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DECOLONIALITY AND CRISIS
INTRODUCTION

The attentive reader might ask: why a special issue on decoloniality and crisis? What is decoloniality, what do we mean by crisis, and why pair them together? The reason is simple (at least in our eyes): we see *decoloniality* and *crisis* as arguably the two key terms/processes/realities of our new millennium, which, tellingly, seem to have to come to fruition at roughly the same time. Just as the new century, certainly post-9/11, was starting to move away from the rhetoric of the “end of history” to one of a “clash of civilizations,” of permanent instability and conflict (i.e. crisis), so also an explicitly decolonial perspective was starting to gain ground, at least among radical academics and activists, primarily in the U.S., the Caribbean, and Latin America. The near simultaneous emergence of (in Walter D. Mignolo's words) a “grammar of decoloniality” and (a new sense and dimensions of) crisis needs to give us a pause.¹ Perhaps reading them side by side can be mutually illuminating, as in a sort of dialectic, whereby the mutual confrontation of the two realities adds further layers of complexity to each one.

Indeed, if there is anything that can be said about *crisis* today it is that it has ceased to be a periodic exception, an unlikely rupture in the regular course of events, and has become rather the norm, the very fabric of existence. The thesis would be familiar to readers of Schmitt, Benjamin, or Agamben, yet there are further nuances here. For someone like Agamben, for instance, while the state of exception has its roots in ancient Roman law, it comes to fruition in the concentration camps of the twentieth century, with the Jewish Holocaust as its exemplary model.² In fact, since at least the 1930s the state of exception has increasingly emerged for him as “the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics.”³ Thinking with Agamben, however, one could claim that he was both partially wrong and partially right. Agamben was partially wrong in exploring the genealogy of the state of exception from an exclusively Western angle of vision, ignoring not only how the Jewish Holocaust itself was rooted in a necropolitics already tested upon non-Western peoples for centuries, but also in how living under exceptional conditions is certainly nothing new in the global

1 Walter D. Mignolo, *The Dark Side of Western Modernity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 85.

2 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) and *State of Exception* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

3 Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2.

South.⁴ He was partially right in locating the normalization of crisis in the global North too, and no longer merely in the South. Indeed, today, in a perverse twist of fate, it is the North that has caught up with the South, rather than the other way around--hence the legitimacy of speaking about the truly *global*, planetary dimensions of the condition of crisis.

But beside its global dimensions, the crisis is a *total* one as well, manifesting itself in various spheres of collective existence. Naming some of those major manifestations would be no hard matter. At its most obvious, especially over the last half a decade, the crisis is a political and economic one, materializing not only in the first global recession since the 1930s (with arguably farther reaching consequences), but also with 2011 marked as the new "year of miracles," when the Arab Spring, the European Summer, and the American Autumn collectively challenged the very core of contemporary neo-imperial and colonial capitalism. Yet its roots go far deeper than politics or economics. Today, it makes sense to speak also of a crisis of spirituality and existential impoverishment, as conflicts over religiosity and facile distinctions between premodern violent fundamentalisms and (post)modern and civilized secularisms are giving way to both more nuanced religious visions and practices and to a more complex articulation of the relations between belief systems, power, and resistance. For those who care to listen to the climatologists, the crisis is an environmental one as well, arguably having passed beyond the tipping point and threatening, for the first time in known history, the very survival of the species. And certainly for scholars and students concerned with academic institutions and their output, the crisis is one of knowledge production and its institutional conditions, marred by both the increasing corporatization and privatization of the university (and the emergence of a whole class of newly "indebted men"), and by what Lewis Gordon has aptly called "disciplinary decadence," the ongoing decay of institutionally entrenched disciplines.⁵ Most importantly, each one of these instances of crisis is intimately interwoven with the others, from which it can be only provisionally separated for purposes of analysis.

