

GLOBAL FRAGMENTS

Globalizations, Latinamericanisms, and Critical Theory



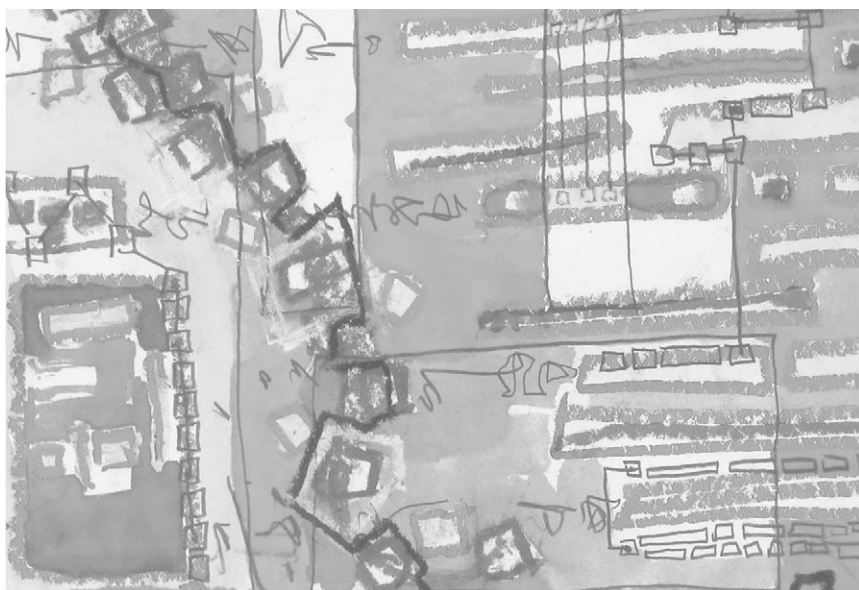
EDUARDO MENDIETA

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Latinamericanisms, Globalizations,
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EDUARDO MENDIETA

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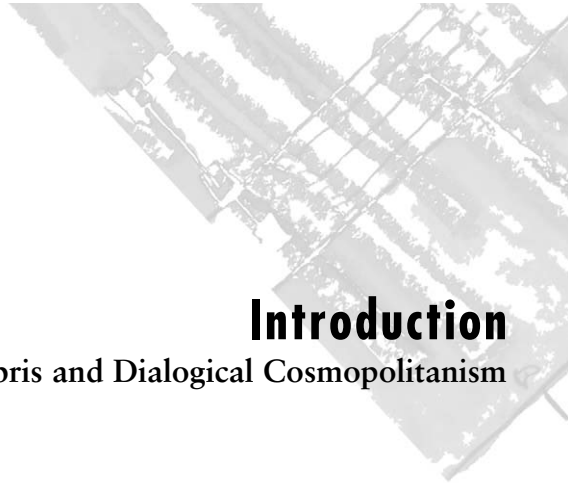
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Introduction

Epistemic Hubris and Dialogical Cosmopolitanism

How Not to Know

Globalization is to many pure ideology, and it is an ideology that operates at different levels, with different degrees of effectiveness, to the evident benefit of a very few. To many, globalization helps describe and name a new societal situation that is different not just in degree but also in kind from what preceded it, even if a precise dateline is not forthcoming. To many others, it is certainly a conceptual and theoretical utopia. The term is used as a noun although it is a verb, but it can also be marshaled as both an adjective and an adverb. The term is as versatile and seemingly innocuous as Martin Heidegger's *Sein*. Like Heidegger's *Sein*, it is complicit in concealing degrees of responsibility, deception, and self-delusion. It invites *Gelassenheit* and *Entschlossenheit*, letting be and resoluteness: Globalization will come of its own accord, or, alternatively, we must seize society and try to emulate the West and globalize—become global, globalize our modernity, and form part of globalization. In its uses and confusions, globalization resembles closely the other great word of contemporary social theory: modernity. I argue in this book that globalization has taken over the tasks that modernity used to perform. Like modernity, globalization is a term that helps us order societies in hierarchical and invidious ways that always put the United States and the so-called West, or Occident, in enviable and also unattainable positions. Like modernity, globalization is a theoretical grid that distorts the world, as it reveals aspects of it, while also distorting our place as epistemic subjects and objects. If modernity was the avant-garde position of the West—the European West—globalization is the avant-garde position of the United States, which has taken over the *mission civilisatrice* of the West. The United States is the latest, most forward point in a world-historical narrative and time line. This narrative and time line, which some have called a metanarrative, harkens back to the idea of divine history (*Heilsgeschichte*), which has as its underbelly a theodicy that exonerates humans of all culpability for their

