

## WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH: APROPOS DUSSEL'S ANTI-CARTESIAN MEDITATIONS

### *Filosofía Occidental y el Sur Global: Acerca de las Meditaciones anti-Cartesianas de Enrique Dussel*

Fernando Gómez Herrero  
Independent Scholar  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5835-2170

**Abstract:** This article is a succinct exploration of the critical anti-Cartesian disposition exemplified by the Argentinian-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel (1934-2023), one of the leading voices of the Philosophy of Liberation. The Dusselian disposition is to historicize, “contaminate” and open up the historical field to thus account for the Early Modern / colonial period within and against the exclusive frame of continental-European philosophy, or rather the universalist pretensions of the “West.” Circumscriptions matter: Global South, Third World, *Indias Occidentales*, Latin America. We are dealing with different names for the spatialization of a series of subordinations denounced by Dussel and many others. This article develops one such dissident Latin American perspectivism vis-à-vis the French figure of René Descartes (1596-1650), one, if not “the” foundational “beginning” of “modern philosophy.” We are dealing with a critique of those Eurocentric foundational principles without falling for easy seductions and “solutions” to the dilemmas that reach us today. What is the Cartesian problem? Or is it ours? Is Latin America philosophical? Is it Western proper? Is it self-constitutive? The category of the “West” demands an endless critical interrogation in between geopolitical tensions and myriad articulations of the popular or mass culture. We may put Dusselian polemics and protestations vis-à-vis Eurocentrism, also in its contemporary hegemonic US-led varieties. The theoretical “dance” of prefixes (anti, post-, de-, pluri-, trans-, inter-) accompanies the big binary modernity/coloniality.

**Keywords:** Enrique Dussel, René Descartes, Cartesianism, anti-Cartesianism, philosophy, postcolonial studies.

**Resumen:** Este ensayo constituye una somera exploración crítica de la disposición anti-Cartesiana representada por el filósofo argentino-mexicano Enrique Dussel (1934-2023), una de las voces más importantes de la llamada Filosofía de la Liberación. La disposición dusseliana consiste en historizar, “contaminar” y abrir el campo histórico para dar entrada al período de la llamada primera modernidad, o

período colonial. Nos movemos de una manera inevitable dentro del marco de la filosofía europea continental y a la contra de las pretensiones universalistas de la civilización occidental. Las circunscripciones importan: Sur global, Tercer Mundo, Indias Occidentales, América Latina. Nos las habemos con unas espacializaciones y una serie de subordinaciones denunciadas por Dussel y otros muchos. Este ensayo desarrolla de manera abreviada un perspectivismo latinoamericano disidente con respecto a las vistas históricas y filosóficas abiertas por el pensador francés René Descartes (1596-1650), “el” o “un” “principio” fundacional de la “filosofía moderna.” Es esta una crítica de estos principios fundacionales eurocéntricos sin dejarse atrapar por seducciones ni “soluciones” a los dilemas que llegan hasta el día de hoy. ¿Cuál es el problema cartesiano? ¿Es suyo o es nuestro? ¿Es América Latina filosófica? ¿Es propiamente occidental? ¿Se constituye a sí misma? La categoría de “Occidente” exige una interrogación crítica continua pues se encuentra habitualmente atrapada entre formulaciones geopolíticas cambiantes y mil y una articulaciones de la cultura de masas o “popular.” Podemos situar a Dussel en el medio de estas polémicas y protestas al respecto de un eurocentrismo que debe incluir sus variantes estadounidenses hegemónicas más recientes. Tenemos un “baile” teórico de los prefijos (contra-, de-, pluri-, trans-, inter-) que acompaña el gran binomio de modernidad/colonialidad.

**Palabras clave** Enrique Dussel, René Descartes, Cartesianismo, anti-Cartesianismo, filosofía, estudios postcoloniales.

## INTRODUCTION: A BRUTAL QUESTION

A brutal question at point-blank range: "Descartes or no Descartes?" The answer has to do with the embrace of the “modernity” of the discipline of philosophy, an exclusive and universalist European provenance of knowledge production in its tradition of (continental) philosophical thought. In its train, the pre-eminence of Western civilization, deliberately or conventionally promoted, ensues, and with it the relegation of other civilizational timespaces to a subaltern status. The figure of René Descartes (1596-1650) emerges at the core of the Age of the Baroque and acquires collective reverberations and mythical proportions apropos the foundational moment of modern philosophy. Who would object to that? Those who feel outside such universalist exclusivism. Yet, genealogies may vary, the notion of singular development (or progress) gets compromised, and eschatologies may get tangled up and even suspended (scatological terminations may be entertained too). Cartesianism is now four hundred years old and things have happened in relation to the constitution of the discipline of philosophy, a Lilliputian presence, largely unstudied and invisible, inside and outside the Anglo Zone. I would argue it is a lost partner for the most part in the “dance” of the

disciplines. The reference to an outside – “the continent”-- demarcates the globally smaller, yet hegemonic tradition of Analytic philosophy within the Anglo Zone whilst the U.S. superpower dominates the meanings of the “liberal West” in the geopolitical and popular-culture domains, perhaps less so than it used to two or three decades ago. Americanness looms large at least in these pages in the vicinity of our “Southern” philosopher.

Other issues show up: the provenance of knowledge production, its circulation and reception elsewhere, the circumscription and allocation of timespaces in the world and its Area Studies, and the construction of structures of subordination. There are also processes of self-affirmation and contestation. Should we assume the preservation of philosophy as a discipline in the current moments of a severe deterioration of the (foreign) humanities inside and outside the Anglo Zone? Should we wish for its metamorphosis, mutation, resilience, elasticity or even expansion? These pages propose quick engagement with the figure of Descartes, rather than the negative disengagement or apathy, and it is done so via Dusselian anti-Cartesianism. The aim is to embrace the challenge of the uniqueness of European thought in its deep-historical formulation. It is accomplished from a subaltern (“Latin” and American, Hispanophone) perspective. Such perspective considers the colossal dimensions of imperialism and colonialism informing the here-and-now or the immediate contemporaneity, also in realms of intellectual work. All the notions invoked thus require a consistent (endless?) critical interrogation: Western philosophy and the recent coinage of Global South (Third World, *Indias Occidentales*, the bigger America than the “America” of the *lingua franca* or Uncle Sam. The historically dominant European power/ knowledge modalities and its dissenting perspectives, “Latin American” in the Dusselian case, are summoned. If these are entities of monstrous dimensions, we have no option but to engage with them. It is a big “game” and we must therefore go for big vistas.

We are holding hands with the philosophical and the post- or decolonial adjectives. There is no secret about the unavoidable tension. Let us assume an expansive American circumstance and the real possibility of a shipwreck; that is, the “cogito, ergo sum” requires the “staging” of inevitable timespaces that may or may not be propitious. Circumstances may well turn out to be hostile environments or may be absorbed or undergo salvation. Consciousness will have to learn to make do in most cases and learn to “digest iron” (Marianne Moore). In the vicinity of Dussel, it is more collision than complicity or collusion with the tradition of (continental) philosophy or by extension the

mainstream of the Western tradition: what kind(-s) of reason(-s) would seriously engage and challenge such Western / European edifice and change it, if ever so slightly? The "badness" of the situation will have to do with the continuing Eurocentrism in its modalities of imperialism, colonialism, "whiteness," classical code or (rigid) canon, racism, sexism, etc. I would make the case that the US now "owns" the European legacy globally. "Europe" (not only the EU, not even NATO) is not by 2025 what it used to be pre-1945 at the three aforementioned levels (geopolitics, university life and impactful popular or mass culture). The world is bigger than this hitherto hegemonic duopoly undergoing profound changes and transformations.

### 1.0 . About "going against Descartes"

The standard attitude within post-/decolonial studies and "epistemologies of the South" is one of *going against* Descartes whilst retrieving an earlier legacy of Early Modernity/ coloniality (a century before Descartes' birth). The "negative" preposition could translate into polemical confrontation, absorption, overcoming or supersession, or divergence. All these meanings apply in Dussel's case, I would argue. Cao Guimarães's good film *Ex-isto* (2010) captures some of these dislocations of Cartesian reason as soon as it is transported to another time and place. Add "landscape" to the "ergo sum," so to speak. How to forget Descartes calmly, silently sitting pensive on the canoe in the solitary river in the Brazilian jungle, increasingly disoriented running around the cheap market, hallucinating by the expanse of the ocean, seemingly gone surrounded by undressed manikins? This is a visual allegory of Early Modern European rationalism mal-adjusting to contemporary "postcolonial Third World" realities, now euphemistically called "Global South," typically kept separate from "global West" and "global East"<sup>i</sup>. Let us be aware of these old partitions and new demarcations. The teasing out of the impetus embedded in the adversarial prefixes (anti-, counter-) and preposition (against) may continue to give life to such a philosophical fixation in the manner of a melancholic lover pathologically attached to its lost object of desire for a reliable power/knowledge. It is what we do with Descartes here. Descartes is not alone. We hold the hand of the ghost of Dussel and others.

### 2.0. Some highlights about Dussel's anti-cartesian meditations

A "negative" practice may thus bring the great foreign French philosophical name to our contemporary tensions. Our example is the recent volume titled *Conversations with Enrique Dussel on Anti-Cartesian Decoloniality*<sup>ii</sup>. In this company, the undisputed "big guy," if the Americanism is to be tolerated, is Dussel, who has had a life-long critical devotion to philosophical debates vis-a-vis Europeans, particularly German thinkers (from the 1990s onwards; see my conversation with him in 2001 for a possible inflection point in this US turn). Dussel has strategically approached the label of "postcolonial," or "decolonial," seeking connections and allies, Walter Mignolo among them, within the Anglo-American platform (Dussel's command of the spoken English language remained shaky until the end; see my forthcoming book *The (Latin) American Scene* for some fellow travellers inside the US context). Except for small circles of Latinamericanists, Dussel remains, as far as the eye can see, an exceedingly marginal figure in the US context, despite a few incursions and a few defenders, and the US remains tangential or marginal addendum, perhaps even a wilderness, to his core preoccupations with deep history, despite visits and collaborations (see Moraña, 2008). It is as though Dussel looked at the US out of the corner of the eye, fundamentally a non-philosophical terrain, a philanthropic ogre (Octavio Paz), a one-eye Cyclops swallowing Ulysses' traveling companions, a technological superpower keen on steamrolling opposition (the second Trump presidency surely dramatizes such perception). I wonder about the quality of Dussel's lived experience in the U.S. and how much inspiration and nourishment he got here and there. At Duke I met with him more than two decades ago.

Be that as it may, Dussel's important essay "Meditaciones Anti-Cartesianas sobre el Origen del Anti-Discurso Filosófico de la Modernidad" is one excellent example of the "retroactive faulting" of Cartesian epistemology for later developments in thought and praxis that still reach us today, even if challenged and debilitated. We must imagine our two philosophical protagonists (Descartes, Dussel) in all sorts of transatlantic relations between Europe and America (Early Modern/colonial legacies, the last two decades of the last century and the two decades of ours). What is the essence of this negative evaluation embedded in the prefix "anti"? What is "anti-" discourse if not a critical, inquisitive exercise of historical intelligence addressing limitations and exclusions from the disclosure of embedded, vaster timespace dimensions? One could say that this "anti" could be generally at least three things: one, a desire for self-affirmation in the fight for recognition (call it Latin-American meaningfulness in the face of the slight regard and an

ongoing marginalization beyond Dussel's timeframe). Two, it is also the correlative desire not to be contained –and thus “tamed”– by others' frames of intelligibility. Three, it is the provision of a gradual break-up initially in the endorsement of a generative perspectivism, one which adds a comparative “cultural” relativity to a hitherto assumed absolutist or universalist position, one that disregards, nullifies, annihilates differential timespaces of symbolic knowledge production, experience, social praxis (again, call it Latin-American meaningfulness in the face of the slight regard and an ongoing marginalization beyond Dussel's timeframe).