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- 4 Aime Cesaire demonstrates, as early as the 1950s, that the true horror of the Nazi "final solution" came from the fact that some Europeans (the Nazis) were applying to other Europeans (the Jews) practices and techniques of mass extermination traditionally reserved for the European colonies. See Cesaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 36. On the concept of necropolitics, esp. in the context of the Middle East and Africa, see Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15 (1), 11-40.
- 5 On the production of "indebted" individuals, see David Graeber's *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2012), Maurizio Lazzarato's *The Making of Indebted Man* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012) and Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's *Declaration* (New York: Argo Navis Author Services, 2012). It was in April 2012 that the U.S. student debt passed the threshold of 1 trillion, while recent data tell us that 1.2 U.S. college students find themselves currently homeless. See resp. *Democracy Now!* "1T Day: As U.S. Student Debt Hits \$1 Trillion, Occupy Protests Planned for Campuses Nationwide" (April 25, 2012), at http://www.democracynow.org/2012/4/25/1_t_day_as_us_student; and *The Real News*, "U.S. Student Homelessness 10% Since Last Year," (November 28, 2013), at http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=11118. On the idea of "disciplinary decadence," see Gordon's text of the same title, *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).

Under such conditions of ongoing global and total crisis, grasping its heightened complexity proves no easy matter. Here, the optics of vision that one deploys can literally alter what one sees, or doesn't see. This is certainly the case with discussions about environmental degradation where, as scholars such as Sylvia Wynter have shown, even well-intentioned climate scientists continue to operate within Western-centered normative frameworks.⁶ And it is surely the case with recent efforts on the part of the Western Left which, after a decade of groping in the dark, seems to be finally finding its bearings in a new trinity of proposed alternatives to the political-economic dimension of the crisis: a turn to anarchism as panacea to the twin evils of market capitalism and state socialism (Graeber & Grubacic, Vodovnik); an increased emphasis on concepts such as multitude and the commons, avoiding the twentieth-century "bad history" of class and communism respectively (Hardt and Negri, Virno, de Angelis, Dyer-Whitford, Libebaugh); and a recent resurrection of what has been called the "communist hypothesis," a Kantian regulative idea of sorts meant to guide collective praxis (Badiou, Zizek, Rancière, Vattimo/Zabala, etc.).⁷ Each of these efforts, interrelated as much as they are different, never questions its own invisible presuppositions, its (sometimes openly) Eurocentric bent, and the provincial limits of its local genealogy as it seeks to project a universal design. Perhaps no one has said it better than Susan Buck-Morss who, at a gathering of nearly only white male "radical" academics during the first London-based conference on communism in 2009, made the following highly pertinent point: "We will not succeed if we continue to read only Western writers, or only writers from the non-West who enter into our debates on our terms. It will not happen if we remain within the comfort zone of any civilization into which we happen to have been born. Communism for our time demands this re-articulation, this rescue of the left, but such a time is only slowly forthcoming."⁸

It is for these reasons that we propose to read decoloniality and crisis together:

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- 6 Sylvia Wynter, "Human Being as Noun? Or *Being Human* as Praxis? Toward the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn: A Manifesto," at <http://otl2.wikispaces.com/file/view/The+Autopoietic+Turn.pdf>.
- 7 For the claim that the twenty-first century will belong to anarchism, see Graeber and Grubacic, "Anarchism, Or The Revolutionary Movement of The Twenty-First Century," *Dissident Voice* (January 6, 2004), at <http://www.dissidentvoice.org/Jan04/Graeber-Grubacic0106.htm>, and Ziga Vodovnik, "Democracy as a Verb: New Meditations on the Yugoslav Praxis," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 14, No. 4 (December 2012), 433-452. For debates on the multitude and the commons, see Hardt and Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), along with Hardt, "The Common in Communism," *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 22, issue 3 (2010); Massimo De Angelis, "The Tragedy of the Capitalist Commons," *Turbulence* 5, at <http://turbulence.org.uk/turbulence-5/capitalist-commons/>; Nick Dyer-Whitford, "Commonism," *Turbulence* 1, at <http://turbulence.org.uk/turbulence-1/commonism/>; Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). On the "communist hypothesis," see Alain Badiou's *The Communist Hypothesis* (London, New York: Verso, 2010), along with the two edited volumes *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso, 2010), edited by Slavoj Zizek and Costas Douzians, and *The Idea of Communism 2* (London: Verso 2013), edited by S. Zizek. See also Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala, *Hermeneutic Communism: From Heidegger to Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
- 8 Susan Buck-Morss' "The Second Time as Farce... Historical Pragmatics and the Untimely Present," *The Idea of Communism*, 80.