inequity and injustice. Today globalization is the name of this gospel. It promises salvation, but also the convenient alibi that globalization's devastating effects and exacting costs are both inevitable and, in the end, worth the sacrifice. Like God's salvation plan with its math of punishment and expiation, globalization offers wealth to some but a calculus of destitution, starvation and exclusion to far too many.¹

Globalization is indeed ideology, part self-deluding fantasy, part distortion of reality, part epistemology in search of corroboration, part critical thought grappling with its own historicity and limits. Theodor W. Adorno's take on the concept of totality is instructive with respect to the ideological dimensions of globalization, and guides my analysis in this book. In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno wrote: "Totality is to be opposed by convicting it of nonidentity with itself—of the nonidentity it denies, according to its own concept."² Indeed, the entire world is not globalized, does not form part of globalization, is not even actively globalizing. Furthermore and on the other hand, there are forms of globalization that are either elided or entirely negated by the type of globalization that gets the most press time in the West and the United States. Adorno also took a stand against "universal history." This history led from the sling shot to the atom bomb must be both "construed and denied."³ This book operates under this kind of imperative, of having to construe, visualize, and represent a world that is conceptualized under this shibboleth "globalization" in order to convict it, to indict it, to deny it, because under its very conceptual light, the spreading darkness of its demise is concealed, negated, and dismissed. Under globalization, the world has become more fragmented as economic inequality shears continents and societies from each other as they grow more interdependent on the well-being of the planet. The other side of globalization, that celebrated by the West and the United States, is the cosmopolitan dimension of its political, ethical, and moral values. Human rights have become a global standard, even as the United States, to its own discredit, tramples them. Feminism and religious tolerance are also global standards. The rights of religious, ethnic minorities, and cultures on the brink of extinction are also a major global concern. The development of a global ecological movement and consciousness that is pushing regulation of multinationals, as well as fueling movements like the anti-GM foods and plants throughout the world, are part and parcel of this new global consciousness. Globalization has made it impossible to retreat behind the shields of nationalism, ethnic chauvinism, religious intolerance, and economic protectionism. Even, or some may say, especially, the United States cannot control the juggernaut of globalization. The Washington and Davos consensus have to be countered with Porto Allegre, Seattle, and Beijing. The globalization from above has to be countered with a globalization from below. The globalization indexes of *Foreign Policy*, and the *New York Times*, have to be checkmated with the globalization indexes of Vandana Shiva's Research Foundation for Science,

Technology, and Natural Resources, the Worldwatch Institute, and Redefining Progress. In the language of my intellectual grandparents, we must think of globalization as both a normative and descriptive totality, which is both horizontal and vertical.⁴ Globalization describes, but also evaluates or imposes normative standards. Similarly, it describes the world in terms of a pattern or process, but it also gives us snapshots, freeze-frame pictures of the state of the world at any given time. Globalization is not just about the growth in consumption, industrialization, and expansion of the car fleet; it is also about raising the living standards of more than half of the world population, about literacy, about gender equity, about the equitable and fair distribution and consumption of the planet's resources. There are many globalizations going on: one set, dreamed up and legislated from above, threatens to destroy the world; the other, fought from below, hopes to save the world and make sure that the world of globalization is a world of globalized political, economic, and cultural justice.⁵