One could reformulate this triple desire thus: “I say what I was not supposed to say, and such a saying goes beyond mere self-affirmation to thus (try to) ‘break’ the imposed frames inside which I am an unwelcome, subaltern “identity,” therefore I fight for the reformulation of gains and games in adversity and utopias.” This is another rephrase, “they may win but they will not win us over,” so to speak, as in the famous Unamunian expression. In the field of Western philosophy, but not exclusively in it, we are interpellated by the Dusselian revolt against the imposition of others' imposing singularity of models of understanding of the world (or “orders”). One clear example lives in the Area-Study configuration of “Empire,” currently undergoing turmoil. Yet, who doubts that “we” are here still inside the typically partial, miserable circumscription of Hispanophone circles, or “the Hispanic world” officially sanctioned, to represent and officiate the “colourful” but not radically divergent instantiations of “Latin American” and “Iberian” dispensations of dubious affiliations within the “West,” now that atlantic divides are growing wider apart in the uneven “global South” and second or tertiary-rate European affiliations typically brokered by official USA agents. It is not a pretty picture: Western civilization remains captured by US's geopolitical interests (or foreign affairs) without apparent filial pieties and largely dismissive of university precincts and, I dare say, irrespective of its myriad cultural ways going in many directions (US Latino entities remain a question mark in these (philosophical) matters by the time this article is printed).

The “anti” mixes with the “de-,” the second prefix, a desirable attenuation, or liquidation, and a third, “post-,” or leaving this bad state of things behind, transversing an interregnum or passage, or perhaps going to the other side, as in “trans-” (modernity), a term much liked by Dussel (cinephiles may remember the tribulations of Andy Dufresne, in Darabont's 1994 film *The Shawshank Redemption*). The desire is to want to pass through the “underside of modernity” or “coloniality” and reach some ideal plurality of forms of being and of knowing, which will have to be sustainable (another line of inquiry

is the apparent extinguishing of “postmodernity” in Lyotard, Baudrillard, Jameson and others). This plurality of being (“world in which all worlds are possible,” as the famous formula of the Zapatistas has it) appears to signal a future-oriented desirability, also for knowledge production. Bluntly speaking, nominal singularities are *ipso facto* suspicious, at least in these Dusselian circles of inquiry typically operating in the shade of the most powerful structures (institutions, nation-states, civilizational formulations of Western provenance, etc.).

### 3.0. About healthy polemics and historical protestations

Dussel’s article begins with healthy polemics: the protestation of historical dimensions of violence, epistemic and otherwise, following the inspiration of the towering Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566). There is nothing antiquarian in Dussel: his epistemic endeavour aims at the “overshooting” of contemporary re-articulations of inequalities of power and knowledge (“over-shooting” to hit the utopian target of suppression and erasure of those myriad inequalities that motivate the thinking impulse in the first place). This past is not dead, it is not even past (William Faulkner) and yet the imperfect present necessitates it for a greater impulse or a more forceful impact. The figure of Guamán Poma de Ayala (1535-1616), recognizable in the U.S. ever since the work of Rolena Adorno, is included here under the generic umbrella term of an indigenous American subject position of mixed configuration (European and already *something else*, let us call “indigenous” qua a denunciatory dimension simultaneously internal and external).

Dussel’s essay constitutes a rewrite of the third chapter included in *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity* (1995), which comes out after a previous lecture series (Frankfurt, 1992). Our essay exemplifies a repetition, an insistence, of the colonizing / imperializing European impetus, a monumentally vast historical process of continuity undergoing a debilitation and reduction, annihilation even, of a historically divergent Americanness vis-à-vis an imperial and colonizing European expansionism continued today under the US aegis (challenges are mounting by the time of the second Trump presidency). I underline the intellectual gesture of insisting on repetition and continuity, which also signals a boundary and a limit, and this is not only peculiar to Dussel. There is a desire to go beyond such “badness” that is yet to happen in the future of Dussel’s death. In other words, the fight for the constitution of strong and

sustainable “Southern” epistemologies defending the corresponding “cultural” relativism of geopolitically stronger epistemologies –represented by Descartes, one representative name among others inside the European horizon defended by hegemonic “modernity” and “globalization”—continues. The discipline of philosophy is also one “game” among others. Current modest “gains” in philosophy and elsewhere look at uncertain increases in the immediate future. There are no certainties.

Dussel’s fundamental message: the Cartesian “ego cogito” is one example of the historical instantiation of imperial reason. One valid synonym of imperial is universal, or the cover-up of divergent formulations deemed “other” (tellingly, late Jameson insists on the “colonial” as “other,” tellingly also US minorities and speakers of languages other than the *lingua franca*, 2012, p. 43-7). Dussel’s recovery operation defends the necessity of the *longue durée* of the “discovery” of America, circumscribing a hegemonic Eurocentric perspective, which turns out to be “repeated” in the various “reincarnations” of a “cover-up” of “indigenous” Americanist modalities of life, knowledge and power reaching us today (“Latin” is the sign of such subalternity and Dussel’s work is a reaction against that and I realize that “Latin” may also turn out to be an insufficient marker of radical difference, but it is unrenounceable for Dussel and others).

Dussel's strong assertion: the Cartesian cogito is of one piece with the famous or infamous Iberian conqueror’s, Hernán Cortés (1485-1547). These early modern / colonial antecedents of such conventional or dominant “modern” rationality constitute figurations of a will to power and knowledge that have morphed into hegemonic modernity (capitalism) five centuries later (readers may easily corroborate a most common perspectivism informing big historical narratives, John H. Elliott’s *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* is but one example). “Europe” is a synthetic, spatial name of a political and historical, also epistemological, imposition that has not ended (the US carries its torch within the “liberal West,” so to speak and the Eurocentric lens is also hegemonic inside the US with or without recent geopolitical tensions).

And “America” turns out to be a sign of subalternity, particularly in its “Latin” formulations, starting in these early modern/colonial frames and reaching us today (the European misnomer of America is later appropriated by the U.S. that kicks its “Latin” out, so to speak, to this day naturalizing a dominant Anglo domain, the latest incident with the Gulf of Mexico renamed Gulf of “America” is but one example). Dussel makes the point that to continue thinking in this (Cartesian) way is to try to possess: the myth of

modernity "conceal(s) its own sacrificial violence against the Other. This process culminates in Descartes's 1636 presentation of the *ego cogito* as the absolute origin of a solipsistic discourse" (p. 48). Such self-possession is denounced as insufficient and even "criminal" in its extensions beyond the original confines of Europe. That K. O. Apel said it does not mean that Dussel will not insist on the Western universalism of diverse thinkers post-Descartes reformulating the insufficient and "criminal" Cartesian legacy. Latin America is always already hanging in a precarious balance of proper or improper West ever since the Early Modern/colonial times.

Dussel wants to downplay or relativize absolute beginnings *somewhat*. Articulation of beginnings are oftentimes affirmations, and Cartesian timespace is retroactively stretched out to include the American dimension since 1492. The emblematic subject of French provenance now appears in a wider context that relativizes the original (northern) European platform during the official Baroque times of political absolutism (again, conventional Anglo domains deflate the Baroque nomenclature, John H. Elliott is our repeated example). Yet, here, there is a strong consensus with Quijano, Wallerstein, Mignolo, and de Sousa Santos among others regarding the necessity of a transatlantic (over-)stretch. "Europe" alone is not and cannot be enough –there then in the big 16th century or now in the big 21st Century. Such (over-)stretch exercised by Dussel and others is meant to relativize one and all absolutist dispositions. Unlike those who seek sole origins in the Athens of Pericles, or privilege later chronologies such as the Enlightenment, or perhaps dwell in the foundations in this or that nation with an official constitutional moment, these "Southern" thinkers are forced to choose for a different type of cosmopolitanism, one that is informed by what I would describe as an "empty centre" against the expanse of hegemonic transatlantic Euro-American frames migrating from continental Europe to the US-dominated North Atlantic since 1945 and now gradually pivoting to Asia according to most reports. We are in a brave new world still in the hegemonic Anglo-American Zone in the interregnum. Dizzying big timespaces are needed and Dussel helps us to see some of these.

The Iberian incorporation is a welcome, partial corrective to the conventional Eurocentrism that nests in the Anglo-Germanic construct of Western Europe plus France building its force from the moment of the Enlightenment (termed "second modernity" by Dussel and others). Yet, this addition is not enough: the vindication of the "indigenous" dimension since the aforementioned date of 1492 affords a series of solidarity claims beyond "Europe" (the name of the old continent is to be understood to be a shorthand for

social groups articulating its privileged visibility, centrality or supremacy, be it in Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere in the previous centuries, its legacy reaching us today). A second operation is important: Dussel wants to link up yet blur the inclination to seek philosophical beginnings in any form or type of univocality. What is wanted is to join the “philosophical club” any time and place where you can find it and add new members of different provenance, trajectory and purpose that will contest the singular notion of “philosophy.” It is therefore the dangers of exclusivity that matter the most (see these tensions informing the discipline of philosophy vis-a-vis the invocation of theology and ethics in Dussel himself in the interview with me, 2001).

We are dealing, it is fair to say, with an open-door policy that finds its strong resistance, or “containment,” in our post-Cold War times. Dussel’s philosophizing is thus sincere, inquisitive and reconstructive. He is not about breaking up the monuments and scattering the pieces among the disconnected disciplines in the global landscapes. No eclecticism, no iconoclastic hammer here. Yet “philosophy” as conventionally constituted qua “Western” exclusivity is proclaimed not to be enough for the satisfaction of intelligence and the political and legal tasks ahead. The Dusselian project is fundamentally a revisionist, additive and expansionist construction of new vistas within a larger field of vision of the philosophical field. Such expansion must reformulate the individual pieces and the working assumptions of the very operation named “reason.” Dussel brings other disciplines, yet keeps alive the “philosophical,” and invigorates it with hitherto marginalized or neglected figures, let us call them “American” in the Spanish sense of the term, under the presumption of equal worth. The gesture remains daring and dissident, accusatory and heterodox within philosophical orthodoxy. No liquidation of the insufficient philosophical field, therefore, no leaving it behind and moving on to other things, so to speak.

Dussel remains a historicism of confrontational philosophy of ideas that engages with the “world.” No parts and parcels, no areas and regions of self-limiting impact. The disposition must always already be towards a “summa.” In so doing, he “betrays” the typical allocation of Area-Studies for non-Anglo practitioners who must stick to the representative coverage of their assigned areas and regions whilst the metropolitan figures fight over global orders. Our Southern philosopher follows the path of a triumphant Europe allegorically personified by the pinnacle of Hegel. Descartes is preamble. But the hegemonic path taken is not enough. It is never enough. There must be other paths – defeated, subaltern, neglected– not taken yet worth taking a look. That is the crux. What

is pursued is a sort of bringing forth a series of subordinated dimensions (sub-)continentalized in the last five centuries under the historical misnomer of Latin America. This is a colossal task that no individual, however great, can accomplish alone. Such an equity project, if one calls it thus, requires reaching out to other continents that have received the impact of the expansionism of the West and theoretically also to the self-conscious “minorities” who, inside those dominant nation-states, maintain “double consciousness” (Du Bois) of alternative intellectual and emotional legacies.

#### **4.0 About bridging separations informing “Philosophy” Absolutely**

Take this double controversy: (“cultural”) relativity of absolute beginnings of the official history of philosophy and (“cultural”) relativity of an absolute difference of diverse philosophical pursuits within the plural and intertwined pursuit of the different disciplines. How is this double controversy articulated further in relation to Descartes? We appear to be traveling in the direction of plurality and dissemination, divergences and deviations. And there is no doubt that there are also processes of convergence, unification, simplification and “world order.” Yet, some (and some have been mentioned earlier) would like to invoke the “colonial difference” –and sustain it for centuries. Our Latin American philosopher reconnects Descartes with the milieu of the Jesuit Order. He populates the wider timespace of the Baroque with Spanish conquistadors and Indigenous figures of an American provenance in a timeframe prior to the foundation of the nation that we now call the United States of America, typically monopolizing the term “America.” Tectonic plates and nomenclatures must shift places inside our imagination. The suggestion is that we must travel pre- and post-“American” hegemony to go to other places typically talked about in terms of modernity and coloniality. Such ambitious travel is not without troubles. Dussel is all about these.