by showing how decolonial thinking allows us to grasp and engage with deeper dimensions of the condition of crisis, just as decoloniality itself introduces a critical condition, effectively *is* crisis, in relation to traditional (Eurocentric) modes of thinking, perceiving, and acting. This is not the time or place for an extensive discussion of the concept of decoloniality (even if some of our authors in this journal do so, to a greater or lesser extent). Yet it might be worth mentioning that, at least within the continental U.S., the idea of a decolonial turn or a decolonial option seems to have been first introduced in at least the mid-2000s, even if the concept of coloniality (of power) was originally theorized by Anibal Quijano at the turn of the 1990s, and a more extensive genealogy of decolonial thinking would need to include the contributions of Chicana feminism, Africana phenomenology, dependency theory, Liberation theology and philosophy from Latin America, and more recently, dialogues with the long *duree* of world-systems theory.⁹ Noteworthy are also both the parallels and differences with postcolonial theory, which has also done much to “provincialize Europe,”¹⁰ yet has historically focused more on East Asia and the Middle East and on the 19th and 20th centuries (Second Modernity), unlike the geographical (Latin America, the Caribbean, the U.S.A.) and temporal (the “long sixteenth century” of the First Modernity) focus of the decolonial perspective. But, perhaps more importantly given the scope of this special issue, we would like to say a few words instead on how we see decoloniality intersecting with the reality of crisis today.

Broadly speaking, we can identify at least three lines of intersection between decoloniality and crisis. For the first line of intersection, if the decolonial project can be defined (1) as a systematic effort to expose the dark side of (post)modern reason, its constitutive underside, and (2) as a persistent privileging of that “dark side” as a site and source of epistemic, cultural, political, economic, etc. production, in short, as a project of “shifting the geography of reason,” then decolonial thinking presupposes a shift in one’s theoretical references.¹¹ Indeed, one of the key tasks of decolonial theorizing has been the effort to produce a counter-genealogy of thought, a minoritarian way of thinking (which yet goes far deeper than say Deleuze and Guattari’s). For theorists working from a decolonial

9 See here, among others, Emma Perez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) and Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008) and Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Andre Gunder Frank, *On Capitalist Underdevelopment* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1975); Enrique Dussel, *Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxism, and Liberation Theology* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003) and Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996); and Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, “Americanness as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World,” *International Journal Of Social Sciences*, No. 134, (Nov. 1992).

10 See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

11 “Shifting the Geography of Reason” is the motto of the Caribbean Philosophical Association, many of the key figures of which have played a significant role in the decolonial turn. The year 2013 celebrated the 10th anniversary of the CPA, with a conference under the title “Shifting the Geography of Reason X: Exploring Decoloniality at the Dawn of Our Second Decade.”

perspective, rather than center, say, John Locke or Thomas Hobbes, one reads Quobna Cugoano or Guaman Poma de Ayala; instead of referencing Heidegger, one draws on Rodolfo Kusch or Frantz Fanon; rather than think with Negri or Foucault, one looks at Anibal Quijano or Catherine Walsh; instead of following Alain Badiou, one may explore Houria Bouteldja or Sadri Khiari, etc.¹² The understanding is that, to put it in the terms of semiotics, what matters is not simply the divide between the subject of the statement and the subject of the enunciation, but also and more importantly, where that subject of enunciation is located, what body they speak from, what community of interlocutors they address. Stated differently, what matters is not only the content or the subject, but also the locus of enunciation.

Yet if the body-politics of knowledge is one aspect of decoloniality, what is perhaps even more important than the shift in one's references is the conceptual shift effected by the decolonial turn. To the extent that concepts never just mirror an external reality but rather help produce that reality, including potentially rendering as non-existent aspects of reality which other concepts might bring to the fore, the question of one's conceptual nomenclature is no trivial matter. Hence, one of the major contributions of decolonial theorists, as we see it, has been to expand the conceptual vocabulary. Thus, in the heterogeneous body of work produced by decolonial thinkers we can see an explicit effort to access "worlds and knowledges otherwise," as concepts such as universality yield pride of place to pluriversality and diversity, modernity and postmodernity to transmodernity, nomadology to border thinking, ontological difference/Being to colonial difference/coloniality of Being, gender trouble to coloniality of gender, posthumanism to decolonial humanism, the common to the communal, communist hypothesis to the work of translation, etc. It is one thing to argue with Michel Foucault that we have entered a biopolitical regime of power where the lives of individuals and populations have become direct targets of intervention, and quite another to think about the world along the fault lines of Anibal Quijano's coloniality of power, as a socio-historical totality with multiple, heterogeneous, and often conflictive logics or movements. At stake in this process of decolonial knowledge production is not simply the substitution of one set of concepts for another. What is crucial, rather, is the opening to, accessing, and thinking and acting from different worlds, alternative arrangements of the social, and different political and epistemic possibilities.

