

CHAPTER FOUR

(De)Coloniality at Large

Time and the Colonial Difference

The predetermined trajectory of historical dialectic allows no culturally disparate options, at least not cultural options that are decidedly disparate. . . . Whether in its capitalist or socialist guise, then, history and temporality reign supreme in the euro-western episteme. On the other hand, American Indian spirituality, values, social and political structure, and even ethics are rooted not in some temporal notion of history, but in spirituality. This is perhaps the most dramatic, and largely unnoticed, cultural difference between American Indian thought processes and the western intellectual tradition. The western intellectual tradition is firmly rooted in the priority of temporal metaphors and thought processes, while American Indians inherently think spatially.—GEORGE E. TINKER, *Spirit and Resistance*, 106–7.

IN THE EARLY 1950s biologists pulled about a dozen oysters from New Haven harbor and shipped them to Northwestern University, in Illinois, about a thousand miles away from New Haven and in a different time zone, one hour earlier. The oysters were submerged in their original harbor water and kept in total darkness. To explore their feeding patterns, the researchers tied to the shells fine threads that could activate recording pens every time the oysters' muscular movements caused the hinged shells to part or to close. As expected, the oysters continued to open and shut their shells as if they were still snug on the bottom of their home harbor, even though they had been displaced to another time zone, more than a thousand miles to the west. Then, after about two weeks, something strange happened. Gradually the hour of maximal opening of the shells began to shift. Now, anyone who lives near the shore knows that

the high- and low-water marks also shift gradually from day to day. Tides are synchronized not with the place of the sun in the sky; rather it is the moon's schedule of appearance that matters, and the moon's cycle runs about fifty minutes behind the sun's cycle. However, the biologists in Illinois were witnessing a daily shift that did not correspond to the one in New Haven. After four weeks of recording and analyzing the data, the biologist determined beyond a doubt that the oysters had restabilized the rhythmic opening and closing of their shells to the tidal cycle that would occur in Evanston, Illinois, if there were an ocean in that location.¹

The biologists were using the categories of time and space in their experiment. The oysters were not. The oyster did not know about time, but apparently they knew quite a bit about the cycles of the moon. Their living organisms were patterned, so to speak. Not that they internalized time, since time is not an existing entity, but a human concept used to organize repetitions and transformations. First, on the experience of cycles of our own natural body and the bodies of nature—equinoxes, solstices, sunrise and sunset, birth and death, conception and birth, menstrual cycles, moments of harvest and of storage, and so on—repetitions and transformations in the life of the cosmos seem to be a useful descriptive metaphor at this point. And it may not be out of place to surmise that living organisms identified as “human beings” have a biological sense of cosmic repetitions and transformations. However, once the categories of time and space were introduced to organize and describe transformations and repetitions not only in the patterns of the oysters, but also in the memory of human beings, the organization itself took on a life of its own. And whether or not human beings are somehow patterned like oysters, the experience of cosmic changes and repetitions has been increasingly repressed by the very artifice built around concepts such as time and space.

The Making of Modernity and Tradition(s): Experiencing (Living), Reckoning, and Measuring Time

So we could make a distinction between a cosmic or biological way of experiencing repetitions and transformations, like that of oysters, and a way of reckoning repetitions and transformations, like that of the biologists, mediated by a technical and philosophical apparatus to imagine and measure

time. “Time,” properly, is a category of reckoning, not a category of experiencing; it is a category belonging to culture, not to nature. In the second phase of modernity (in the eighteenth century), it became one of the central categories to distinguish culture from nature. However, this is not the occasion to survey the concept of “time in different cultures,” since that would merely mean to reproduce precisely two of the distinctions that “time” contributed to: the distinction between nature and culture; and the distinction between modernity and tradition.

But once we get to this double equation (nature vs. culture; modernity vs. tradition), we can recognize the complicity between culture, time, and modernity and the dependent paradigm in which nature, tradition, and coloniality have been placed.² Although this equation became more visible in eighteenth-century Europe, it was already at work in the sixteenth century, with the emerging idea of progress and the distinction between the ancient and the modern. However, I am not interested here in tracing the history of an idea, but in clearing up its formulation, when the concept of time (modernity and tradition) joined, under Newton’s influence, the concept of system (system of nature) and was used to imagine the logic of society.³ As we have already established in the previous chapter, Kant imagined that human societies could be organized following the model provided by the law of nature, and therefore he conceived universal history from a cosmopolitan (e.g., cosmo-polis) point of view. However, we can extend that discussion here by investigating how Western concepts of time also mediated Kant’s cosmopolitan ideals (see chapter 5). If you enter the civilizing mission into the equation modernity vs. tradition, you would understand that societies around the planet began to be measured and classified according to their similarity or dissimilarity with the natural order offered by cosmo-polis. But that was not all. History as “time” entered into the picture to place societies in an imaginary chronological line going from nature to culture, from barbarism to civilization following a progressive destination toward some point of arrival. Hegel, as it is known, organized Kant’s cosmo-polis on a temporal scale that relocated the spatial distribution of continents (Asia, Africa, America, and Europe) in a chronological order that followed a certain directionality of history, from East to West. The planet was all of a sudden living in different temporalities, with Europe in the present and the rest in the past. The anthropologist Johannes Fabian coined the expression

“denial of coevalness” to underline time as a conceptual and colonizing strategy.⁴ “Time” became a fundamental concept of coloniality at large. The present was described as modern and civilized, the past as traditional and barbarian. The more you go toward the past, the closer you get to nature, as in Alejo Carpentier’s *The Lost Steps* (1953). If geography was translated into chronology by the masters of historical time, and time was transformed into a colonizing device, then the present moment of Europe needed also to be separated from the past—and the concept of the Middle Ages accomplished that function. The second stage of modernity/coloniality established modern Europe as the present by creating the “otherness of the past and the past of the other,” as Diana Hugh eloquently puts it.⁵ Geopolitically, particularly since the nineteenth century, the translation of geography into chronology was the work of colonization, of the coloniality of knowledge and power. It has served as the justification of the ideology of progress and, in the twentieth century, of development and underdevelopment.

The Fabric of Time in the Modern/Colonial World

The thesis that I’m advancing and that I would like to propose is the following. Whatever the conceptualization of “time” in the social sciences today, the humanities, or the natural sciences, it is caught and woven into the imaginary of the modern/colonial world-system. This is the weak version of my thesis. The strong version is that time itself is a central concept of that imaginary. Let me clarify that I use imaginary to identify the social and geopolitical dimensions of modernity/coloniality; both the coloniality of power (e.g., strategies of colonization implied in modernity) producing the colonial difference and the different forms of adaptation, resistance, subaltern alternatives, forced by coloniality of power. I am thinking, in brief, of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world-system from the perspective of the colonial difference. My understanding of “imaginary” follows the Martinican writer and thinker Edouard Glissant who conceives it as the ways, conflictive and contradictory, a culture has of perceiving and conceiving of the world.⁶ Notice, however, that Glissant defines imaginary from the history and experience of people who suffered the consequences of African slavery in the Caribbean, rather than from the history and experience of

those who forced contingents of enslaved Africans to the Americas. Hegel's and Glissant's engagement with the imaginary of the modern/colonial world do not come from the same memory: they are at the different ends of the colonial difference. Hegel contributed to creating the colonial difference by translating geography into chronology.⁷ Glissant is contributing to the undoing of the colonial difference by revealing its structure and that of the coloniality of power that underlies it.⁸ Below I will expand on this definition. Now, I am only interested in rethinking the geopolitical imaginary of the modern/colonial world-system from the perspectives of coloniality and colonial difference (instead of modernity).