In pursuing such travel, the strict modern divide between philosophy and religion is compromised in its social, and historical embeddedness. There are connections in terms of intellectual inspiration and nourishing influences. Following Ferrater Mora's *Dictionary of Philosophy*, most concretely the entries on Descartes and the “cogito, ergo sum,” Dussel pushes the connectivity with Augustinianism<sup>iii</sup>. The qualitative beginning of Descartes is conventionally affirmed by Ferrater Mora, Russell, Husserl, and Hegel himself. It is however a reflex mechanism in most histories of philosophy to stick to the “narrow” qua strictly European-provenance sense of the term “philosophy” and not listen

to Americanist invocations. Dussel disagrees with all these gentlemen thus raising the political thesis of the philosophical meaningfulness of America since 1942. At least in theory, “America” must be a *res cogitans* and not merely a *res extensa*. It is up to our “archaeology” to find the evidence. But at least the thesis is put forth. Dussel’s argument appears to be more than sociologically circumstantial: given that Descartes studied with the Jesuits in his tender years, Dussel also adds the case of mutual inspiration between Augustinianism and these early Portuguese and Spanish world citizens, Jesuits and scholars, articulating diverse modalities of “cogito, ergo sum” (Antonio Rubio, Pedro de Fonseca, for example). Descartes’s cogito is not alone in the universe.

We can say that Dussel adds “circumstance” to such Cartesian “cogitations,” almost adopting the language of existential historicism. It is a subaltern circumstance that defines not only the lives of those added historical figures but his own, Dussel’s –and probably to a certain extent the life of the readers of these pages who remain concerned with the uneasy associations between Western philosophy and the Global South. The Dusselian disposition is the rescue operation that reinvigorates thinking entities that are “down and out” (easy check of the conventional philosophy courses inside the general crisis of the humanities, not only in the Anglo Zone, will confirm the relative marginality of Global-South membership inside Area-Study constraints of colossal dimensions, i.e. a majority world population now considered to be world-economy engine!). If philosophy is an anomaly, a blurred discipline in the conventional curriculum in the West, the Global-South contribution to it remains a double anomaly (or double indemnity) to this day and it will continue to be one as long as a respectful tendency towards a vital (European) centre holds. Not so for Dussel and others for reasons that these pages tease out.

The invitation is and must be towards a positivity of “incontinence.” In other words, the Dusselian disposition is tantamount to a “rescue operation” of world dimensions that cannot be contained by specific Area-Study configurations, whether in the Cold War timeframe or later (Pletsch, 2001). Such ambitious disposition, Dussel’s, constitutes, a rethink of trajectories, rejections and repudiations of modalities of knowledge production made in the name of philosophy, and not only of philosophy, according to Eurocentric presumptions or criteria deemed insufficient. In other words, blow up the social-scientific labor divisions brilliantly described by Pletsch. At the biographical level, it is interesting to note that Dussel keeps the separation between his own religious belief system (Catholic Christianity) and his philosophical activity (explicitly mentioned in the conversation with me). Not without tensions, he observes the

"modern" dictum of separation between rationality and religiosity. Yet, his predilection for the figure of Bartolomé de Las Casas is more than a concrete way of bringing the hegemonic frame of intelligibility, Early Modern / colonial Christianity, to relevance. Dussel keeps the name of Las Casas and such timespace-moved-forward in inspirational association with contemporary philosophy-and-theology-of-liberation solidarities. De Sousa's secular sociology also establishes these ties. Upon the rejected stones, a "new church" (a wider tent if you wish) is built.

The Dusselian operation must be seen as an inclusive operation of historical, and social dimensions, hitherto marginalized. Such "inclusion" has little to do with the "liberal" conventions of minority-subject incorporation inside American institutions. Dussel names thinkers and philosophers of the Coimbra and the Salamanca Schools thus underlining the point of introspection and withdrawal strongly associated with this Early Modern – and also colonial – Christianity. For Dussel, the fundamental inspiration of Cartesian epistemology, via the Jesuit early training and practice is not to be doubted (Augustinism, Pedro de Fonseca, Gómez Pereira, Francisco Suárez, etc.). Who is the scholar who wants to handle these entanglements? The rational kernel is here pursued, and double takes may find other paths not yet taken. In so doing, Dussel inserts the modern exercise of reason in its original religious ground, "desecularizing" reason in a sense, or at least raising doubts about the a-, de- or even anti-religious constitution of "modern" reason. But this modernity is, in Dussel's case at least, no fetish, no totem and no taboo (postmodernity grabs him less too). The abstraction of modernity necessitates the dimension of coloniality to be fully its own and such juxtaposition must move beyond solipsistic even narcissistic European provenance. Dussel's circumscribed Cartesianism must cure this narcissism of "small differences." In other words, pan-relationality (add America to Europe) cures old temptations towards substantialism.

Things will get messier or more complex. That is a good thing: scholasticism and Cartesianism are not necessarily to be imagined in separate galaxies. They coexist in the same neighborhood so to speak (Roger Ariew is an excellent account of this coexistence)<sup>iv</sup>. Dussel and others would not want to throw away religiosity, even if these negotiations are tricky with "philosophy proper," as the conversation with me demonstrates. Dispositions vary. As far as I know, Dussel has not pursued the political theology of Carl Schmitt, surely a thinker in the antipodes of Dussel. Husserl affirms the "modern cut" between philosophy and theology, which remains something of a convention. Other philosophers do it otherwise. Eugenio Trias has travelled to the rational

kernel of the great religions self-consciously, whether defending the specificity of a Western-centric notion of philosophy or not (see the conversation with me, 2023). Žižek has recreated the Christian legacy from an atheistic Lacanian-Marxist standpoint. The porous sociology of Sousa Santos considers valid the theology-of-liberation practices among the different subaltern groups. Others still would not touch religious beliefs or practices with a ten-foot pole (Negri, Mignolo). Yet, there is something of a comeback of the "religious" dimension, which remains something of a totem-and-taboo for our secularist societies, if I may put it that way, particularly in our unsettled post- 9/11 times, bringing the Weberian thesis of the secularization constitution of modernity under scrutiny. A more mixed picture (arrangement or configuration) of world dynamics emerges, it seems to me, even if working assumptions of the varied forms of "progress" (or (under-development) of the different societies still remain in place and underpin, for example, the pedagogic construction of the different historiographic accounts or "orders" of the *longue duree* of the different entities typically assuming continental proportions. We are moving towards greater entanglements and a variety of rhythms of the big entities (global south is one of them, Latin America is another). I find that few in polite society explicitly defend the self-sufficiency of "Europe," yet convincing openings of the "philosophical" domain remain hard to find in our times of mounting tension and scarcity (scarcity, certainly in the humanities in the different nations across the Atlantic). On the US side of the Atlantic, I find there are still a few voices explicitly defending, often in the *lingua franca* that I am using in these pages, is the "leadership" of a "collective West" that is reluctant to open up the philosophical tradition beyond the historical inheritance of its hegemonic European conventions<sup>v</sup>.

Dussel's work invites us to do just that and go far and wide, throwing a (sub-)continental dimension (i.e. Latin America among others) at the construction of a Cartesian universalism, so to speak, come what may, and one must mark this epistemological move<sup>vi</sup>. He "provincializes" Descartes in a gesture similar to Dipesh Chakrabarty<sup>vii</sup>. Dussel "americanizes"<sup>viii</sup> the Hegelian trajectory of hegemony that we find in his Lectures on the Philosophy of History. In its, Latin America is "down and out" of meaningfulness. Dussel constructs a parallel "underside" of valid meaningfulness of such "modernity." The article that concerns us here is but one example of big vistas –from 1492 onwards– that are projected towards a future of "liberation." Musically, we can imagine the voices of the tenor and counter-tenor in the musical composition in official and non-official settings moving the "melody" forward. These two lines may be said to

be the global-philosophical ideas of an hegemonic impact, call them imperial if you wish, and the subaltern contestations, call them postcolonial provocations and denunciations of insufficiency of a wider world picture. Dussel seeks these intersections. He rides this tandem bicycle, if I may put it that way: there is an engagement with an hegemonic and Eurocentric centrality, with or without an U.S. platform; and there is an inevitable contestation of such a monopoly of dominant power/knowledge activity that is not only operative in the narrow field of (continental) philosophy.

Dussel refuses to see himself wholly content reflected in the pupil of one-eye Polyphemus (philanthropic ogre (Octavio Paz), liberal Leviathan (Hobbes, Ikenberry). In other words, Dussel's work is not about the "mere" addition of "colour" and "diversity" to the standard practices of knowledge and power. We are not in the quietist, conservative world of Tomasi di Lampedusa's Prince of Salina. It is a more alarming world that is closer to the Church of the poor in the Puebla gatherings during the times of the dictatorships in Latin America that forced Dussel's exile and the legacy of the sacrifice of the Jesuits (Romero and others) in the assassinations of indigenous communities (Menchu) in Central America in the Reagan era. How to "philosophize" about that, that is another difficult question that Dussel poses.

Dussel's philosophy of liberation approaches a historical theatre of horrors over the centuries. The challenge is how to make it philosophically relevant, and one step must be in the expansion of the very notion of "reason." Such "inconvenience" must rub against the conventional exchanges of polite society in reduced philosophical circles and those of the other disciplines. "Externalities" matter. Dussel opens the curtains selectively to some of these horrors, certainly in First-World and Third-World spaces<sup>ix</sup>. No doubt this colossal historical violence is one of the core themes of his Southern philosophy. And one of its utopian ideals is to imagine a bigger coexistence of knowledge modalities that would sit the *pauper* at the feasting table, as he would put it<sup>x</sup>. Dussel is maximalist. He adds new figures and vaster vistas in a manner that could be described as critical-denunciatory and projective-desiderative. The utopian horizon is one of drastic, non-violent transformation of the status quo. In so doing, a cultural relativity of hegemonic tendencies, their cutting down to size so to speak, must happen and with it a bigger opening for the emergence of other voices, the speech of the subalterns, giving other colours, forms, shapes and sharper angularities to "world orders." The Cartesian legacy operates within a historical manufacture of universalisms going in the wrong political direction, i.e. Eurocentrism, "monstrous" dimension that must be imagined in a variety of

ways and localities, disciplines and social groups (you may wish to remember the etymological Latin of "monstrum").

Dussel makes Descartes, an itinerant intellectual, a representative of a diasporic bourgeoisie inside a northern European geography, a stellar spokesperson of what will become a solipsistic (imperial) reason side by side the marginalized indigenous and mestizo populations represented by the chronicler Guamán Poma de Ayala in the Andes in the Baroque moments of the Spanish conquest. Dussel retrieves Bartolomé de Las Casas, a protestor of the acts of violence constitutive of the colonial underside of modernity in the Americas. America is and cannot be simply the *res extensa* of the *res cogitans* of Europe, not in the past and not in the present. Hence, there is a relationship in thought and praxis that is *not* reciprocal or egalitarian (big transatlantic timespaces construct exchanges among the different understandings and uses of reason –let alone those of the so-called “philosophers”– since Descartes’ times. Those understandings and uses pass through the uneven associations between the Hispanophone and Anglophone zones of today –there are of course other zones. Dussel’s dramatic irony assumes the “barbarian” side of the historical, political and epistemological equation<sup>xi</sup>. Dussel puts himself inside a genealogical continuation of the lascasista disposition of retrieval, protestation and utopian transcendence of colossal violence (Rabasa too; see my *The (Latin) American Scene*). In quick brushstrokes over the vast canvas, Dussel juxtaposes Descartes and Guaman Poma de Ayala, contemporaneous figures. Our challenge is to think through the juxtaposition and give it philosophical weight. What would that do for us? Perhaps, a theater of intense unintelligibility flying fast and furious in their faces. Perhaps the abstract affirmation of a desirable future-project of peaceful coexistence (call it "ecology of knowledges"). Dussel's opening to the Other, inspired by Levinas, goes in this direction. An Other which is the other of reason, potentially productive and self-enriching, an excess to be sure to the conventions of the uses –and abuses– of singular reason. Such an opening would have to imply a theoretical pluralizing of ways of being human (“liberation” is the invocation). The contrast is sharp with Jean Baudrillard, who is aware of US Latinos and plays a perverse game of carnivals and cannibals, welcoming the inspiration of Jorge Luis Borges<sup>xii</sup>.