12 Leaving aside the more familiar references, the reader might want to consult, among others, Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), Roldo Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from the South*, vol. 1, issue 3 (2000), Catherine Walsh, "The Plurinational and Intercultural State: Decolonization and State Re-Founding in Ecuador," *Kult 6*, special issue on "Epistemologies of Transformation" (2009), Houria Bouteldja, "White Women and the Privilege of Solidarity: Houria Bouteldja's Speech at the 4th International Congress of Islamic Feminism," at <http://www.decolonialtranslation.com/english/white-women-and-the-privilege-of-solidarity.html>, and Sadri Khiari, "The Left and Racial Domination in France: An Interview with Sadri Khiari (PIR)," at <http://www.decolonialtranslation.com/english/the-left-and-racial-domination-in-franceEng.html>.

Last but not least, a decolonial turn presupposes also a shift in one's methodological choices and sites of intervention as well. This is so because a decolonial methodology requires and entails more than a different conceptual vocabulary or set of references. It is not just that a theorist (or activist, for that matter) approaches the same topic, object, or area of interest in a decolonial vein; rather, these areas and objects themselves change, as one assumes a decolonial attitude, or new ones emerge. This is certainly the case with a number of the contributors to our special issue. For instance, in her contribution to this volume, feminist philosopher Maria Lugones seeks to explore the convergences and coalitional possibilities between women-of-color feminism and radical (or what she calls "structural") multiculturalism. Similarly, Xhercis Mendez turns her attention to the problem of embodiment in spiritual traditions, yet rather than address any of the major monotheistic religious traditions, she chooses to explore the complexities and decolonial possibilities of a syncretic spiritual tradition such as Afro-Cuban Santería. Finally, it is a decolonial impulse that motivates the work of scholars such as Mark Lewis Taylor and Manuel Vásquez, as they investigate how artistic and spiritual practices/movements can contribute to decarceration and rolling back of the Prison Industrial Complex in the United States.

It should be noted that not all of our authors are equally positioned in relation to the decolonial turn in the human and social sciences: for some this is more explicitly the case, for others less so. Yet, in our mind, each one exhibits a decolonial attitude and moves toward a decolonial possibility, as they explore different facets of the current condition of crisis. We begin with Enrique Dussel, one of Latin America's major philosophers and a key figure in the philosophy of liberation, who has long interrogated the dominant rendering of the origins and history of modern Western philosophy. In this original contribution from Dussel, he suggests an alternative starting point for modern philosophy *before* Descartes by showing how Descartes himself was the "fruit of a *prior* generation." The Cartesian methodology of doubt, thus, is shown not to be the presumed starting point it presents itself to be. Even the *ego cogito*, the Archimedean point for the paradigm of modern philosophies of consciousness, is founded, fashioned, and disciplined by Descartes under the tutelage of the Spanish Jesuit F. Suárez and the Mexican philosopher Antonio Rubio, among others. While it is not properly speaking "new" because of these various antecedents, Descartes did nevertheless achieve an ontological reduction of the *ego cogito* which thereby, by Dussel's reading, provided a philosophical basis for domination – the *ego cogito* as *ego conquiro*.

At its best, therefore, the "new" paradigm inaugurated by Descartes must be understood as a "second modernity" – a restart that effected a displacement of knowledge and power aligned with an emerging imperial power and consciousness. As Dussel masterfully shows, Descartes' restart with this inauguration of a second modernity is a concealment of colonial being, one that occludes and effaces the *critical* origin of modernity announced a century prior by Bartolomé de las Casas. In this way we might say from a decolonial perspective that not only do we detect here one possible origin of the crisis of modern Western thought, but that the crisis is of origin – of the very notion of the originary whereby modern consciousness itself is founded on its own abstraction

from the geopolitical.