Let's, first, look at how "barbarians" became an image of modernity to classify certain people who, subsequently, had no choice but to deal with the fact that they had been classified as "barbarians." Coloniality of knowledge works here as an epistemic strategy to create the colonial difference. At the inception of the colonial matrix of power, "barbarians" were located in space.⁹ By the eighteenth century, when "time" came into the picture and the colonial difference was redefined, "barbarians" were translated into "primitives" and located in time rather than in space. "Primitives" were in the lower scale of a chronological order driving toward "civilization."¹⁰

Second, let's examine how the subalternization of knowledges was implied in the classification of "barbarians" and "primitives" (new categories in the imaginary of the colonial matrix, added to "pagans," "infidels," and the like). And third, let's identify the moment in which "natural history" was transformed from a description of entities and the search for universal laws (Newton, Kant) into the chronological narrative that starts at the "beginning of time," the secular version of the beginning of the world and of human beings.¹¹ I hope that these three episodes will help us to understand the inter-connections between the conceptualization of time, the colonial matrix of power in the management of the colonial difference: time was conceived and naturalized as both the measure of human history (modernity) and the time-scale of human beings (primitives) in their distance with modernity. The denial of coevalness redefined indeed colonial and imperial differences (for even Chinese and Russian civilizations were not considered primitives but back in time) and built them around the notion of time, instead of space. This redefinition contributed to holding together the colonial matrix of power imaginary from its emergence as part of the Atlantic

commercial circuit (in the sixteenth century) to its current consolidation of the North Atlantic (the United States and the European Union).

Although the linear concept of time was introduced in the Ancient Testament, or what is also referred to as the “Judeo-Christian tradition,” during the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, known and unknown communities were located not in time, but in space. The famous Christian T-in-O map imprinted the division of the planet into three continents on the imaginary of European Christians. The map consisted of a circle with a “T” in its interior, with the horizontal bar of the “T” cutting the circle in two. Asia was placed at the top of the horizontal line; Europe and Africa to the left and right of the vertical line of the “T,” cutting the bottom half of the circle into two quarters. Each continent was attributed, in this imaginary, to Noah’s sons: Asia was attributed to Shem, Africa to Ham, and Europe to Japheth. St. Augustine’s description of the Christian cosmo-graphy described in the T-in-O map is worth being recalled:

Here by Asia I mean not that region which is a single province of greater Asia but the entire area, which is so called. Some regard it as one of two parts, but most as a third of the whole world—Asia, Europe and Africa would thus comprise the whole. But the divisions are not equal. For the part termed Asia goes from the South through the East to the North; Europe, however from the North to the West and Africa from the West to the South. So we see that half the world contains two parts, Europe and Africa, and the other half only one, Asia. These two parts arise because all the water that flows between the lands comes in between them from the Ocean, forming the Mediterranean. So that if you divide the inhabited world into two, an eastern and a western half, Asia will be in the one, Europe and Africa in the other.¹²

Scattered through the chapters devoted to Jewish history, from the Flood to the time of Abraham, St. Augustine explains the reasons for which a particular continent was attributed to a particular descendent of Noah. Dennis Hay observes,

The starting point is a consideration of the meaning of the Hebrew names: Shem is interpreted as named, Japheth is “breadth” enlargement; Ham is hot. Shem is so named because of his seed was to become the humanity of Christ. Japheth is enlarged because as the Genesis anticipates, God shall enlarge

Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem. Visionaries will say that here was an anticipation of British colonialism. And for Ham he surely signifies the hot brand of heretics, hot not in wisdom but in willfulness.¹³

Up to 1500, Christian cartography left the unknown and the monsters inhabiting its margins. The monsters and the unknown were located in space. The map reproduced in the edition of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, before 1500, had its margin populated with all kinds of monsters: people with two heads, horse bodies and human heads, several legs, inhabited the confines of the *ecumene*. The emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuits rapidly transformed this imaginary, the monsters were translated into barbarians and cannibals and were no longer located in the unknown space of the planet, but in the New World or *Las Indias Occidentales*. Waldseemüller's early drawing of what he termed "America," by analogy with the other two continents, Asia and Africa, relocated the barbarians and strange creatures in the Caribbean, insular and continental.¹⁴ Today one would say around Venezuela and northern Brazil!

So "barbarians" then were located in space, not in time. Barbarians were different and lesser humans, but not traditional or primitive back in time. Nor were they conceived as remnants of the past. However, in the foreground of the Christian imaginary being transformed into the imaginary of the modern/colonial world, there was a teleological concept of world history, with an origin (creation) and an end (the final judgment). Hundreds of paintings of the final judgment are dispersed in museums all over the Western world. But time here does not imply "progress" from beginning to end. It does imply, however, a final destination, the end of the world, and the final judgment. If "barbarians," in the New World, were located not in time but in space, this was because their subaltern position was mapped on the "chain of beings" model, a model that ranked the entities of the world from rocks to human beings, and all was subsumed under "nature" as the work of God. The "chain of being" was a "vertical" model complementing the "horizontal" model provided by the T-in-O map.¹⁵ Space was the principle of classification, vertically and horizontally.

By the eighteenth century the translations of barbarians into primitives supplanted the "chain of beings" model with a new one. The new model had two main features. First, primitives were closer to nature and civilized

people were at the peak of culture. Second, primitives were traditional, and civilized Europeans were modern. Knowledges beyond the epistemic European imaginary from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment were disqualified as sustainable knowledges, although recognized in their past and traditional values. In the sixteenth century, some knowledges were considered dangerous (Indigenous knowledge, for example), and Spanish missionaries devoted themselves to an extirpation of idolatries that was indeed an epistemic lobotomy. In the eighteenth century, knowledge was not extirpated, but transformed into an object, and in that project “Orientalism” was born.

However, “time” reckoning was already a point of contention between people in Tawantinsuyu and Anáhuac and Spaniards, although not in the conflict between moderns and primitives. The point of contention was the calendar. Why? Because the calendar was, for European Christians as well as for Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas, something more than a system of reckoning dates. It also contained codes of knowing, ways of remembering and of understanding the present by anticipating the future.¹⁶ Looking at the point of contention from a distance, one could say that much like the oysters from New Haven, Incas, Aztecs, and Spaniards had a similar experience of the rhythms of the cosmos—of summer and winter solstices (even if they had it at different times of the year), of the period of the moon, of daylight and night darkness, of the rhythmic movement from hot to cold weather, and so on. In that regard they were all equal. Around these same basic experiences of the rhythm of the universe, Spaniards on the one hand and Aztecs and Incas on the other built different concepts of the moving patterns of the universe (that in the West was conceived as “time”) and the place in which people could move and locate other people or objects or just look at the horizon (that in the West was conceived as “space”). But for some reason, the Spaniards managed to impose their concept of time. If the Spaniards paid so much attention to the indigenous calendars, and the Andean dissident Guaman Poma de Ayala, toward the beginning of the seventeenth century, devoted so much attention to comparing the Christian and Inca calendars, it was because something important was at stake.¹⁷ And that could not have been just the differences in the system of time reckoning. One of the direct consequences was the very concept of history that, for Renaissance humanists, was embedded in time. In the European context, “History” had not always been linked to time (like for Herodotus), nor was

recording the past necessarily linked to “history.” Following the same argument one can say that there is no logical necessity tying together an event that could be dated in the past with its status as an “historical event.”¹⁸