Gaukroger is sensitive to class differentials. He speaks of the difference between the philosophical intelligence of the upper bourgeoisie and that of the lower nobility sandwiched in between the few nobles and clerics and, below, the majoritarian plebs. Dussel makes Descartes's rationalism the mirror image of Hernán Cortés's practical

intelligence of the petty nobility, or *hidalgo bachiller*, who studied hasty letters at the University of Salamanca<sup>xiii</sup>. Comparatively speaking, Althusser's conception of philosophy (another articulation modality of class struggle in his case in solidarity with the position of the working class) finds its "exact" mirror image in Negri's chapter two, "Philosophy and Conjuncture" side by side Gaukroger's chapter two "An Education in Propriety, 1606-1618," which deals with the Jesuit training of Descartes in the times of the official Baroque (p. 38-67).

Interesting questions are raised about the relationship between philosophical reason, aesthetics and the social standing of the subject who is supposed to know<sup>xiv</sup>. Dussel introduces the enemy of Las Casas, the polished scholar of arms and letters, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490-1573)<sup>xv</sup>. Sepúlveda's Latin-language neo-Aristotelianism, via the Islamic tradition traveling through Renaissance Italy, will become one of the two contenders for the official ideology of the Hispanic Empire. Las Casas's vociferous Christianity, increasingly "americanized" is a leading genealogical line chosen by Dussel apropos the difficult enterprise of mounting counter-discourses and counter-philosophies vis-à-vis the imperious orthodoxies that reach us today (substitute Sepúlveda for Richard Rorty and the Hispanic Empire for the American Empire and we are instantly in the contemporary situation in which disagreements of substance are difficult against officialdom).

Sepúlveda's brand of Aristotelianism constitutes an explicit logic of imperialism and colonization according to the revival of the Roman *ius belli*. It is truly a mind-boggling diachronicity encompassing diverse localities, the one that is recreated by Dussel, and one cannot but marvel at these impressive Dusselian vistas. Our "barbarian" philosopher builds continuities and speaks of sequence (first, second and third moments of modernity/ coloniality, Early Modern/Renaissance; Enlightenment and 20<sup>th</sup> Century since Industrial Revolution and conventional "modernity"). Žižek has little to say about this big canvas and Negri de-emphasizes, philosophically speaking, the second term, coloniality, as though America held no philosophical importance in general terms, and certainly so early in the chronology. Negri offers the big divide between Descartes or early Renaissance and the preceding Middle Ages and also internally within an inherited Christian tradition (p. 151).

Descartes's philosophy instantiates, for Negri and others, the separations between reason and faith or belief system, and the failure of the bourgeois revolution, what Negri considers the interruption of greater democratization energies. The aim of the Italian

thinker is towards the future projection of a revolutionary subject in our own times (a certain erosion, blurring or "squeeging" of "class" is perceptible in the books written with Michael Hardt). Yet, there is a metaphorical tension of the "multitude" against "empire," which often receives the language of "North" and "South" (I dare say such tension also exists, potentially, in this Plí issue devoted to Western epistemologies differentiated from the Global South). I hasten to add that there is a certain Leftist empathy among these thinkers (Dussel, Zizek, Negri...) at the level of possible political solidarities, yet the agreements will be short-lived if we come to consider the "theaters" of the intellectual and philosophical preferences. Our European thinkers cannot let Europe go, and they tend to totalize it. Dussel's project is about such detotalization, but the US platform has taken over at least since 1945 and not only in relation to the philosophical field. These figures may agree that there are undesirable dimensions of the knowledge production called Cartesian modernity (Cassirer, Husserl do the same). They will agree less on the guard rails allowed for the run of those conversations –what to include and not include– and also about the future projections within the Western platform of observation–or without<sup>xvi</sup>. Indeed, the crucial issue will be the terrain in which such timespaces play out, what actors and figures are invoked and what intellectual future projects may circulate inside institutions of academic learning. I would say that Americanness, an entity larger than the United States, interpellates Dussel most intensely. Our "Southern" philosopher necessitates expansive vistas. For him neither the West nor Europe are sufficient, let alone the U.S., either historically or philosophically. There is here a restlessness, a sustained migrant and honest pilgrim condition of "being," a persistent homelessness, which I find deeply moving.

Dussel compresses "European reason" marginalizing *somewhat* class relations. A more nuanced approach to race relations could also complicate the mixed picture, certainly in the Americas<sup>xvii</sup>. How representative are these chosen figures of continental dimensions is a valid objection. Ventriloquizing Dussel, he would say that a reductive approach is necessary at least to circumscribe hegemonic reason and not to dwell –or drown– in a purposeless plurality. If so, the Descartes-Cortés dyad is presented as one leading dawn of modern (European) reason imposing itself over an "indigenous" (i.e. non-European) reality, constructed as "exteriority" from the moment of the "clash of civilizations" onwards (I am appropriating the Huntingtonian formula for my purposes). The theoretical *indigenista* attitude of Christian-inspired solidarity, the tandem of a philosophy and a theology of liberation, remains consistent in Dussel.

The Dusselian gesture is always one towards the proliferation of figures inside an enlarged historical landscape that cannot be reduced to the vision provided by the one-eye Polyphemus (i.e. the narrative of a powerful nation-state, the jargon of legitimacy and the bureaucratic ways of an influential institution, the cushion of a powerful social group, the orthodoxy of an official credo, etc.). Americanizing such European provenance has to do with such widening of the depth of field, adding new figures to the solitary desert, tranquillity and separation of Descartes mentioned by Negri at the beginning of chapter two<sup>xviii</sup>. Tensions play out across the American continent, the U.S. and Latin America, also inside the philosophical field. Almost three decades after I met Dussel, the (academic) conjuncture appears more difficult and unpredictable. Ours is an interregnum. We are transitioning from US hegemony towards something not yet imagined.

A few historical figures may still be summoned to populate our contemporary global imaginary. Dussel brings together Descartes (1596-1650) and Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (1534-1615) in their respective localities of post-Hispanic Low Countries and early colonial Perú. Where can we imagine the intersection points in these expansive transatlantic vistas? Dussel makes these (male) intellectual figures representative of a transatlantic chiaroscuro of metropolitan superimposition and “colonial difference” (comparable to a world-systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein and Anibal Quijano)<sup>xix</sup>. Dussel underlines class and race-and-ethnicity considerations, yet his macrovision does not develop the implications fully (a necessary compression, I suppose, must take place in the provision of those vast vistas). A certain binary opposition emerges: the solipsistic and imperial European reason versus an “idealized,” subalternized, dialogic, non-European, or better not-solely-European proto-reason, or “other” reason yet to become. Dussel “politicizes” philosophical thinking, that is, he constructs a “us v them” between the Cartesian legacy strictly within the illusion of self-sufficient European confines and the critical interrogations of all those positions –call them by the shorthand of Latin American or Global South if you wish– geopolitically, civilizationally, professionally left “down and out.”

The engagement with Descartes must therefore retrieve the foreignness of Cartesianism inside and outside a conventional “American” setting, here in the narrow sense of the U.S. Descartes is our “Mr Chance” whose intentionality is exceeded by historical avatars since the original chronology (I am referring to the protagonist, interpreted by Peter Sellers in Hal Ashby’s film *Being There*). Our intentionality is exceeded too. Individual intentionality –say, Descartes’s presumed or reconstructed

intentionality-- is not the main point of the critical interrogation. This one is: Dussel runs the conventional qua Western-only philosophy afield. It is rather the Cartesian legacy that may have kept it within restricted and restrictive “European” confines. There will be an aggravation of the problem when such confines are implemented, for example, by an American (U.S.) perspectivism; hence the “bad name” Eurocentrism in so far as the thinking operation vis-a-vis the “glorious” figures of the past is universalized and said to represent regulatory models or impositions and cover-ups of “human reason.” Assuming a xenophilic disposition, Dussel and others will have none of that. In so doing, there will be an openness to strangeness and the welcoming to dislocations. One could call it a necessary “cultural relativity” thrown at any absolutization temptation. Descartes is one valid name among others and there will be others before and since within the configuration of areas of knowledge production of abstract thought (philosophy), that remains prestigious in some quarters. These quarters, doubts anyone? Are dwindling by the time this essay sees the light of day. Yet, the name –any proper name– and the discipline –philosophy among others– is not enough. The invocation of these singularities does not hold. It is therefore not a matter of not engaging with Descartes or with the Cartesian legacy. I am answering the brutal question with which we started this essay. It is rather a matter, it seems to me, of not fetishizing any single name and radically not following a predetermined path of restricted and restrictive philosophical affiliation or belonging. No totem, no taboo, with or without the ongoing destruction of the foreign humanities inside and outside the Anglo Zone. The Dusselian project cannot be antiquarian and conservative in the preservation of token figures from a forgotten past, typically not delivered using sophisticated philosophical discourses. Dussel does not call Guamán Poma de Ayala philosophical. And who is coming to dinner? (the smart reader already picked the reference to Stanley Kramer’s 1967 film). Would this be a problem? There are however philosophical implications in the joint rescue operation that brings such historical figures to the (philosophical) dinner table, side by side, Bartolomé de Las Casas. This unconventional gesture of a desired enlargement of the philosophical field seeks an upset and a reconfiguration of the “field.” But we cannot remain “there.” Holding the distance from poststructuralist postmodernism, Dussel defends a historical continuity of Lascasista critique for the violence and exclusions of capitalist modernity also in the 20th and 21st centuries not yet left behind.

### 5.0. In the manner of a conclusion and new vistas

The firstness of "first-world philosophy" is compromised in the methodological perspectivism that brings Americanness to the depth of field, call it trans-Atlantic. First-Third world tension has now been relabelled Global-West and Global South, and we must contemplate at least three levels of engagement: geopolitics, university life and popular culture. Conventions are compromised. It is salutary. The radical fracture between philosophy (qua exclusive sphere of abstract or totalizing reason) and religion (qua realm of faith and belief system, "mysteries," Ortega y Gasset spoke of philosophy emerging out of the hole of belief!) is also compromised in the intimate association of Descartes with the contemporaneous Scholastics, at least according to Dussel. Dussel highlights the importance of the monastic context of the Jesuits and the Augustinians, the neo-Thomist Scholastics, Portuguese and Spaniards such as Francisco Sánchez y Gómez Pereira. And there is a further stretch that reaches the figures of Ginés de Sepúlveda, Bartolome de Las Casas, Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala and surely many others there then and since. Descartes is no man on an island. The intelligence of the foreign humanities must always try to reconstruct the collective nomothetic and idiographic underpinnings of any individual achievement, not to mention the original circumstances. Hence, a situational or situationist call is to be made in the vicinity of this Dusselian reconstruction.

