these commonly held assumptions.

Chapter 6, "Thinking Decolonially: Citizenship, Knowledge, and the Limits of Humanity," brings the question of subalternity to a more basic level: the concept of Human and Humanity in the modern/colonial world. Human and Humanity are linked to knowledge in very complex and ambiguous ways. In fact, there is a direct connection between racism and legitimate knowledge, and between citizenship and education, which, in their turn, impinge on the concept of Human and Rights. This is the topic of Chapter 7, "Globalization and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: The Role of the Humanities in the Corporate University." This chapter connects with the previous two through the concepts of Human and Humanity and comes back to the main thesis of the book, i.e., learning to unlearn, as a basic process of delinking from imperial education and building decolonial knowledges. "Learning to unlearn" means here a double movement: decolonizing the Humanities as inherited from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and delinking and shifting toward the making of decolonial Humanities the overarching horizon of knowledge under which science, technology, and professional schools should be conceived and enacted. Amawtay Wasi [the House of Wisdom], is the model that provides us with the need of learning to unlearn in order to relearn and to conceive of and enact the decolonial humanities.