In the New World context, Spanish men of letters as well as those soldiers who attempted the task of writing histories faced people whose manner of recording the past was not grounded in the concept of alphabetic writing and time, that is, of “history.” Let me elaborate on this by taking the Aymara word *Pacha* as a case in point. Ludovico Bertonio, who wrote a very important Aymara dictionary in 1612, describes *Pacha* in relation to the sky. As “when the sky is too low” in the expression “*laccampu llikhuti*” (when the sky is quiet). In both Quechua and Aymara, *Pacha* refers primarily to daylight, rather than to a particular space, the space where birds fly. But, of course, the space where birds fly is where we notice that daylight occurs in space, from sunrise to sunset. Daylight or the space where birds fly is thus also the space of time. The space of time is the best I can do to render the connection between event and movement, which, in Aymara or Quechua, was not rendered with the word *time* as distinct from *space*, but with a word that implied both space and time. And that was precisely *Pacha*.¹⁹ A full description of *Pacha*, as it is known today by the detailed reconstruction from early Spanish chronicles and more recent anthropological work, cannot be pursued here. There is one more aspect, however, that I would like to look at by introducing the notion of *Pachakuti*. Bertonio translated the term as “time of war,” which in Aymara philosophy was rather conceived as the “moment in which people cannot be together any longer,” or the moment in which dualities become contrary or contradictory, rather than complementary. Apparently Bertonio was collapsing the meaning of *Pachakuti* with the meaning of *Tinku*, generally described as two moieties (say, masculine/feminine; sun/moon) which are complementary and mutually constituted, although tensions and conflicts arise.

In this regard, the word *Tinku* could be interpreted as an instance of space-time in which dualities are complementary. But *Tinku* can also be the ritual that helps dualities to remain complementary rather than becoming contrary or contradictory. *Tinku* as ritual is a performance for the encounter of opposing factions *alasya* (“of the side of above”; and notice that it is not those from above, but those of the “side of above,” or something like that) and *masaya* (those of “the side of below”). Notice that in both cases it is the “side” of above and of below, and not just above and below. *Tinku*

is therefore the place of encounter, like in the expression *tinkuthaptatha*, “the place of encounter of those that come and go.” *Pachakuti*, then, is a disturbing alteration of the order of things. Any attempt to reduce or subsume *Tinku* under Hegel’s dialectics would either fail or end up in another imperial epistemic move of translating the unknown to the known, which started with missionaries and men of letters in the sixteenth century.

Thus, if *Tinku* is the complementary of contrary and contradictories, *Kuti* is the moment in which complementarity becomes non-compatible, that is, at war; and *Pacha Kuti* then becomes the disturbing alteration of the order of things. At its extreme, *Kuti* is “a violent turn around,” “a rollover” (like when a “car rolls over”); in Spanish, it is “volcar un auto, hubo un vuelco.” The closest I can get to the limit of *Pacha Kuti* through the imaginary of modern epistemology (which I cannot avoid) is to translate it as “final judgment,” akin to that in Christian cosmology, or as “revolution,” as in modern and secular cosmology. As in “industrial revolution,” “French revolution,” or “Russian revolution.” However, there is a difficulty: “revolution” is engrained in a linear concept of history and of time, and in an epistemology based on a logic in which dichotomies are always in contrary or contradictory relations; they are never complementary. *Pacha Kuti*, instead, belongs to an imaginary of cyclical repetitions and regular transformations of the natural/social world. *Pacha Kuti* is a third element that introduces the colonial difference, the negated knowledge that can no longer be recovered in its “purity,” but that allows us to see the limits of “final judgment” and “revolution.” The Spanish conquest was perceived and described in Quechua-Aymara as *Pachakuti*.²⁰ And it was, from their perspective, an integration of a foreign element into their cosmology that maintained, however, the irreducible difference with “final judgment” and “revolution.” With the conquest understood as *Pacha Kuti*, we can see both sides of the colonial difference and understand why Spanish missionaries saw in Amerindian calendars a dangerous manifestation of the Devil.²⁰

Detaching Time Measurement from Cosmological Time

Similar to the cartography of the sixteenth century, which mapped the global and detached the visualization and experience of space, projecting the territory into space measurement and management, so happens with

the conceptualization of time in Western societies.²¹ Both, the separation of space and time from cosmological experience of time (four seasons, the time of the harvest, the movement and the impact of the rotation of earth and moon around the earth, etc.), explain in part the separation of “nature” from the human body: “natural phenomena” takes place out there, in space and time outside of us.

There are, then, two aspects I would like to stress here that will pave the way toward a reflection on time and “natural history.” One is the intersection of the concept of space/time in the organization of memory and society from Indigenous perspectives (either Aymara or Quechua or Native American);²² the second is the distinction between linear and cyclical time. But let me give you an example provided by the Native American lawyer and activist Vine Deloria Jr., who made a distinction between Western European and Native American people in terms of their approaches to place (space) and time. You can read what follows in tandem with my argument on Linda T. Smith, in the previous chapter. This is not the occasion to go into a detailed commentary on Deloria’s position. I am basically interested in stressing the point that “time” is not naturally *the* central category of human experience. Deloria writes,

Western European peoples have never learned to consider the nature of the world discerned from a spatial point of view. And a singular difficulty faces peoples of Western European heritage in making a transition from thinking in terms of space. The very essence of Western European identity involves the assumption that time proceeds in a linear fashion; further it assumes that at a particular point in the unraveling of this sequence, the peoples of Western Europe became the guardians of the world. The same ideology that sparked the Crusades, the Age of Exploration, the Age of Imperialism, and the recent crusade against Communism all involve the affirmation that *time* is peculiarly related to the destiny of the people of Western Europe. And later, of course, of the United States.²³

When Indigenous thinkers wrote (at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth) about their past and addressed their writing to Spanish readers, they had to bargain with two different temporal logics to organize past events.²⁴ One of them was the “place where the birds fly” (as we saw in the description of *Pacha*). The other will be, like

Muñón Chimalpahín, in the Valley of Mexico, did in his writing of the past of Chalco Amaquemecan, having ancient codices as sources.²⁵ He dated a period of time as, say, “Year 6 House” (following the Mexican calendar) and next to it he wrote “1472,” knowing full well that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the two dates and that the cosmologies in which these dates are embedded are divided by an irreducible difference—which is not to say that these cosmologies were incommensurable.²⁶ They were, and they remain, different but inextricably linked to and transforming each other, although with different intensities at each end of the spectrum, in the changing imaginary of the modern/colonial world. They are linked in the colonial matrix of power and the system of knowledge that sustains it, and their differences are constitutive of colonial and imperial differences (e.g., the Chinese, who were not colonized, were considered, by the West, behind in time, just as were the Indian and Andean, who *were* colonized by British and Spaniards). Space and time can be translated into each other, but they cannot be assimilated. It is not a problem of cultural difference or cultural relativism, either. The colonial difference shall remain visible, not as a semantic problem, but as a sign of how coloniality of power works in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world.