Dussel helps us expose the conventional oblivion of the imperial and colonial legacies generated by the Iberian dimension within and against a conventional narrow vision of Europe and "America" qua the U.S. within the "West," typically a colossal entity that is often – always? – misapprehended by conventional philosophy courses and the geopolitical interests of the stronger nation-states, first and foremost the United States of America. The greater expanse of Latin America suffers an even greater "fate" of oblivion inside conventional American (qua US) accounts activating a conventional Eurocentric frame of historical intelligibility of world dimensions (by the time I write these lines there are visible cracks in the transatlantic compound of the collective West in the EU and NATO formulations). The sign "Europe" (with the adjective "continental" inside philosophical precincts to differentiate it from Analytic philosophy, hegemonic inside Anglo domains, Rorty ascertains) will mean different things in different places. Europe is easily a sign of inherited privilege in the US institutions not to want to see too much of those new figures "coming to dinner" (see my article on Huntington, 2006).

Here, Europe is, with Dussel, americanized, expansively so. The courageous imagination is called upon to endure the surely excessive, long stretch from Alaska to

Patagonia. I am spatializing what is fundamentally a matter of the relationship of consciousness and circumstance. In other words, Dussel forces us to contemplate the seriousness of the challenge of the American difference vis-à-vis historically hegemonic Europe, never forgetting, how could we?, the more recent impetuous input of the U.S. superpower within and without the colossal dimension of Western civilization. Polyphemus (Leviathan, the philanthropic ogre) makes the West its possession in official public domains, “liberally” so. It remains to be seen if Europe in its NATO and EU formulations can speak its own independent mind in the conjuncture. After Zea, Dussel, Quijano and many others, Latin America can. Will it have an impact in the present and future (im-)perfect? These pages push in that positive direction. The alleged absoluteness of the Habermasian trajectory of incomplete modernity is provincialized by Dussel and others. This is no longer a matter of renewing the promises of a single modern teleology, but of opening up thought and praxis to multiples points of entry and departure, hyperlinking collaborations in timely, circumstantial, oblique fashion being fully aware of the (im-)possible reconfigurations of hegemonic templates with or without the guise of singularities such as modernity, capitalism, Christianity or philosophy. It is easier said than done.

The solipsist paradigm of consciousness, the *ego cogito*, thus inaugurated, will continue its overwhelming, steamrolling development in the later stages of European modernity, and it will reach, albeit with a few modifications, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Sartre or Ricoeur. In the 20th Century, it will be radically critiqued by Levinas who, starting from the fifth meditation of the *Cartesian Meditations* by Edmund Husserl, will try to open up to the Other, which is also the Other of the European modernity, but still in Europe... Nevertheless, Levinas himself and the entire Frankfurt School in its three generations do not manage to overcome this Modernity, because they fail to notice the coloniality in this process of Western power. Levinas inevitably remains Eurocentric, while discovering the irrationality of the totalization of modern subjectivity, but he cannot situate himself in the exteriority of this capitalist, imperial, metropolitan Europe ("Meditaciones anti-Cartesianas;" my translation from the original Spanish).

Let us underline such “exteriority” whilst we pay attention to the line-up of European philosophers, the "dream-team" of Dussel’s desire. Dussel wants to be included in the photo opportunity under the philosophical banner. Yet the gesture signals a huge missing outside. There are no "Indian feathers" here, not even horse feathers as in the Marxist-Brothers film. My tone of levity is meant to be convivially complicit, in admiration and good faith. Yet, something is missing in this list of names. The figure of Levinas, historically within the tradition of Judaism, allows our “Southern” philosopher

to podium the grand singularity of alterity ("the Other"), in strict philosophical lineage with the Husserlian phenomenological genealogy. These are major names, and these are major works that require many readings that no hasty gesture with the fly swatter, postcolonial or not, will dismiss. There will be, to be sure, other major names and other major works. The task is not simply one of adding new names and new works to a preexisting canon, any canon. Canonical reconfigurations have been dislocated since the 1980s, and we are now in the tribulations of the diminished (foreign) humanities inside the institutions of higher education on both sides of the Atlantic. The irrationality of violence informing the exercise of reason, labelled Western, European, and now "American" too, is "resolved" in this conclusion in the theoretical jump to the "exteriority," the negated dimension, the typification of unreason under coloniality that on close inspection turns out to be something else, the "excess" of a dominant or hegemonic reason that is always, already insufficient.

This is the "exteriority" that Dussel has been affirming time and again since the early books in the 1970s. One could perhaps think of this delicate balance between introspection and extraversion, the transcendental negation of immanence, at least in the affirmation of historicity, and the desire of other timespaces that we may imagine not only transactional but episodic, non-terminal, translational, indefinite, passages full of thick description, potentially carrying a "transcendental" importance or meaning. Reasons are still needed to articulate narratives, meanings, and repudiations. The dyad Cortés-Descartes, at least according to this Dusselian rendition, operates within the historical synthesis of an expansive and dominant "Europe," as it is contemplated from a hard-pressed (Latin) American perspective. Just imagine a violent foreshortening of exteriority that distorts the main image as in a Mannerist painting: the "barbarian" has wanted a seat and a piece of the cake at the philosophical table since Guaman Poma de Ayala's and Las Casas' times.

There have been big historical transformations since, and this "Europe" has acquired a secondary status since WWII and may well be on its way down to a tertiary status after the second Trump presidency. Yet, it is still too early to tell. Its horizon remains however relevant, institutionally significant, less dominant than it used to be, and there is a defensive or cautious inertia inside the typical houses of knowledge production, not only in Richard Rorty's original habitat. What will happen to the official U.S. if the European horizon undergoes severe distancing and even a debilitation? Will these de-Europeanized Americans open to and embrace the Southern philosophies of the best

minds among their neighbours? Important transformations are taking place whilst I write these pages and many already see and speak about a break, and it will be traumatic, in the consensus of imperial domination and an interregnum of Anglo dominance constructed across the Northern Atlantic axis. The ‘externality’ of geopolitics does not determine but clearly circumscribes and has a great impact on the university settings and its disciplines. If the tilt to the East is confirmed, there will be enormous implications for a historical Eurocentrism informing not only the discipline of (continental) philosophy. Undoubtedly a certain Europe is conveniently propped up by US interests, i.e. one very strong player, the self-appointed “leader” in the so-called “liberal West” that is typically propped up against all “competitors.” Be as it may, the totalization of the duality (Europe and non-Europe) is perhaps a necessary thick brushstroke in a historical canvas that is, always already in Dussel, breathtakingly vast. It must be breathtakingly vast, he would defend, and Dussel’s work will continue living in such duality that remains fundamental in relation to the surely excessive stretch of consciousness and expansive timespaces since 1492. Finer touches will surely have to follow to convey a sense of the plurality of social energies pursuing different political interests in different timespaces, retroactively turning to the past and imaginatively looking ahead to an uncertain future projection.

If philosophy is the telos of Europe, we – at least those who see themselves for better or for worse situated in the West – are all implicated. Yet, where does that leave its historical colonial extension, i.e. America, the Western Hemisphere, or Monroe-Doctrine-corralled entity caught up in the dominant portion, the U.S., and the vast Latin dimension? (Interestingly, the (American) entity is still one continent in the romance-language and two in the conventional English language). Dussel’s lifetime devoted to “philosophy” invites us to contemplate the suspension of the three nouns (philosophy, telos, Europe). How are we to understand the development of thought in relation to one minority discipline of some prestige in some quarters and one old world that used to be hegemonic and dominant until about 1945? Let us never neglect the stronger progeny, the U.S., “monstrous” dimension, etymologically understood, never be considered an absolute or a totality of self-sufficient meaning. This article started in the U.S. It ends elsewhere. I may see the print version back in the U.S. Such dislocations are not particular to the writer of these pages.

Dussel’s work helps us provincialize dominant or hegemonic entities (Europe, U.S., West). This is very important, given the solipsistic official self-definitions of these entities vis-à-vis the “benign neglect” of bigger dimensions (let us synthesize them as

“world”). Would the deepening of a Dusselian knowledge practice delivers liberations from such inevitabilities (philosophy, telos, Europe, West)? What would such “liberation” look like –wholesale liquidation, salvation of the good parts, a new game and lots of potential gains? Perhaps the sign “philosophy” is no longer intelligible, transferable, or even translatable in most social and academic situations as a code and signal. This has certainly been my experience, and this article comes out of that experience<sup>xx</sup>. The current default position in the maligned humanities is that of “cultures” in the generic plural form.

Let us insist with a second conditional: if “philosophy” is (class) struggle by other means, we cannot let it go either, no matter how fractured, fleeting, and ephemeral the acquaintance with it already is inside the typically insufficient institutional settings. If these philosophical options are available, they will have to be used for what they are worth. If these are not available, we will have to learn to make do and greater freedoms may perhaps take place in such a vacuum. One never knows. I have had a strong suspicion for a while now that conventional institutional life is undergoing a process of a seemingly unstoppable immiseration and bureaucratization (it cannot pay its bills, dramatically so, in the generality of the UK university system which I have witnessed first-hand for almost a decade). If the university core is bureaucratic inside an institutionalist nationalist methodology in the years of Brexit, buffeted by capitalist-market logic, there is also little official effort towards a persuasive language to win hearts and minds<sup>xxi</sup>. Agamben speaks of how the constitutive process of institutionalization means a *de facto*, if not *de iure* effective process of desemanticization, and of a corresponding suspension of concrete praxis in relation to the real<sup>xxii</sup>. We are witnessing processes of de-institutionalization of the foreign humanities –and not only of the foreign humanities inside which we must imagine the philosophical field, always already a diminished entity inside the conventional Anglo Zone– that go on hurting, not only in the Anglo Zone. Further explorations will try to come out of this brutal institutional fragility<sup>xxiii</sup>.

But there are no guarantees and no consolations, and we cannot linger “there.” From my current observation platforms, I can see that the Dusselian interpellation prioritizes the emblematic figure of *a* first-world philosopher who is declared to be insufficient (indefinite article, “a,” rather than the definite “the,” and the whole thrust of Dussel may be behind such move pushing for imperfection and incompleteness against a utopian horizon of perfection or completion). “He” –the first-world-philosopher, be Descartes or Rorty, and it is exclusively a male series– is insufficient *qua* insufficiently

totalizing and violently universalizing. And this is so in the double sense of reducing vast domains of an expansive world to insignificance or meaningless for the philosophical field or other fields of inquiry (let alone, timespaces of geopolitical importance worthy of economic reconsiderations, deserving mass-media visibility or audibility, etc.). In other words, this article by Dussel is part of a larger collective denunciation of a world *redux* constructed by some canon defenders of *a* (philosophical) tradition (*idem* as before) of a certain “West<sup>xxiv</sup>.”

Dusselian denunciations follow suit (Las Casas’s famous account of the destruction of the Indies, conventionally denigrated by conservative officialdom in academic circles and popular mass media venues in Spain constitutes an emblematic precedent). What would happen if the dialogue were constructed with other philosophical practices that push in other directions? Memorably, the vanity of the “Cartesian man” was hit in different ways since Renaissance and Baroque times (Copernicus’ heliocentrism, Darwin’s evolution of the species, Marx’s class divisions, Freud’s unconscious, Nietzsche’s death of God and the nihilism of history, decolonization processes since the 1960s and the opening up of new subjects who are supposed to know about other ways of thinking and being, non-white sectors, feminisms and alternative-sexualities modalities for example). The next decades will be interesting and not only for the “American man,” the epitome of Western man, but especially for “him” –and “woman” too (early days of the second Trump presidency appear to signify an acceleration of transformations towards a de-Europeanization of the U.S. and other domains will follow suit, “philosophy” among the disciplines too). General indicators (economic indexes, demographics, BRICS+ emergence, etc.) signal a debilitation of the hitherto hegemonic West, particularly in its U.S.-led versions. We can expect internal fractures in this West-*redux* in the different associations of the nation-states and its institutional interlockings. The situation appears even more dramatic for Brexit Britain, losing its calculations of a transatlantic mediation between the U.S. and the EU and possibly its soft power (the Reagan/Thatcher moment long gone). Changes in Area-Studies will inevitably go along this post-Western hegemony interregnum: First, Second and Third worlds will get increasingly entangled. Interpreters will be wanted for these “global” West, East and South (de-)associations that do not fit into the (philosophical club of) usual suspects. In the end, I maintain that Dussel can help us see some of these present and future (im-)perfect (im-) possibilities.