In “On Lost *Crisitunities*,” Madina Tlostanova writes from the perspective of the post-Soviet—in her words, “The non-existence of the world.” She occupies not so much a marginal space as an alter-space, that might just as easily be conceived of as an altar-space—a space of sacrifice representing a “problem region” that poses a “problem people” who are regarded as the “annoying remnants of the collapsed system.” Though decolonial through and through, this particular post-Soviet—and as such, post-national—interrogation is explicitly not a radical or revolutionary endeavor, at least in a more traditional sense. Its turn towards the decolonial takes place in the realm of thought and knowledge and cultural production in the effort “to develop a global decolonial community of sense.” It contains no nostalgia, nor a simple operation of de-Westernization. That is because the particularities of the perverse colonial matrix of power it seeks to resist emanate from an already accomplished alternative obliteration. Instead, it begins with the delinking of religiosity from both corporate and state power. It appeals to the ecosophic sphere of decolonial spirituality, as well as other grassroots anarchic initiatives such as street universities, alternative museums and various activists groups that bypass the official educational, cultural, and political channels of power. Tlostanova effectively shows the decolonial option as a pluriverse wherein even the colonial itself and the legacy of imperialism must be critically interrogated according to specific contours and locales.

On her part, feminist philosopher Maria Lugones continues her groundbreaking work on radical multiculturalism and decolonial feminism, by bringing the two in a generative conversation here. She announces at the outset the template that might be applied throughout the entire special issue—namely, “the shift from a logic of oppression to a logic of resistance.” More specific to Lugones’s project is a shift from “ornamental multiculturalism” that still operates according to a false universalism, to a multiculturalism of the “structural” variety where multiple cultures inform both the functioning of institutions and the modes of perception and feeling. At the same time, she builds on and constructively critiques the intersectional feminisms of women of color in the U.S., proposing a move from an analysis of intersections (which presupposes that the intersecting categories are discrete and separable) to an analysis of fusions and intermeshings (resonating with Audre Lorde’s notion of interdependent non-dominating differences). A significant part of her discussion is dedicated to exposing the “feminist mask of oppression” of mainstream (white) feminism, which writes large the experiences of white middle class women, overlooking how non-Western and non-white women have frequently been defined as in a deep sense “without gender.”

Manuel Vásquez chronicles the rendering of Latino/a immigrants from what is largely a post-colonial perspective and line of analysis. By showing how “every aspect of an illegal’s life” is aggressively targeted he is arguing for “the emergence of new forms of bio-power.” He draws on, but ultimately goes beyond, Foucault’s trope of the Panopticon by placing the biopolitical dream of a universal visibility within a transnational context. If Foucault’s genealogical work unearths the dynamics by which modern liberalism gets consolidated within the sovereign nation-state, then Vásquez seeks to show how neo-liberal

measures to discipline, categorize, contain and exclude the “transgressive and mobile Other” are operative in today’s epoch of globalization.

This critical supplement to, or expansion of, Foucault is accompanied by like maneuvers that leave Vásquez himself in a kind of border position between the post-colonial and the decolonial. For instance, citing Frances Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman, he employs the term “tropicalism” as the correlative to Edward Said’s “Orientalism.” And in his explicit turn towards the decolonial in his conclusion he takes up and responds to the criticism of Foucault—namely, that Foucault’s analysis of the dynamics of biopower leaves little space for resistance. In a gesture characteristic of the decolonial option, Vásquez shows instead the “plurality of resistances” that can be found most notably in the “potential for grassroots religious movements to disrupt the appropriation, redeployment, and reinforcement of colonial power asymmetries by contemporary global capitalism.” On this point, he references the recent work of his interdisciplinary research team into multiracial religious communities and the mode by which though they operate still within the framework of Christianity nevertheless offer a “real break from the power regimes of the past.”