But what is the difference between cultural relativism (or cultural differences) and colonial and imperial differences; and why is time so important here? It is because it was through the concept of time that the distinction between modernity and tradition was made. Today when someone claims “tradition” in a non-European history, he or she is critiqued for aiming at an identity that can no longer be retrieved; the vexing question is that tradition was invented in the process of building modernity. The idea of modernity needed its own tradition in order to be distinguished as modernity. Thus while modernity was established by inventing its own tradition (Middle Ages and Antiquity) and colonizing time, it so happens that in the colonization of space the rhetoric of modernity was used to disavow the legitimacy of the “traditions” (invented in the process of inventing modernity) of civilizations that were colonized. It was by means of the concept of time that cultural differences were classified according to their proximity to modernity or to tradition. The discourse on cultural differences hides the logic of coloniality that the discourse on the colonial and imperial differences displays. The first presupposes that cultures are discrete entities, semanti-

cally closed, and that translation is difficult or sometimes impossible when cultures do not share the same language, the same script, or the same religion. The second, instead, tries to conceptualize historically how cultural differences were indeed constructed by the coloniality of power simultaneous with the emergence of the North Atlantic. Colonial and imperial differences raise questions of power and knowledge, of course; but questions concerning the coloniality of knowledge and of complicity in the making of the modern world are better still. Why? Because based on a certain understanding of time and/or space, you may end up believing that you are behind in time; and if you believe so, you are more likely to want to catch up with modernity. If you fall into this trap, you have lost the game before beginning it. The discourse on cultural differences remains within the theo- and ego-political frame of knowledge, meaning, and interpretation. The discourse of colonial and imperial differences is already a departure, a way of delinking, and a form of epistemic disobedience that opens a parallel road to knowing, sensing, believing, and living.

Consequently, my previous narrative about the translation from monsters to barbarians and then to primitives, as well as my underlining the coming into being of the distinction between nature and culture, were prompted by the thrust of my argument: that “time” is a fundamental concept in building the imaginary of the modern/colonial world and an instrument for both controlling knowledge and advancing a vision of society based on progress and development. At the end of the sixteenth century Mathew Ricci suggested that Chinese science was *falling behind* that of the West, since the Chinese had no conceptions of the rule of logic, and because their science of ethics was merely a series of confused maxims and deductions.²⁷ Ricci’s observations were not isolated, but complemented Christian discourses about the Moors and about Incas and Aztecs.

The epistemic colonial and imperial differences did not end with decolonization in Asia and Africa after the Second World War (nor did they end, of course, with revolutions and independences in Americas and the Caribbean from 1776 to 1830). Currently, the transformation of colonial differences is entrenched in what we now call globalization in such a way that it makes sense to think in terms of global coloniality. It continues to be reproduced by global capitalism, and “time” continues to nourish the imaginary that reproduces colonial and imperial difference. However, as we saw in chapter 1,

the incomplete project of modernity may never be completed, due to the fact that rewesternization is no longer the only game in town. Differential times and differential memories and histories are delinking from the belief that there is only one line of time; and this is a reasonable conclusion if one follows Christian or secular Hegelian time-linear narratives. All these considerations account for the need to think in terms of coloniality at large, and not only of modernity at large; and by extension—as I do in this book—of decoloniality at large.

Imperial time is translated into the time of a given nation. The emergence of the modern nation-state in Europe, as well as the parallel emergence of the modern/colonial nation-states in the Americas and, subsequently, in Asia and Africa, shows one specific transformation of the colonial matrix of power. The modern nation-state became the imperial tool for the control of authority in the colonies during the process of building (during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) modern/colonial nation-states. Nation-states (in their modern European or modern/colonial American, Asian, and African versions) are not “outside” the colonial matrix. “Internal colonialism” is a concept that describes the mutation of imperial into national management in the ex-European colonies. What is “internal colonialism” if not the persistence of the coloniality of knowledge (and therefore the control of authority and economy) under nation-building processes after decolonization? This is why coloniality remains as the hidden side of modernity, and why there cannot be modernity without coloniality. The *places* defined by the interaction between modernity and coloniality are the *places* where the colonial difference is being played out in a constant conflict. Imperial narratives were entangled with national narratives after these events, and the emergence of nation-states (modern or modern/colonial) became an exemplar of the linear process and the advancement of global human history.

Again, what does “time” have to do with all of this? As you may have guessed: a lot. Narratives of beginning and end, from the creation to the final judgment, told in the sixteenth century in Christian Europe were imposed beyond the Euro-Christian continent. The possibility of thinking in terms of the sky where birds fly and where daylight is perceived, where the Tinku as ritual maintained the complementarity of the opposites, where Pacha Kuti was the horizon to be avoided—all this was cast out to non-

sustainable types of knowledge. The same template (e.g., coloniality of knowledge) will be enacted from the end of the eighteenth on, when British and French imperial designs moved to Asia and Africa. If the sixteenth century was when the global distinction between space and time emerged, including a linear concept of time linked to sacred history, the eighteenth century celebrated the final victory of “time” by opening up the links between time and secular history. Secular history redefined the logic of coloniality, and “time” became a central rhetorical figure in the self-definition and self-fashioning of modernity: modernity is a “time” based concept.

Kant gave the colonial and imperial differences in space its final format when, in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, he coupled race with territories: red people are in America (he was thinking of course in North America), yellow in Asia, black in Africa, and white in Europe (see chapter 5). But Kant also connected time with secular history. Consequently, we (those engage in decolonial thinking) are working to delink and disconnect from Kant’s linkages and connections. His theses on the “Idea of Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View” (1784) (see chapter 7) are argued from “progressive” or “developmental” conceptions of the human race. In the first thesis Kant states that “all natural capacities of creatures are destined to *evolve* completely to their natural end” (emphasis added). The second thesis maintains, “In man those natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason are to be fully *developed* only in the race, not in the individual” (emphasis added). Now, if you put together “anthropology from a pragmatic point of view” and “universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view,” what you get is a universal perspective on history based on a racial distribution of the planet.²⁸ And time has a crucial function in such a distribution. For, according to the thesis argued in “anthropology,” civilization can only be defined, implemented, and guided by the white man who is in Europe at the present moment of a linear, historical time. Modernity and tradition, progress and stagnation, city and country, speed and slow motion, and so on were distinctive temporal features of the second stage of the modern/colonial world. Between Kant and the nineteenth century, during the second stage of modernity characterized by the “denial of coevalness,” *time* became a central factor in making and recasting colonial differences. Progress, a weapon of the civilizing mission, was the key rhetorical figure in the nineteenth century; development, after the

Second World War, was its successor as the rhetorical figure in a new stage of coloniality of power re-mapping the colonial difference. Modernity, progress, and development cannot be conceived without a linear concept of time defining a point of arrival. To understand what tradition and underdevelopment means, it was necessary to have, first, the concept of modernity and progress/development, since they (tradition and development) are non-existing entities outside the discourse of modernity and development. Coloniality is the hidden, logical connection between modernity and tradition, and to experience it is also to experience the “magic moment” that makes us believe that modernity and tradition are concepts that name what there is. To be redundant: there is no modernity and tradition beyond the rhetoric of the same modernity that invented itself, by inventing its own tradition and making believe that the concept of tradition is universal. And in order to do that, it was necessary to develop a linear concept of time embedded in the very notions of progress and evolution.

The Nature of Time and the Time of Nature

Since I began with a reference to “nature,” let’s come back to it. How is it, if you remember the narrative I offered at the beginning about oysters and biologists, that biologists became so far removed from oysters? How is it that the biologists became so much taken by time reckoning and oblivious to their own rhythm of life, that rhythm that the oyster sensed and knew but that cannot be reckoned like the biologists did? There may be an inclination to say that among the oysters cyclical time is prevalent, while biologists prefer linear time. However, there is still another difference. Oysters do not have a time-reckoning system to describe their own behavior and the behavior of the biologists. Oysters do not have hands and do not engage in scientific observation and philosophical speculations. Time reckoning, however, seems to be an activity that requires the extension of the hands, the inscription of graphic marks on solid surfaces (or of other material devices), a semiotic disciplinary frames called science and philosophy.

Stephen Jay Gould, in his book *Time’s Arrow, Time’s Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of the Geological Time* offers a detailed analysis of linear and cyclical conceptions of time in geology. According to Gould, geologists at the beginning of the nineteenth century “discovered” geological

time, the time of nature. And, of course, “natural history” was transformed. “Natural history” was instrumental, in the sixteenth century, and then again in the eighteenth, in the making of colonial and imperial differences. Was it so also in the nineteenth century, through science?