There should be a renewed effort to cover these big-entity transformations currently undergoing change. The Hispanophone zone, for example, will be part and

parcel of priority and non-priority areas or regions of the world, even if it does not acquire a visible geopolitical importance. One can see increasing fractures inside the liberal West (Russia's Ukraine and Israel's Gaza wars are perhaps preamble to others. There is a re-focus on the so-called Indo-Pacific from the trans-Atlantic axis and who doubts that such change, tearing Eurocentrism apart since (post-)Cold War era, will take some re-adjustment of hearts and minds on both sides of the Atlantic. "The old continent" (the nomenclature is a sign of an inherited, fraying Eurocentrism) may undergo fragmentations as it slides into a secondary or tertiary position in world rankings. Nordic-Baltic countries may go one way in collaboration with the UK, perhaps. The France-and-Germany core may reaffirm itself, or may not. The UK-France nuclear capability may form a nucleus with Germany, but Britain has always been the distant cousin of the European family. Will the Mediterranean countries veer towards Northern Africa around the issue of migration and population decline and boom down South? Will Morocco and Turkey remain outside the EU? Will Ukraine? The Eastern pull may undergo re-affirmations. Is it inconceivable to imagine a re-appraisal of the EU with Russia, with or without a US diminution of its dominant role, even a departure? Will the U.S. allow such rapprochement? Will Uncle Sam allow the continuous Chinese investment growth in the Americas? Perhaps the crucial battle takes place in the technological field. Perhaps that is where the future is. The crystal ball can only deliver so much conjecture.

This "old continent" is perhaps inevitably playing a small part, a second-fiddle (ask Josep Borrell or Kaja Kallas, Jens Stoltenberg or Mark Rutte) of a displaced "West," the compact nomenclature seemingly broken down, and ineffectual, non-capitalized in conventional British media. Such orthographic conventions signal euphemism and interregnum (historically, the seat of the King, the site of authority and legitimacy, is vacant, hence disorientation, disquietude and ambivalence). Doubts anyone as "the most powerful nation in the history of the world," as one conventional form of rhetoric has it, breaks the rules of engagement and decides to go solo? The appearance of the "liberal international order" from Obama to Biden has been shattered. "Europe" – including its misbehaving British Island portion– will continue to deserve critical analysis even as it turns into a destination for mass-culture tourism, entertainment, sports and leisure.

The challenge will intensify if the tilt to the East, due to the global impetus of China, brings the increasing distancing between America and Western Europe, Brexit Britain already to boot, and perhaps even a progressive strangeness and de-Europeanization of the hitherto conventional self-perception of the United States. The

preamble of the British Empire for the US Empire is a common trope among UK analysts in the US, but this may give way too to other realities in Asia and Africa, perhaps less so to the international visibility of Latin America. Perhaps a comparable disenchantment and distancing, even de-Americanization, of Western Europe may ensue, also in popular culture, as it fixes its eyes on Northern Africa, the Muslim world and Eurasia for possible alternatives (but the Israel/Gaza conflict is likely to continue).

Is a greater independent Europe –not exclusively captured by the Western Europe of EU and NATO– possible in relation to its Eastern flank? There is a new EU-Mercosur agreement and Latin American migration is already bringing massive numbers to Spain (Madrid is a city of more than one million inhabitants of Latin American provenance, 1 out of 7!). Perhaps Latin American visibility will fly better under the radar in the large scheme of things and not necessarily as one area or region? University life will have to change accordingly, although one does not see the “languages” picking up momentum in the Anglo Zone any time soon, quite the contrary. Yet, the future is open even if anti-immigration rhetoric is being normalized. Political oppositionality is now standardized by the establishment around the interrelated figures of the immigrant and the (illegal) foreigner. These are the “foreign humanities” that undergo conventional xenophobic treatment (likewise, the humanities that deal with international domains of language and thought, are, inside immiserated university structures, placed outside the remit). But we must imagine overlaps, entanglements and combined, uneven developments going in many directions across the partitions and demarcations of the world (the “big game,” not only in geopolitical terms, but that is also surely an excessive dimension for the critical imagination of every single one of us).

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Latinization of the United States already pushes in a direction that is not and cannot be exclusively European in origin (“Hispanic” is a federal sign and Spain thins out accordingly). There will have to be a greater instability of the conventional racial categories (white, black, brown, Hispanic, Asian, indigenous, etc.), which brings us to the de-whitening of the “American man,” another hit to a certain mirror-image of an official self-identity of the U.S. (see my extensive interview with Frank Wilderson III for these tensions, 2022). We must continue imagining big numbers of populations on the move with or without official rhetorical opposition and restrictions (global-South populations penetrating the conventional West – Western Europe and the United States). A shorthand way of saying this is that the “liberal-imperial” will blend in and also clash in different ways with the “colonial.” That

is to say, the “liberal-imperial West” in the latest U.S. formulations<sup>xxv</sup> will undergo changes and transformations going along the (im-)possible (post/de/anti) colonial juxtaposition. Such a future –like the past– will not be one straight line. I cannot imagine one big single cause, or Big Bang, and one destination or teleology (I can imagine an infinite number of individual scatologies, but that is a different matter). Singularities appear on the way out unless a big catastrophe of global proportions ensues (perhaps the climate crisis will be a moment like the one for the dinosaurs!). In the meantime, Dussel allows us to think of a series of (dis-)continuities running along the “colonial” and the possibility of going along the BRICS+ matrix (Mexico will have it harder to be independent due to the proximity with the U.S.).

I feel a sense of collective disorientation might perhaps be more traumatic for the Northern portion of the American continent, given the signs of a relative decline and a corresponding suspension of authority and legitimacy of the self-appointed leader of the “liberal West,” at least since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, if not before (Wallerstein saw the crisis of the U.S. already in the 1970s!). Such a difficult conjuncture, ours, should be the moment for the reinvigoration of intelligence and thought. Will the universities help in the difficult task of comprehending mounting challenges to the constructions of identities and self-perceptions, let alone of colossal “world” dimensions?

So far, I see a disjointed world of higher education and the further deterioration of the “languages” in the lands where the *lingua franca* reigns supreme. I am summarily describing what I am seeing, not what I would like to see: a “consolidation” promoted by the managers (euphemism for elimination). In our patriarchal societies, the humanities undergo feminization and de-institutionalization (signs such as “languages for all” in the UK are very clear). The “Latin” in the Americas will also have to transform. I wonder out loud about the Latinx addendum, whilst the “Hispanic” sign will soon become an orphan category if it has not already done so. Inside the U.S., “Hispanic” is largely a misnomer, a bureaucratic taxonomy, of little social echo and this is something that the “Iberians” on the Southern-European side of things do not yet understand. As globalizations are being reconfigured, greater affirmations of locality may take place but who doubts that many will be seized by greater forces (do we really know where our information, knowledge networks, food production, codes of intelligibility, etc. come from?). Most of these weaker localities will undergo further marginalization. Self-designations such as “west” may become old-fashioned and antiquarian (some IR analysts are already saying so and conventional university courses on both sides of the Atlantic prove them right). There

will be a competition for collective umbrella terms and the people of the future (or users or consumers of the differential cultural modalities) will go their own ways about finding what they (think they) need. “Junk” will inevitably flow in myriad ways in the digital and virtual existence. Philosophy, if it exists, will be a self-selected reading club of minority readers. Will “dissidence” make sense then? What Prospero figure, *deus ex machina* or “big brain” will be able to put all sorts of IP locators and AI “mess” of timespaces together? North, South, East and West of what in relation to what reference points and points of connectivity of those digital and virtual users? We will get to see different stages of globalizations and local affirmations, internationalist expansion and isolationist retreats, coherent structuring of world orders and multi-layered disorders, fragmentations and inequalities within and against them. Enrique Dussel remains a good name for our travels and travails since Early Modern and colonial times reaching our bewildering transformations.

Therefore, try to place the “ubi sunt” to the “ego cogito” (who does what to whom, where, when, how, what’s the point, who wins, loses, etc.?). It is not Descartes’ “fault” entirely, but “ours.” It is “we” who are trying to overcome the Cartesian *modus operandi*, the Hernan Cortes in the Cartessian “ego cogito” in the Dusselian interpretation. What will our steps backward and forward therefore take us to thus make the philosophical field more expansive and infinitely more capacious to go along with an always already excessive world dimension? Dussel places Descartes in an expansive cognitive field, “far away” from the landscapes lived by the French philosopher. The challenge, for us, is to assume a violent foreshortening that combines a depth-of-field approach to the Cartesian primary material and tradition of scholarship with “soft eyes” of an enlarged vision that “americanizes” European-knowledge sourcing and inheritance. Call such perspective “American” and add the “Latin” portion. In so doing we can relativize the absorption of the continental category by the superpower that does not call itself “Latin.” Dussel has called attention to the figures of the cynic and the sceptic in his “conversations” with First-World philosophers (Rorty has been included in the previous pages). There is also the “running of the field” in the spy world, deceit and dissimulation, dishonesty and bad faith, bureaucratic-institutional cynical play, and a “whole lot of green” as the game of snooker has it. The big world out there cannot be brought down to the conventional West-redux of your conventional humanities sections in university settings now undergoing tight budgets. These challenges remain ours for the foreseeable future, and there is no

doubt that these “externalities” do matter enormously every time we sit down to read and write things.

Yes is the answer to the initial brutal question about the engagement with Descartes particularly in the dire straits of the (Western-centric) philosophical field in the conjuncture, yet this “glorious” proper name is but one in the force field. A self-imposed mores: no exclusive club, no white-only trajectory of history (or meaningfulness), no strictly-come-Anglo-domain of knowledge-privileged domain about self-definitions of the world at large. No solipsism, no substantialism (or essentialism), less of the Cartesian “geometrical method” (Chica Blas), more of an “anthropology” and an invocation of the “human” (Lewis Gordon)? I am not sure if the critique of the violence of European modernity – later pushed forward by US supremacy – necessitates a “preoccupation with ‘human’ (P. Mabogo More via Lewis Gordon) or the construction of an ontology. Technological transhumanism is knocking on our doors of perception. The question of an “exteriority” of a metropolitan, imperial and capitalist “West” remains.

Predilections like mine for a situated or situationist approach to knowledge practices will thus face new challenges. Consider these dislocations and disarticulations to the school of existential historicism<sup>xxvi</sup>: the disruption of the idea of single provenance (origin or cause) and the idea of destiny, teleology and even scatology. Is progress thus becoming unintelligible at least individually since we are simply passing through largely without clear points of reference, definite symbols and monuments? Are we “fated” to “be immanent,” go through the trees and the “fog of war” to use the expression, rather than “be transcendental,” and see the forest in the big landscape and taste the taste of the finality of victory or defeat, to go through immanence without transcendence? Dussel saw utopian “liberation” more clearly than in the following decades.

Transcendentalism may turn into transience and a mercenary variety of passing through hostile environments in the minority disciplines, call them the “foreign humanities” if you wish. “Where are you from?” is a conventional way of pinning down, a pointed way of seeking a clarification, from a stranger in the midst since s/he may be displaying one or two disorienting features. “Anywhere I hang my hat is home,” may be a good way of conveying the previous dilemma of the “loss” of definite and definitive singularities. That is, singularity may give way to plurality and dissemination. In other words, *any* locality (philosophy, West, Global South, Europe, Latin America) must be looked at and even lived through its exchanges. A world of relations rather than a world of substances. This appears to be the case concerning the asparagus we eat, the tennis

shoes we wear, the car we drive, the partners left behind and ahead of us, the codes and languages, the social networks we visit and the devices we use, the endemic situation of job precarity of the immense number of university people, the book production that you may have finished recently, the people involved in the production of this very essay. In other words, “world wide web (www)” and social hubs and networks in our increasingly digitized and virtualized “global” reality is where we are at. What if we take this idea to any singularity (Dussel’s Descartes, “history” or “philosophy” or “nation” or “self” and “other”) and run with it? A greater complexity arises in relation to the very title of this essay initially structured by the binary polarity of Western philosophy and Global South apropos Dussel’s anti-Cartesian meditations. Old partitions (first-second-third world) and new demarcations (global West, global East, global South, BRICS+ and others) may travel through the levels of analysis (geopolitics, university life, mass consumer culture), ever so slowly or gradually, not in lockstep, let alone in goose step, yet inevitably inside the hegemonic Anglo Zone that has characterized the world in Dussel’s time and ours. This essay underlines the Dusselian foreshortening, call it Latin American if you like, of the liberal-imperial dimension generated from the (post/de/anti) colonial perspective. De-totalizing the “West goes first” or the “West-knows-best” occurs. It is a very good thing it does.