While the articles by Xhercis Méndez and Mark Lewis Taylor make important contributions in their own right—indeed, it is these two articles more than any others that exemplify our original expressed interests in this special issue—we may segue to them both by suggesting them as compliments to Vásquez. Like Vásquez, Méndez’s analysis turns on actual ritual practices—in this case, from Afro-Cuban Santería—that provide material sites of resistance. More positively put, these practices make possible a decolonial arrangement of bodies and practices by which categories of gender and social relations more broadly may not only be reconfigured, but “reborn.” In this way Méndez gives voice to a decolonial feminism. In so doing, like Vásquez vis-à-vis Foucault, she critically appropriates, but ultimately moves beyond, the work of Judith Butler, specifically, with regard to the role that rituals play. For Butler, ritual carries a negative connotation as a “disciplining and constraining force.” By contrast, for Méndez, ritual provides “enabling possibilities” for the “abjected”—reiterative ritual materializes the body differently. And when seen through her decolonial lens, we may see how this is a re-materialization of the body in a non-gendered and non-racialized sense.

In his critical exposé into the U.S. penal state, Taylor argues that it must be understood as a neo-colonizing project by its consolidating structures of international control. In this way, mass incarceration is seen not only as the latest strategy of racial subjugation—new “new Jim Crow” as termed by Michelle Alexander—but part of, and nested in, a much larger colonial matrix of power necessarily involving issues of labor, sex and sexuality, racialized modes of subjectification, and state authority. By setting mass incarceration in this context, we get the clear sense of the struggle’s “long *duree*”—both material and symbolic. Like our other contributors to this special issue, Taylor is not content with a mere analysis of the problem. Instead, he attends to what he terms the “spectral powers of material resistance.” More specifically, it is this long historical lineage of resistance (echoes of Dussel should be noted here) that activates critical modes of a resistance in a threefold manner: (1) By owning agonistic being; (2) by a

cultivation of artful expression; and (3) by fomenting resistant and organizing practices.

Finally, we conclude the special issue with Daniel Colucciello Barber's "The Immanent Refusal of Conversion." Readers will note that by his style Barber is set apart from the rest of our contributors. He invokes Malcolm X in order to present what the Christian logic of conversion cannot think. This is a fundamental critique that accomplishes a break not only with the logic of conversion, but thereby the entire culture of Christianity and the modern West. While by some measures Barber's expressed concerns and analysis stretch the coherency of the special issue to its breaking point, we see towards the end a shared sensibility and common problematic that returns us full circle to where we began with Dussel. However, Barber adds a twist to the *ego conquirō* by equating Cartesian dualism with the preexisting and enduring Western appetite for conversion. Only here conversion is a special kind of forgetting—namely, the forgetting of extermination. In this way he shows us how what we tend to call modernity is not only a restart that at its best is only a "second modernity"—one that occludes and effaces its own *critical* origin—but has its beginning before colonialism in conversion. Thus, by Barber's reading (and in this radical posture, he certainly does stand alone from his fellow contributors), decoloniality requires opposition to Christianity.

To return to where we started then, one could argue that that a decolonial angle of vision allows us to both grasp and challenge the crisis, in its three aspects delineated above. Decoloniality grasps and challenges the global dimension of the crisis, from the perspective of transmodernity and the "epistemologies of the South"; it countenances its total(izing) character, by identifying and insinuating itself in the very cracks and fault lines of the heterogeneous totality which is the modern/colonial world; and it attends to its immense complexity, by multiplying the sites of intervention and refining the methodological apparatus. Perhaps a visual metaphor may be of some assistance here. We can think of modernity/coloniality as a semi-transparent mirror, a little like those found in police stations, where from the one side (that of the police) one hears and sees everything, and from the other (that of the apprehended individual), nothing. Yet this image needs further modification, and not only because we are wary of parallels with institutions of state-sponsored violence. In the relationship between Modernity and Coloniality, it is the (post)modern Westerners who see and hear almost nothing but themselves, a luxury not afforded to those on the "dark side" of the Modern world, to whom Modernity looms as large as ever. More importantly perhaps, the mirror is not fully opaque on either side: from Modernity's "light side," the mirror is a mirror to oneself and a distorting image of the Other; from the "dark side" (the side of Coloniality), it is a distorting mirror of oneself and an aggrandizing image of the Modern Self (as if touched up by modern computer technology). Arguably, it would not do to seek to make that double-sided mirror more transparent or friendly. One could instead define the decolonial project as the effort to destroy the mirror itself.

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