When the Jesuit father José de Acosta wrote and published *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (1590), he translated Aristotle and Pliny the Elder’s legacies in two directions. First, he accounted for the “newness” of what was also conceived, in a metaphorical rather than in a legal and administrative way, as “New World.” Now, “new” did not have then the meaning that “progress” imposed on it. “New” in the first case, meant unknown. “New” in the second case is something that comes after, as in “a new model of car.” Acosta was in possession of experiences in nature and direct knowledge about nature, that neither Aristotle nor Pliny the Elder could have enjoyed; and, second, he used that new experience as a signifier (nature) of a signified (God).

But, by so doing, Acosta installed the colonial difference in natural history. He did not pause one single moment to think or to ask what Aymara and Quechua speakers thought about what, for Acosta, was “natural history,” a concept with a genealogy of knowledge that he assumed was the only one, or at least the only valid one. Civilizations “were there” but they apparently did not have “knowledge” (experience in and organized knowledge) about nature. If he had asked, and thought about it, perhaps he would have understood that what he, and other Christian missionaries, conceived as “idolatry” was indeed an epistemology in which Pacha was one of the central concepts. Pachamama, whose epistemic function was similar to Greek *Gaya*, was more than a goddess of earth and fertility; it was also energy manifested in the fertility of earth and of life: a concept in which space, time, and the fertility of the earth (as in “Mother Earth”) all came together. Tinku was perhaps not a ritual of idolatry, as missionaries imagined, but perhaps an epistemic expression of the forces that animate the world, the life of nature and the nature of life. In a word was what Spaniards may have considered their own “tinku”: theology and philosophy. Acosta, however, was instead working on a double difference: the difference between nature and human beings (that is why he titled his book “Natural and Moral History”) and the silenced difference of Quechua and Aymara knowledge, reduced to “idolatry.” The extirpation of idolatry was indeed not a religious

issue, but an epistemic one. The eradication of other forms of knowledge was the real project at stake in the extirpation of idolatry and the establishment of the limits of the epistemic colonial difference.

In sixteenth-century Europe, “time” brought together encyclopedic knowledge with mercantilism and merchant demands. The Dasypodius clock, built in Strasbourg, in 1570, epitomized the interrelations between time and encyclopedic knowledge.²⁹ It helps to explain the struggle over the calendar in the New World I referred to above. There was, in Renaissance Europe, a concern with time that did not find its equivalents in China or in the New World. Dasypodius’s clock was a consequence of this concern and also a symbol of the implicit complementarity between time and encyclopedic knowledge in the process of building Western civilization and European culture. The clock was an astronomical mechanism that showed

the motion of the planets around the earth. Another display predicted eclipses, while a perpetual calendar laid out the moveable feasts, leap years, and the twenty-eight-year cycle of the ecclesiastical calendar for the next century. Automata represented the pagan gods for whom the days were named, Time and Death. They both served as an animated almanac and embodied the all-destroying force of time and change. . . . For the clock, like gunpowder and the compass, was one of the first distinctively modern technologies, and late medieval and Renaissance intellectuals loved to cite it when arguing that the ancients had not exhausted all fields of knowledge and invention.³⁰

Before then, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Europeans, Incas, and Aztecs (to limit myself to the New World and Europe) had similar approaches of measuring time. In both cases, time reckoning (in counter distinction to today) was integrated into the flow of nature and the four seasons; to equinoxes and solstices, closer relation was maintained between human beings, as living organisms, and the life of the cosmos. Nature was not yet conceived as something that had to be tamed and dominated, as Francis Bacon would put it at the beginning of the seventeenth century, thus initiating a separation between human beings and nature that would be further developed by the philosophy accompanying industrial capitalism. That is one of the reasons why there were so many striking similarities between the European and the Inca calendar, and why today Native Americans and Western cosmologies seem so distant from each other.³¹

Anthony Aveni provided a sensible narrative to understand time reckoning and spatial organization among the Incas. The system is indeed too complicated to describe here in any detail. What is of interest is to remember and underline the existence of a certain commonality among communities dispersed all over the planet, from the Americas to Europe, to Asia or Africa. Sunrise and sunset, summer and winter solstices, zenith and nadir, menstruation and gestation cycles, the turn of food regeneration, collecting, and storage, and so on are some of the regularities common to living organisms. Now, these regularities are not experienced in the same way near the poles or in the tropics. This is of course common sense, but there are also countless documents from European travelers pointing toward the experiences of the tropics, of the mountains, and correcting ancient speculations about extreme heat and impossible life in certain earth zones. The movements of the sun and the stars, in the tropics, are right above your head. From further north or further south, the sun would circle at a 45-degree angle, approximately. Aveni summarizes this confluence as follows.

The Incas fixed attention on the zenith sunrise-anti-zenith sunset axis not only because that sector of the celestial environment was so suggestive, but also because they were deeply influenced by the terrestrial half of the environment as well. Imagine a mountainous land in which faraway places are reckoned not by the distance east, west, north or south of the major population centers, but rather by how far above or below them one is situated. The Incas lived in a vertical world, *a space in which the time for human action*—for planting potatoes, burning of the scrub, worshipping the gods—depended critically upon whether a person was positioned in a vertically based ecology, each tier of which was dependent upon every other one.³²

The Incas invented the horizontal system of *ceques*, a series of lines that emanated from Cuzco, the center of the empire, and organized the city, socially and spatially. They also counted the days of the year lining up the ceques with the movement of the sun. Aveni's evidence suggests that "the Inca had converted the landscape into a natural, self-operating calendrical device powered by the movement of the sun, a system with no need of formal writing to articulate it."³³

The difference between Andeans and Europeans, in their approach to both Pacha and Pachamama and to time and nature, was not so much in

how they “measured” time but in the ways Andean people related to Pachamama, and the ways Europeans related to Nature—which they considered to be outside human beings. For the latter “nature” became an entity to be dominated: “we” and “nature” are two distinct entities. For the former, human/nature were, and still are, one; they are indistinguishable: Pachamama is in us and we are in Pachamama. They were divergent cosmologies that framed the conception of human beings on Earth, and the relationship of Earth to human beings, differently. However, since both Andean and European people were equally intelligent beings, both communities figured out the best way to organize their lives in relation to “time.” Nevertheless, since the sixteenth century they have remained irreducible in their difference and inextricably linked through coloniality of power and the colonial difference.

I said before that these differences were and are irreducible. But at the same time, they have been since the sixteenth century inextricably intertwined. Irreducible, and at the same time inextricably entangled, by the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality (or, what is the same, the colonial matrix of power), which made possible the construction and transformation of colonial and imperial differences, and which defined and used the category of time, the construction of the modern/colonial world-system, and the narrative of Western civilization (I will come back to this issue in chapter 5). The Western concept of “time” became the essential “connector” of colonial and imperial differences throughout the globe. In other words, coloniality at large means that the successive stages of Western expansion predicated on modernity carried with them successive stages in the implementation of its darker side, the logic of coloniality. The zero line of longitude that unites the two poles, vertically, and that crosses the heart of England’s Greenwich observatory, reconverted spatial global linear thinking (see chapter 2) into temporal global linear thinking. The zero line of longitude was also a zero point epistemology, controlling time by establishing that “all countries would adopt a universal day,” that “the universal day would be a Mean Solar Day, beginning at the Mean Midnight at Greenwich and counted on a 24 hour clock,” and that “nautical and astronomical days everywhere would begin at mean midnight.”³⁴

Now let’s go back to time reckoning in the Andes. Two aspects of my previous analysis deserve further comments. One is to provide more contextual

information for my previous reflections around Pacha. And the second is to underline how much Acosta suppressed when he interpreted “nature” as God’s design and ignored the integrative understanding that Amerindians had of time, space, and nature.³⁵ Christian cosmology, in the narrative of missionaries or men of letters, suppressed Inca, Aztec, and Maya cosmologies. It was as if an observer outside sixteenth-century Europe had described the Dasypodium clock, stripping it out of the entire cosmology surrounding the mechanism that counted the hours and the minutes.