Combined, uneven developments will therefore take place in between these false singularities, and we will have to learn to face exchanges that will not be those based on contiguity of shared physical space and neighbour proximity, unlike the restrictions of your (grand-)parents and the contemporaneity of faithfulness to the restricted nation-state territories with their flags and rituals. Our problem is one of accelerated timespaces that are generating new “technical” disorientations (the emphatic filler word, “technical” in the American idiom is a symptom of these forces of novelty, pull and traction). Yet, bureaucracies are still doing your fingerprinting and background checks to ascertain who you are and possibilities of making a living in distant geographies hang by a thread. Individual self-affirmations will not forget that there are larger collective forces, those you have never met and will probably never meet and still have a tremendous influence on your life and the lives of others. In the meantime, we have never met Descartes like we have not met a few of the illustrious names mentioned in these pages, but we have read Descartes, and we will continue reading him in the future – via Morillo-Velarde, Chica-Blas, Jean-Luc Nancy, Dussel and others. I met Dussel more than two decades ago

and I am passing to others these reflections in relation to persistent dilemmas that will not disappear tomorrow.

## REFERENCES

Agamben, Giorgio. (2005). *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Althusser, Louis. (2014). *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. London & New York: Verso.

Barreto, José Manuel. (2012). *Human Rights from a Third World Perspective: Critique, History and International Law*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Baudrillard, Jean. (2008). *Carnival and Cannibal: Ventriloquous Evil*. Chris Turner, translator. Seagulls Books.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2005). *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*. Chris Turner, translator. Oxford & New York: Berg.

Cassirer, Ernst. (2000). *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*. New Haven & London: Yale UP.

Chica Blas, Angel. (2001). *Descartes: Geometria y Metodo*. Madrid: Nivola.

Ciccariello-Maher, George & Grosfoguel, Ramón, Eds. (2013). Conversations with Enrique Dussel on Anti-Cartesian Decoloniality, Special Issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, Issue 1, Volume IX, Fall.

Dussel, Enrique. (1996). *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor and the Philosophy of Liberation*. New York: Humanities Press International.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2008) "Meditaciones anti-Cartesianas: Sobre el Origen del Anti-Discurso Filosófico de la Modernidad," *Tabula Rasa*, Bogotá, Colombia, Núm. 9, Julio-Diciembre, p. 153-197.

\_\_\_\_\_. (1995). *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*. New York: Continuum.

Gaukroger, Stephen. (1995). *Descartes, An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Ferrater Mora, José. (1979). *Diccionario de Filosofía. Tomo I [A-D]* Nueva edición revisada, aumentada y actualizada por el profesor Josep-María Terricabras (Barcelona:

Círculo de Lectores, 3a reimpresión de 2004; 1a edición revisada, aumentada y actualizada en Ariel Referencia (1994); primera edición en un único volumen (1941); 6a y última edición, 4 vols.).

Gómez Herrero, Fernando. (forthcoming April 2025) *The (Latin) American Scene, Present and Future (Im-)Perfect: Five Critical Conversations*. Anthem Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2022). "The Afropessimist never drinks the kool-aid of Black Enlightened Progress: A Conversation with Frank Wilderson III," *Diacritics* (Vol. 50, Num. 4): p. 72-97.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2023a) "The unsustainability of American Power: A sustained critique of G. John Ikenberry" (Part one and two): *The Unsustainability Of American Power – A Sustained Critique of G. John Ikenberry* (Fernando G. Herrero), Part 2 – THE NEW POLIS (40 pages).

\_\_\_\_\_. (2023b). "Foreign Humanities in the 'liberal West' in the Interregnum: A Critique of G. John Ikenberry," included in *Herencies / Legacies* (Universitat de Barcelona: Seccio d'història contemporània I món actual): p. 426-436.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2023). "About the Philosophical Proposal of the Liminal Being" (An interview with Eugenio Trias Sagnier) (*eHumanista: Journal of Iberian Studies*, 53: 410-485) (75 pages). ISSN 1540 587. eHumanista | eHumanista - UC Santa Barbara (ucsb.edu)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Sobre postcolonialismos maltrechos, descolonizaciones malogradas y angostamientos universitarios" (Umbral, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, Sobre postcolonialismos maltrechos, descolonizaciones malogradas y angostamientos universitarios (uprrp.edu)). 30 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2022). "The Latest American Appropriation of Western Universalism: A Critique of G. John Ikenberry's "Liberal International Order," included in *Rethinking Sovereignty and Territoriality in the 21st Century* (<http://journal.thenewpolיס.com/archives/1.1/index.html>; Inaugural Issue, Vol. 1 No. 1, Winter, Decoloniality and the Disintegration of Western Cognitive Empire): 90 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2021). "*Liberal Internationalism for Hard Times: An Interview with G. John Ikenberry*" (<https://toynbeeprize.org/posts/world-safe-for-democracy/>).

\_\_\_\_\_. (2012). "Desapegos de todo Universalismo, incluido el de Occidente" (*Revista Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, Año XXXVIII, Núm. 76, Lima-Boston, 2do. Semestre,): pp. 471-506.

“Sobre la crisis oficial de la política exterior estadounidense en las primeras décadas del nuevo siglo”. (2010). (*Nuevo Texto Crítico*, Vol. XXIII, No. 45/46): 25 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2001). "Ethics is the original philosophy; or the barbarian words coming from the third world. An Interview with Enrique Dussel," *Boundary 2*, 28/1: p. 19-73.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2002a). "Francisco de Vitoria in 1934, before and after," *Modern Languages Notes* 117: p. 365-405.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2002b). "Historicidad, Juricidad y Para-Literatura: En torno a Francisco de Vitoria (1486-1546)," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* LIX: 413-440.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2006). "La Identidad Nacional Estadounidense según Huntington," *Casa de las Américas* (Enero-Marzo): p. 23-35.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2001). *Good Places and Non-Places in Colonial Mexico: The Figure of Vasco de Quiroga (1470-1565)*. Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America.

Gordon, Lewis R. (2013). "Thoughts on Dussel's "Anti-Cartesian Meditations,"" *Human Architecture Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (XI, Issue 1, Fall): p. 67-72.

Husserl, Edmund. (1960). *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

\_\_\_\_\_. (1970). *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated and with an introduction by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press).

Jameson, Fredric. (2012). *El postmodernismo revisado*. Ed. de David Sanchez Usanos. Madrid: Adaba Editores.

Meneses, Maria Paula & De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. (2010). Eds. *Epistemologias do Sul*. Coimbra, Portugal, Almedina.

Moraña, Mabel & Enrique Dussel and Carlos A. Jauregui. (2008). Eds. *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Durham: Duke UP.

- Morillo-Velarde, Diego. (2001). *Rene Descartes: De omnibus dubitandum*. Madrid: Edaf.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. (2007). *Ego Sum*. Traducción y prólogo de Juan Carlos Moreno Romo. Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Negri, Antonio. (2007). *Political Descartes: Reason, Ideology and the Bourgeois Project*. London & New York: Verso (2007 [Italian original edition in 1970]).
- Pardos, Julio A. (2010). *Carl Schmitt. Ex Captivitate Salus: Experiencias de una Epoca 1945-7*. Madrid: Trotta.
- Pletsch, Carl E. (1981). "The three worlds, or the division of social scientific labor, circa 1950-1975," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Oct, 1981): p. 565-590.
- Quijano, Anibal & Wallerstein, Immanuel M. (1992). "Americanity as a concept; or, The Americas in the modern world-system," *International Social Science Journal*, XLIV, 4, p. 549-557.
- Russell, Bertrand. (1945). *A History of Western Philosophy, And Its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rorty, Richard. (2024). *Sobre la Filosofía y los Filósofos. Escritos Postumos*. Traducción de Angel Manuel Faerna Garcia-Bermejo. Madrid: Tecnos.
- Schmitt, Carl. (2011). *Catolicismo Romano y Forma Política*. Estudio Preliminar de Ramón Campderrich Bravo; Traducción y Notes de Pedro Madrigal. Madrid: Tecnos.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2010). *Ex Captivitate Salus: Experiencias de una Epoca 1945-7*, edición de Julio A. Pardos (Madrid: Trotta).
- Sousa Santos, Boaventura de. (2009). "A Non-Occidental West?: Learned Ignorance and Ecology of Knowledge," *Theory, Culture, Society* (26; pp. 103-125).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2009). "If God were a Human Rights Activist: Human Rights and the Challenge of Political Theologies," *Law, Social Justice and Global Development (LGD)* (42p.).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1997). "Por uma Concepção Multicultural de Direitos Humanos," *Lua Nova* (N. 39): p. 105-124.

Zizek, Slavoj. (1999). *Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London & New York: Verso.

<sup>i</sup> Culture Fudge in the Anglozone: Gideon Rachman's "global west" (sic, in lowercase). (fernandogherrero.com)

<sup>ii</sup> The volume is included in the journal *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (2013), edited by Ciccariello-Maher and Grosfoguel. I highlight Lewis R. Gordon's contribution in it. The centre is, if I may call it thus, the article by Dussel, originally published, as far as I know, in Spanish in the journal *Tabula Rasa* (2008) in Colombia. The Dusselian piece that concerns us here is reprinted in the volume of essays *Epistemologies do Sul* (2010), in Portuguese, edited by Meneses and De Sousa Santos. This new collection of essays gathers different materials, including the foundational essay on the coloniality of power by the influential Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano. There are earlier versions too.

<sup>iii</sup> Negri separates what Dussel approximates circumstantially and Ferrater Mora remains more circumspect about these connections with Christian monasticism.

<sup>iv</sup> *Descartes and the Last Scholastics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1999).

<sup>v</sup> See Richard Rorty's disquieting construction of a Eurocentric picture of Anglo-American philosophy separated from a silenced rest of the world included in chapter 13, "El estado actual de la filosofía en Estados Unidos;" Spanish edition, pp. 219-227, 2024. Pity the Hispanophone world in this picture! The contrast could not be stronger with Enrique Dussel's vision including comments about Rorty in the conversation with me, 2001. What vision is more expansive and what vision is deliberately more restrictive, indeed miserable, from a historically privileged standpoint that is inevitably geopolitically informed, that is one elementary question raised by the theme of Western philosophy and the global South, my dear Watson.

<sup>vi</sup> One counterstrategy will be to make all universal claims culturally specific hence situating them and thus underlining the forceful demonstrations of power/knowledge, not uncommonly geopolitically enforced. Some postcolonialists see nothing but bad, undesirable things in universalism, qua fault or imperfect, historically Eurocentric articulations of singularity or a violent imposition. Others may condemn the previous imperfections and argue for an "incomplete modernity" (Habermas) and defend a re-articulation of a better universalism for example in the manner of the United Nations invoking the "human" category (human rights, etc.). Total negation or partial negation or reformation. The reformist position welcomes criticism, for example, Husserl's phenomenology. Cutting out "universal" from every single page in the *Cartesian Meditations* would leave the pages full of holes and unreadable and do irreparable damage to the thinking operation. I do not think Dussel is in this latter camp. His disposition is more of the overcoming towards a more encompassing ("catholic") notion of the "human." I do not think Dussel has entered the psychoanalytic questioning of the transcendental ego, the unconscious Other, as far as I can see. Is it possible to think differently from the singularity of nouns in the radical plural forms?