If Inca and Aztec cosmologies operated at the space/time intersection (e.g., the ceque system, the four divisions of Tawantinsuyu with Cuzco at its center, and the four cycles that preceded the present, the fifth cycle, at the center), Western Christian cosmology operated more on lineal chronology. In Western linear chronology (which means Western discourse on time), events are ordered one after another. In a cyclical chronology, conception of time returns and repeats itself is, so to speak, space/time. In Christian/Western cyclical time, what returns are the dates—the month of January, or Thanksgiving Day. The events that happened, say, in January or on Thanksgiving Day of 1998 would not necessarily be repeated in January or on Thanksgiving Day of 1999. And finally, Christian cosmology saw nature as a design and a performance of God, and the nature of the New World as an occasion to correct the speculation of the ancients who were not aware that an entire continent and people living in it ever existed. “Natural and moral history” was an interesting concept in the sixteenth century. On the one hand, “time” was not much of an issue in this kind of history. On the other, “the natural and moral history of the Indies” was an anticipation of contemporary museums of “natural history” (mainly in Western Europe and the United States) where indigenous people from America, Asia, and Africa are mixed up with polar bears, terrifying snakes, and colored and exotic fishes. Beyond that there is civilization (and the museums of art history, where time is, indeed, an important component in manufacturing narratives of works, authors, and schools of thought in a chronological order). But, then, when did “time” enter “natural history”? Or, as Gould would have it, when was “time” discovered? Notice also that in running the parallel between Christian and Andean time, I am not opposing them. I am saying that they are different and have been entangled since the sixteenth century. Furthermore, they have been entangled through the epistemic colonial differences

that made the timeline of modernity the real time of history, because history was being conceived and written by those who felt themselves riding the horse of “true and objective time,” without parenthesis.

In the hundred and fifty years, approximately, that separates Acosta from Kant, significant changes took place in how Western intellectual history conceived of nature and time. Changing conceptions of time and nature went hand in hand with the changing identity of Europe; that is, with its definition of (European) Man, relative to the rest of the planet. Francis Bacon, writing a few decades after Acosta, derailed the Christian hermeneutics practiced by the Spanish Jesuit missionary by interpreting nature as God’s design and masterpiece. Bacon was moving away from the theological and rhetorical conception of knowledge that was valid for Acosta. For Bacon, the end of rhetoric was to “overcome an opponent by disputation,” while his method had as a final goal “to overcome Nature by action.”³⁶ For Acosta, overcoming nature would have been a heresy, because it would have been like attempting to dominate God. Bacon was concerned not with nature’s history, but with nature’s system, the vocabulary and concepts later developed in the works of Newton, d’Holbach, and Diderot. So when was “natural time” “discovered”? In the nineteenth century, and, according to Gould’s argument, by means of a fascinating intersection of the ideas of time, progress, and science, on the one hand, and of science as capable of measuring the “age” of nature, on the other. Natural history became at this point a question of age: counting the years without anniversaries.

What was “discovered” indeed was “deep time.” In eighteenth-century Europe, the age of the planet Earth and the universe was calculated to be a couple of million years. In the sixteenth century, of course, it had been calculated to be much less than that. What matters, however, is that with the discovery of “deep time” European science was able to imagine the age of the universe in a dimension that surpassed the calculus achieved until then by other civilizations. “Deep time” was in a way a confirmation of the superiority of Western knowledges over the rest of the planet and other advanced civilizations. Nature and the universe were subjected to time’s arrow, or linear time, and to time’s cycle. Stephen Gould believes that these two metaphors are legacies of what he calls the “Judeo-Christian” tradition. This statement is clearly an honest belief that there is no history beyond

either ancient Greece or the two major religions of the West. Indeed, linear time and cyclical time could be found everywhere, among the ancient Chinese, ancient Mayas, or ancient Indians. This is another way of saying that the rhythm of the cosmos that told the oysters when to open and shut their mouths also provided human beings around the planet with a pattern they could use to survive and organize their life. Human beings took it on themselves to believe that a certain interpretation of the order of the *cosmos* had to be imposed on other societies to organize the *polis*. The Judeo-Christian metaphor that Gould refers to is, obviously, the theological macro-linear metaphor of creation and end of the world that was translated, in secular time, into the idea of progress, development, and modernization. “Time,” cyclical or linear, of nature or of human history, as we know it today, is a result and a consequence of the colonial matrix of power imaginary. The very idea of “time” coupled with “history,” progress, and development was so strong that Western modern sciences reached the point in which time was not only the spine of history, but became an entity in itself, with its own history.³⁷

Time, the Myth of History, and the Myth of Science

I’m arguing that “time” as it is conceived today is a fundamental piece of the coloniality and Western civilization imaginary that gives support, in part, to both the myth of history and the myth of science. As such, and for these reasons, it was and continues to be a major factor in the making of colonial and imperial differences. When Western history and science were (and still are) contradicted by forms of recording the past and of knowing nature and the universe, in other words when they were confronted with histories and sciences that failed to correspond with their own standards of history and of science, modern historians and scientists had recourse to their own imagined unilinear evolution of humanity, in defense of their claims. Civilizations in which Western expansion did not establish colonies (like China, Japan, or Russia) had to endure the myth of universal history and universal science as a marker of “modernity” with which they were supposed to catch up. Coloniality, remember, is much more than colonialism: it is a colonial matrix of power through which world order has been created and managed. It is precisely the colonial matrix of power that is

in dispute today, as I outlined in chapter 2—quite apart from the quarrels within European cosmology that keep both the Left and the Right busy.

The Western notion of time supports “history” and “science” to acquire a hegemonic force and to develop a comparative point of view that allows for the erasure or devaluation of other forms of knowledge. This is a common procedure and strategy in the making of the modern/colonial world as well as in creating colonial/imperial notions of difference. Secular history and science just transformed Christian strategies that, during the sixteenth century, devalued Inca, Aztec, and Maya epistemologies. By this I mean that the Maya were rational beings, and that their logic of knowledge-making manifested the same human capability that in the West was described by the word *epistemology*. Moreover, the word *epistemology* was used to disavow epistemological practices that did not correspond to the Western management of knowledge, and did so by attributing to them devilish designs, and by referring to them as agents of the Devil. To be regarded as being behind the present time of modernity was the secular equivalent of being in the hands of the Devil during the theological moment. I have argued that Western notions of “time” contributed to the distinction between both nature and culture, and modernity and tradition. Because of the illusion this creates, we can easily forget that both the oyster and the biologist who works in the scientific culture of time reckoning belong to the same basic lived time. “Modern man” built his sense of superiority and his pride in the process of cutting the umbilical cord with “nature,” while “primitive man” was still too close to it; and being close to nature meant (from the perspective of “modern man”) being far from civilization. However, Incas for example, were both, close to Pachamama and civilized. But that idea was destroyed by the rhetoric of modernity in order to build the logic of coloniality justifying actions over the “barbarians” later on translated into “primitives.”

Is it possible to think from that silence (the silence created by coloniality of knowledge), to undo the colonial and differences that “time” contributed to make and contributes to maintain? Interestingly enough, this concern arises not only among intellectuals who through childhood exposure and professional training have gained an experience of epistemologies based on principles beyond Greek legacy and beyond Western needs. The Italian philosopher Franco Cassano, in his important book *Il pensiero meridiano*, connects the force of the Sun in Albert Camus’s *L’Etranger* (1942) with an-

cient Greek perception and conception of nature and *Kairos*.³⁸ He sees in this constellation an aspect of Greek thought that has been suppressed in the construction of Western civilization, an aspect similar to Arabic contributions to Western epistemology that equally went unnoticed in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance readings. Cassano's disclosure allows us to understand the similarities between ancient Greece and Andean cosmologies, the similarities between Kairos and Pacha, as well as the continuity between space, time, nature, and life. Cassano is not concerned with the colonial but with the imperial difference. His claim for a Southern thinking ("un pensiero meridiano") emerged from the imperial (internal) difference, that is, from the European construction of the South as the place of "slow speed." Since the eighteenth century, the European South was simultaneously constructed with the Orient, and the denial of coevalness was at the center of such constructions. Isn't there in Latin America a similar image, and hundreds of jokes, told from the perspective of the (modern) city about the slowness of the (traditional) country? Or in South/Central America and the Caribbean seen from the perspective of the efficient and speedy North? Notice that the imperial internal difference, in Europe, was translated twice, in America, into the colonial difference: first, after 1898 and the Spanish-American War; second, after the end of the Cold War, when the global order moved from West vs. East to North vs. South. Indeed, a powerful double stroke. On the one hand, Orientalism in Europe was reissuing the imperial difference established in the sixteenth-century experiences of the Mediterranean (expulsion of the Moors) and the colonial difference of the Atlantic (contact with Amerindians and African slavery). On the other hand, the making of the South was the imperial difference that paved the way for Hegel's "heart of Europe" (England, France, Germany), and for the current movie-making imaginary, in the United States or in Europe, the South remains the place of sun, love, tourism, good life, and "slow speed." "Time" was and is a fundamental component in such an imaginary. The "East" and the "South" live a slow time, while the North is the location of speed, progress, and of living by the "clock."

Nature (space) and tradition (time) were outcast by the imperial and the colonial differences and constructed as that which is inert and fixed. "Still nature" became a common topic in Western painting late in the seventeenth century. At that point, nature was no longer conceived as a living system (as

it was among the Andean and Mesoamerican civilizations), but was transformed into an object external to human life, to be overcome by action, and as the prime resource for the needs created by the Industrial Revolution. Parallel to this narrative of progress and modernity, tradition began to gain ground as the image of a “still” human past. In the Museum of Natural History, in New York or Chicago, you can see “primitives” next to polar bears and Chinese scrolls. But of course there are other places, beyond museums, where nature and tradition are kept under control and are not recognized for the force they have in the present. Or, as the Senegalese singer, musician, performer, and political activist Baaba Maal would have it, tradition is the present, not the past, reminding us that the distinction between modernity/tradition is part of the larger strategy of the denial of coevalness,³⁹ the creation and reproduction of colonial and imperial differences, and, more generally, of building and maintaining the colonial matrix of power.

Consequently, it seems to me that one of the intellectual tasks for imagining and doing toward communal futures (the conference where this chapter was first presented had in its subtitle “possible futures”) is to undo the colonial difference and the contribution of “time” to it. Thinking in terms of “transmodernity,” instead of modernity and tradition, and thinking in terms of Pachamama or Gaia as a living system, instead of nature and culture, may open our imaginary to the restitution of suppressed epistemologies—epistemologies inscribed in languages such as Mandarin, Arabic, or Aymara, which were relegated, precisely, to the realm of tradition or almost nature from the perspective of a conception of time and of culture. Certainly, not all is good in non-European traditions, and most certainly not all is good in European tradition. Within the modern/colonial world, epistemology was not so much the “representation or the mirror of nature” as the “domination of nature” (Bacon) and of “traditional” forms of knowledges.⁴⁰ “Universality” was a consequence of an overarching concept of space/time and a dominating scientific epistemology that permeated the conception of the social (e.g., the state, democracy). As I have discussed above, decolonial possible futures can no longer be conceived from a universal perspective, anchored in a hegemonic imaginary managed by linear time and final destination. Decolonial possible futures shall be imagined as “diversal” (or pluriversal if you wish), which implies, of course, that philosophies of *time* (as well *cosmo-polis*, see chapter 7) are anchored in the rhythms of the universe, and are common to all living organisms. Such philosophy would

perhaps take us to “times and diversity of being” and to put more effort in reflecting on how the clock, in complicity with capitalism, imposed a conception and a style of life in which time goes together with money. Undoing the colonial difference as was built in the concept of time will involve, among other things, removing “time” from the privileged position it acquires in complicity with science, capitalism, and the mono-culturalism (e.g., uni-versalism) of Western civilization. In sum, undoing the colonial difference means to accept and act on the fact that History is the flat narrative of imperial dominium that pretends to capture the flow of reality, while histories, ancestralities, memories are local, marginal, insignificant narratives from the perspective of History. Sciences, in the same manner, built formulas, invented laws based on the belief in objectivity without parenthesis. Now that colonial and imperial differences are being disclosed, roads to the future are being built, and some are being repaired.

Time and Possible (Communal) Futures

First of all, do not imagine communal futures as the abstract universal that will replace existing abstract universals like liberal capitalism and state socialism, once for all and all at once, and that will reign as the undisputed solution for the humanities (I will come back to this topic in the afterword). The cycle of search for universal models for world order are over. I have been arguing in this book, and in different contexts, that decolonial options are options, not missions of conversions to a universal truth or truth without parenthesis. As such, they are options imagined and acted on by those who find that neither capitalism nor socialism (and these both, yes, with a view of the future in which one or the other should prevail) is the solution, and who find even more so that abstract universals, whether socialist or capitalist, are not the solution. Decolonial options accept the non-pacific coexistence of the diversity of the five trajectories toward the future I outlined in chapter 1. Non-pacific coexistence (which is, therefore, conflictive) doesn't mean that we have to buy our guns before they are sold. Conflict does not necessarily lead to war. War obtains when truth and objectivity without parenthesis reign. Conflicts obtain and are solved without war where and when truth and objectivity in parenthesis reign and there is no enemy to be destroyed and universal truth to be defended and imposed. A world in which truth in parenthesis is accepted as universal is a world

guided by pluriversality as a universal principle. In a pluriversal world founded on truth in parenthesis, there is no place for war. It means that the differences between the five trajectories will be negotiated in non-imperial ways, which means that there is no room for an exclusive rewesternization. Western civilization would be merely one among many options, and not the one to guide and rule the many. In other words, there is no one trajectory that has the right to prevail over the other. This is the point at which dewesternization, the reorientation of the Left, decoloniality, and the spiritual option all have the common task of reducing Western imperial designs and its desires to their proper and regional place. “Provincializing Europe” acquires a new meaning in this context. That dewesternization, the reorientation of the Left, the spiritual option, and decoloniality all have a common task doesn’t mean that one of them has the right to become the “new” hegemon. If that were to become the case, we would remain, *mutatis mutandi*, within the rules of the same games imposed by Western modernity, when secularism appropriated the hegemonic discourse of the church. In such a scenario, the “content” would change and become the cultural biases of the new hegemon. Pluriversality means unlearning, so to speak, modernity, and learning to live with people one does not agree with, or may not even like. Conviviality is not holiday, but a hard and relentless effort toward cosmopolitan localism and pluriversal futures (see chapter 7).