<sup>vii</sup> I mention Dipesh Chkrabarty (University of Chicago) advisedly since I know there were contacts in the early 2000s via Walter Mignolo's mediations from Duke University, where I met Dussel.

<sup>viii</sup> The old-fashioned verb is a borrowing from the "Great Master" (Henry James). Here it is not aggressive. It "simply" means spending some time, and having a good time, in the "old world." Such verbs (europeanize, americanize) imply mobility and travel, also comparative residence. I detect no negative connotations in relation to our exquisite Europeanized American author who negotiated the transatlantic dimension in his delicate fictional prose his entire life. Perhaps the unusual verb forms could still deliver a modicum of surprise, energy and dynamism to nominal abstractions and essentialisms, strategic or not.

<sup>ix</sup> See Richard Rorty and Rigoberta Menchú tied in the same handkerchief knot, so to speak, in the conversation with me (2001) against an expansive "human" horizon of systemic violence. We must resist the temptation to fall for strict disciplinary affiliations, or self-limiting methodological nationalisms, let alone any endorsement of epistemic imperialisms. There is an explicit tension in Dussel with the legacy of post-structuralism encountered in his visits to the United States.

<sup>x</sup> *The Underside of Modernity*, edited by Eduardo Mendieta.

<sup>xi</sup> Dussel's ironic self-identification with the "barbarian" figure vis-a-vis the self-styled civilizing empire repeats the previous gesture of Leopoldo Zea, *Discurso desde la marginacion y la barbarie* (1990). A

crucial figure who held strong connections with UNESCO initiatives, I do not doubt to consider Zea a precursor of postcolonial initiatives. Zea cut his teeth in Ortega y Gasset's philosophical school exiled in Mexico after the Spanish Civil War. José Gaos was Zea's mentor.

<sup>xii</sup> For a seductive postmodernism traveling through a merciless US context, see *Carnival and Cannibal* and *The Intelligence of Evil* among other works by Jean Baudillard. The "clash of civilizations" between the French intellectual expat in the U.S. and the Mexican Argentinian philosopher of liberation in the Americas could not be starker. Fredric Jameson and Walter D Mignolo constitutes another clash and generally Anglophone and Hispanophone worlds in the Americas (see my *The (Latin) American Scene*).

<sup>xiii</sup> The historical mirror image of these agents of history appears fair to the contemporary majority belonging, *petty bourgeoisie*, of the immigrant academic sectors of lesser visibility in the foreign humanities in the metropolis. Mirror-image associations may include Lacan's famous mirror-stage essay within psychoanalysis, a field of knowledge that is not well represented or integrated into postcolonial theory as far as I can see. There are other formulations: Foucault's own uses of Borges, Magritte's "This is not a Pipe" visual play, Saussure's discontinuities between the signifier and the signified, the impact of Foucaultian post-structuralism on diverse practitioners of cultural studies and postcolonial studies. U.S. popular culture gives us the Marx Brothers' famous mirror scene in *Duck Soup*, repeated by Harpo Marx and Lucille Ball in her television show. We may recall the famous final scene in Orson Welles's *Lady from Shanghai*. We have to see ourselves reflected in those broken pieces –with or without souvenirs of Latin America– and there are restrictions and eliminations inside university settings where "philosophy" is said to be living, but also outside.

<sup>xiv</sup> What would best combine historically with Cartesianism, close to Ignatius of Loyola's exercises? Profusion of images? Theatricality? Iconoclasm? The Cartesian desert and isolation and the Baroque theater of excessive ornamentation: the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy (of history) is neglected by most authors. One exception is Carl Schmitt, who speaks of the beautiful aestheticism of the Roman Catholic form versus the non-figurative character of the "modern enterprise," which he resisted. Schmitt clings to the mythical and rhetorical dimensions, conservatively speaking, against Weberian modernizations and the march of triumphant history that will put him "out." "The machine has no tradition," as he memorably puts it, and a certain mechanicism is traceable to Cartesian rationalism that Schmitt fustigates again and again. The futurist aesthetic is contemporaneous to Schmitt's early production. For him, the "universal" goes together with history and power, *imperium*, and everything that is worthwhile. For him the talk of humanity is oblique, insidious politics, politics through and through. Schmitt offers a provocative reading of Mozart's *Magic Flute* as a horrible dimension of the nightmare of modernity and also of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: Prospero as a Masonic preacher and Caliban as a despicable member of the Papageno family. The social function of the arts is, for Schmitt, the preservation of the mythic structure and a sense of a resisting tradition within and against a modernity he despises, a political act, against any false dreams or illusions, call them pacifist humanitarianism. Schmittian argumentation has obvious echoes among postmodernists and postcolonialists with different political variations. Mine has been the Spanish edition, *Catolicismo Romano y Forma Política* (Tecnos, 2011). Notice the sharp contrast with the conservative English historian John H. Elliott, for whom the Baroque is of little value. His handling of J. A. Maravall is symptomatic of it.

<sup>xv</sup> See chapter IV of my *Good Places and Non-Places in Colonial Mexico* for a tableau of characters including our imperialist humanist and the "repressive culture" (or law), pp. 181-205.

<sup>xvi</sup> The official, hegemonic "West," US-led, holds a precarious hold of the "Latin" in the Americas, let alone inside the U.S. The "West" is typically understood in geopolitical terms rather than civilizationally, brutally so in the Anglo Zone on both sides of the Atlantic. The conjuncture (Trump's second presidency) is one of tension within this "compact West," with EU and NATO scrambling for a position and parts of Latin America going the way of BRICS+, whilst others (Mexico) feel the North American pressure. Still others mobilize "Hispanic" connectivity with Spain.

<sup>xvii</sup> Dussel's handling of Guaman Poma de Ayala is cursory. Guaman Poma de Ayala is a mixed-breed member of the Cuzco elite who wishes to represent reformist proposals with lascasista overtones to Philip II of Spain. He does so through somewhat unconventional channels and there is mounting evidence of a "dubious" intent. See the chapter with Rolena Adorno (a leading Guaman Poma de Ayala expert) in my forthcoming *The (Latin) American Scene*.

<sup>xviii</sup> Cao Guimarães' film *Ex It (Ex Isto)* works its critique of Cartesian reason through shocking juxtaposition of timespaces. No matter how "serious" the thinker, we can make him look ridiculous if we take him out of his natural habitat and place him in the hot jungle! Perhaps the "illogical" uses and "incongruous" abuses of the montage apropos visual images, text, context and paratext can be appropriate by a "decolonizing" technique, one which aims at upsetting hegemony. If so, Dussel "americanizes" Euro-Western thinkers, also some US thinkers. In so doing, there is a forced coexistence within the same photographic depth of field, also a running of the field, like spies, involved in a violent foreshortening of (Southern) perspective of the "embarrassment of riches" of hegemonic (Western) reason. Not so, Dussel says. Miserable feast.

<sup>xix</sup> See the influential "Americanity" essay (1992) penned by both authors. The US in the 2000s saw diverse collaborations among these three Latin American thinkers (Dussel, Quijano and Mignolo). The latter has been instrumental in "popularizing" the Peruvian sociologist in the Anglosphere.

<sup>xx</sup> "Theory" was an alternative sign used inside liberal-arts sectors in the U.S. in the mid-1990 as a means of dissident activation with the status quo. Behind the sign, there was a strong continental philosophical contingent, also a dissident Latinamericanist perspective at least in the context of Duke University in which I trained. "Cultural studies" was another such sign. "Postcolonial studies" was another partner in "crime." The "humanities" remain a fourth, weaker option behind the conventional and debilitated "liberal arts." If you build it, they will come, perhaps, yet the crisis is indeed severe. The language of "culture" appears to be the last stand.

<sup>xxi</sup> In his "conversations" (sic, in the original) with Richard Rorty and other noted philosophers, Dussel brings the figures of the skeptic and the cynic to the discussion table (*The Underside of Modernity*, pp. 64-71; 103-128). Others speak of "bad faith" (Lewis Gordon). In this spirit, I should like to mention one telling biographical anecdote. I organized a lecture series one year when I was a very young assistant professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Stanford University. Richard Rorty was enjoying a so-called "sunset appointment" and turned out to be assigned the next office door in the larger Division of Languages, Literatures and Cultures (the Department of Philosophy was elsewhere since it was Analytic philosophy). Rorty was kind enough to participate in a session I put together that included the conversation with Enrique Dussel in *Boundary 2* (2001). I am fair to the memory when I say that all participants received copies of the conversation, including Rorty. I personally gave him a copy before the session. He made no comments during the session or after the session to me or, as far as I can tell, to others. Ominous silence, if you ask me. The aforementioned chapter 13 titled "El estado actual de la filosofía en Estados Unidos," included in the posthumous anthology (2024), cuts "Latin America" entirely out of the picture of "philosophy." The "no comment" is persistent: Dussel mentions Rorty's visit to Mexico as a guest to the biannual philosophical congress at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana. Such precedes the publication date (1996) of *The Underside of Modernity*, which must follow an original piece in Spanish. The silencing travels through my Stanford Lecture series (2001) and the posthumous essays (2024). That is 30 years! I am not aware that Rorty ever responded to Dussel's challenges. Such silencing is symptomatic and congruent with the larger theme of the relations between western philosophy and the global south and must remain open.

<sup>xxii</sup> Giorgio Agamben's *State of Exception*, p. 37.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See my recent piece "Sobre postcolonialismos maltrechos, descolonizaciones malogradas y angostamientos universitarios" (*Umbral*, 2022), freely available on the internet.

<sup>xxiv</sup> The singular "West" should be never left alone among the standard proliferation of "cultural" ways. "West/ern" always needs interrogation, particularly in the geopolitical captures by the stronger nation-states, as in the formula of the "liberal West" (US and EU-NATO alliance at the core, now undergoing tensions). Dussel joins a series of distinguished LatAm critics in the intellectual contestation of the "marginality and barbarism" of the Lat Am region (qua member of the colonial legacy, Third World, Global South, etc.) by a universalizing and civilizing West (attention to the indefinite article!). For the interrogation of this "West," see my recent "Foreign Humanities in the 'liberal West' in the Interregnum: A Critique of G. John Ikenberry" (2023b). This brief intervention includes some typical Anglo versions of this "West," largely complicit with U.S. foreign policy interests. There are of course European-establishment solidarities with these formulations, now being tested ("Today's geopolitical context requires us to strengthen the multilateral system and make it more inclusive. EU-US co-operation and shared leadership are instrumental to avoid alternative models to take over, which in the longer term will be to the detriment of both the US

---

and the US interests,” EU’s former chief diplomat, Josep Borrell, *dixit* (“US-led postwar order thrown into disarray by Trump victory,” *The Financial Times*, 9-10 Nov. 2024, p. 3). What would a non-universalist and non-imperial civilizing construction of the West ever be and do for *us* (first person plural pronoun must be left an open signifier)?

<sup>xxv</sup> See my articles on G. John Ikenberry (2023a, 2023b, 2022), and my own conversation with him in [toynbeeprize.org](https://toynbeeprize.org) (2021). There is a historic critical review of this imperial Wilsonianism during the years of arrogant unipolarity (Bush 2 years and the Iraq War), *Nuevo Texto Critico*, 2010).

<sup>xxvi</sup> “Devertebration” was a word associated with the Madrid philosopher, Ortega y Gasset, the greatest philosopher of Spain in the first half of the 20th century, in relation to his national preoccupations. The subaltern configuration of Spain and its self-induced under-development inside the philosophical field and others is of limited interest, given the high stakes. My extensive conversation with Eugenio Trias, the Barcelona philosopher, possibly the greatest philosopher of Spain in the second half of the 20th century, who left us twelve years ago, includes a clear-eyed self-critique of the Spain space. Trias and Dussel constitute a clash of philosophical visions.