Now, if the goal were to build not only a peaceful world but also a world in which everybody, because of its humanity, is equal to every other body and thus has the basic right to food, shelter, health, and education, and not to be bothered by solicitors (evangelicals, mini-credit saviors, anxious financial agents, military interventions, irresponsible corporations, promoters of socialism, etc.), then pluriversality would be the universal project to which decolonial thinking and doing aspire, and which they promote.

Racing to Death: The Postmodern Recolonization of “Time” and the Decolonial Claim to “Tradition”

“Tradition,” like “anthropos” or “space and time,” has not ontological but fictional existence, like Don Quixote or Madame Bovary. However, the fact that they do not have ontological existence does not preclude their being taken by many as truth of universal scope. They were inventions of Western

imperial modernity, inventions that contribute to consolidate Western modernity. What could anthropos do but remain behind in time, outside the forces of progress and development; because “tradition,” in the modernist lexicon, means underdevelopment. But once we accept that tradition does not exist as a transcendental category, who can claim the monopoly of time? Since the Enlightenment, time has assumed the role that natural law had in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Whoever knew what natural law was, and could argue forcefully for it, had the power to rule out all those who did not abide by that (fictional) natural law. Again, this is true because natural law is another entity that does not have ontological existence; rather, it was and is a fiction that was managed to be believed as true—just as with tradition and time. Who would want to be traditional once the rhetoric of modernity put a value on time, progress, and development, and those time-values became accepted by rulers as well as by the governed?

Once you control (the idea of) “time,” you can control subjectivity and make the many march to the rhythm of your own time. There are three key moments in the colonization of time and the re-making of the colonial matrix of power. Two were already mentioned: the Renaissance invention of the Middle Ages, and the Enlightenment invention of the primitive and tradition. The third is the postmodern invention of the acceleration of time. When Benjamin Franklin stated his famous dictum “Time is money,” time was measured against labor and the outcome of labor. But in the postmodern era, the idea that to *fall behind* is to lose has concomitantly introduced the idea that to go faster is to win (and of course you accept that winning is the name of the game), that you not only have to produce more (of whatever you produce) but that you have to do it first—thus, the “acceleration of time.” Success is the companion of moving fast, coming in first, and being the winner. Daniel Innerarity suggested that *chrono-politics* displaces, today, the colonization of space with the colonization of time.⁴¹ That had already happened in the eighteenth century, as I argued above. However, Innerarity’s *chrono-politics* and its companion (*bio-politics*, and *necro-politics*) are all diverse spheres of the logic of coloniality;⁴² however, while *bio-* and *necro-politics* are managed by the state, *chrono-politics* takes place mainly in the spheres of the market, finances, and media. In this regard, the state—and Innerarity makes this explicit—is “slow”: deliberation “takes time,” decisions are debated, votes have to go through two or three rounds,

and so on. But corporate ideology makes of time an essential component of efficiency and the incremental pace of production; it disregards the possibility of overproduction; it denies that “wasting time” could benefit the many, whose labor is being sold instead of being used for the benefit of the community.

Conceptually, the notion of chrono-politics adds another dimension to our understanding of the colonization of time; it enriches our understanding of the way the European Renaissance colonized by inventing the Middle Ages, and, later, the Enlightenment invented the primitive. While there is a difference between the colonization of time during the Renaissance, the invention of the “primitive” during the Enlightenment, and the corporate politics of time under neoliberalism, all three historical managements of “time” are different instances of the coloniality of time or, in Innerarity’s word, chrono-politics. Chrono-politics, in other words, is a specific aspect of theo- and ego-politics of knowledge; it is a *civilizational* principle that serves to ostracize all who do not conform to the modern conventions of time, that devalues “subalterns” for being slow and not racing toward death, which in the rhetoric of modernity is translated as “progress and development.” Chrono-politics, in the last analysis, shows how the coloniality of knowledge and being is managed by the Eurocentered system of ideas built around the colonization of time.

While bio-politics or necro-politics are politics of the state as it *regulates* the populations (be it within the imperial state or in the colonies), chrono-politics served (during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, to detach the Renaissance from its own tradition—the Middle Ages—and during the Enlightenment to detach European modernity from the “primitives”) in the era of neoliberal globalization it has become one of the main weapons to *promote competition*, thereby encouraging fast speed and success, consuming the energy of millions of people who live their lives constantly thinking of going faster and getting ahead, to being a winner and to avoiding the shame of being a loser. Take, for example, the “remodeling” of *Newsweek*, which has been amply reported by the media. Jon Meacham, the magazine’s editor, has been quoted as saying, “As the number of news outlets expands, it is said, attention spans shrink: only the fast and the pithy will survive.” David Carr, who quoted this sentence, comments on it by noting that the statement was made when *Newsweek* was redesigned, in 2007. Carr adds,

“The fact that another redo is at hand in less than two years suggests that there is not a design concept in the world that will serve as a firewall against broader changes in reading and advertising.”⁴³

Meacham’s statement clearly suggests a world in which the faster will survive. Now, when competition and speed are prioritized, the journalistic goal is no longer to inform and educate civil society, but to be *better* (by being faster) than the competition. The naturalized assumption is that by being faster and thus better than your competitors, the more you will fulfill the function of journalism. Whether civil society is informed or not is irrelevant. What matters is to be fast: quality is another casualty of innovation and progress. The goal in the last analysis is not to inform, but to be faster. As in many other instances, institutions come first and society (civil and political) second. It is necessary to win the competition, rather than to have a well-informed and critical audience. The public sphere that reads the news is a “collateral beneficiary,” and “good” information is a collateral phenomenon. But how many of the 6.8 billion people on the planet dwell in the acceleration of time and in the survival of the faster? One could say that at least half, the half of the population that live in mega-cities. However, it is not necessarily the entire population of a mega-city who will be trapped in the acceleration of time, which is a feature primarily of the lifestyle of bankers, builders, media figures, politicians, and all of those who strive to make more, to succeed, to get “there” first. The middle class, too, who live to consume (instead of consuming to live), will be trapped in the acceleration of time, in the realm of consumerism: to make more, to buy more, and to buy the newest and the best, to be not only fast, but also first.

In view of the non-sense in which the survival of the faster unfolds, there is good reason to make a case to re-inscribe “tradition” in the present and toward the future (see my discussion of “cosmopolitan localism,” in the afterword). Tradition could hardly be co-opted by chrono-politics; for if tradition, which is slow by definition, gets faster, it is no longer tradition, but modern. And if that happens, modernity gets stripped, and the logic of coloniality is unveiled. That means that next to (conflictively coexisting with) the postmodern acceleration of time and the lifestyle it engenders, decolonial thinking shall build arguments for the revival of “the de-acceleration of time,” revaluing what modernity devalued with no other reason than to eliminate the difference. There is significant room for maneuver beyond

the illusion that if you are not fast, you do not deserve to be in this world. One way to decolonize modernity is to move toward undoing the pair “modernity and tradition.” That means that the anthropos, who was also invented in the process of inventing the modern self, would assume delinking from the imperative to be human in the sense that Western modernity conceived *humanitas*. Once you delink there is no longer modernity and tradition, *humanitas* and anthropos, but only people who believe in modernity and tradition and in *humanitas* and anthropos. By delinking you remove yourself from the bases that sustain the edifice. As Groucho Marx used to say, “I do not want to belong to a club that invited me to be one of its members.”

The communal, to which I will turn in the afterword, is a starting point and will shed more light on the issue. But before that, let’s explore the role of space-politics in the rhetoric of modernity, in the next chapter.