The book is made up of fragments. It is about fragments, and about the fragmentation of the world in an age of globalization. The title *Global Fragments*, captures three central ideas that orient the book. First, one of the central ideas that is communicated by the title is that all theorizations, all images and imaginations of and about globalization are only fragmentary. I often make reference to Jorge Luis Borges's parables and metaphysical stories to illustrate this point. Borges was the master of the philosophical tale, and some of his classic stories have to do with libraries, Alephs, labyrinths, total books and inexhaustible encyclopedias, hyperrealistic maps, and ur-texts. In Borges's work, however, these total, totalizing, totalitarian accoutrements of utopian dreaming turn into their own nemesis. Even when viewing the impossible object, the Aleph, in which the whole world is captured and seen at once, like God's eye, can offer but a perspective. All that remains are the shreds, torn parchments, ruins, footnotes, fragments, and snapshots of a total but impossible *sub specie aternitatis* gaze. There can be no total perspective on the global world. Theories of globalization are at best epistemological fragments.

Another central idea that guides this book is that the fragments of society, of human consciousness, and even geohistorical units (whether we see them as fictions or actual geographic formations—that is, Latin America does not exist except in the geopolitical maps of nineteenth-century Imperial designs) are products of globalization, the process of globalizing the planet. This book argues, forcefully enough I hope, that as we have become more interdependent, entire regions of the world, but also sectors of society, within our own societies, have been torn from the fabric of civilization. Africa, for example, is plagued by AIDS, starvation, endless civil unrest, genocidal ethnic wars, and is sinking farther into what theologian Engelvert Mveng has called “anthropological poverty.” Within the United States, we have our own types of fragments drifting away in seas of dehumanizing

poverty, neglect, and ultimately, invisibility. African Americans, notwithstanding the minimal gains of a showcase black middle class, are caught in a vicious cycle of prisonization, criminalization, undereducation, social marginalization, and political disenfranchisements. Plantations, ghettos, hyperghettos, ethnoracial prisons, the death penalty—these are racial mappings, topographies of terror and exclusion.⁶ They are the mechanism through which the United States sends adrift entire sections of its society into a sea of material destitution, despair, and hopelessness. Latin America is another global fragment, both theoretically and geopolitically. Continents and subcontinents do not exist.⁷ They exist only in the imaginary maps of imperial designs. This is no less true of Latin America than it is of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Yet, even if they do not exist in actuality, these geopolitical markers matter profoundly, because they become the means by which sectors of society are precisely excluded and written out of history, from the web of human interdependence.

Finally, the third idea that is evoked in the title *Global Fragments* is that of biotheoretical fragments. The lives of ideas are linked to the ideas of the living, and the living give life to ideas in specific geohistorical contexts. It is not possible, after Giambattista Vico, G.W.F. Hegel, and José Ortega y Gasset, to say like Heidegger said of Aristotle, and I paraphrase: “That he lived, and what was important was his philosophy.” The *bios-theoreticos* is a bios-historical. This book is oriented by a further qualification on the *bios-theoreticos*, that as a bios-historical it is also a fragment of geopolitical life. Ideas have historical lives, but these lives are geohistorical. In the age of globalization, ideas travel, either wittingly or unwittingly.⁸ They are produced in local contexts, but have global effects, in different degrees, depending on where they are produced. Like commodities, ideas and the thinkers that produce them are caught in the rapacious grip of the global market of images, imaginaries, and imaginations.⁹ In this book, however, I am interested in the theoretical fragments of systematic thinkers and how those fragments reflect the fragmentary character of a globalized world, and the way that globalization can only be conceptualized fragmentarily.

The book is therefore organized in three parts, each part dealing with three types, if you will, of fragments: epistemological fragments, geohistorical-political fragments, and biotheoretical fragments. The first part, “Globalizations,” is made up of two of my fragments dealing with the different ways in which we have theorized globalization. I began writing the first chapter, “Philosophizing Globalizations,” in the spring of 2002 when I taught a seminar on globalization and postcolonial theories at the European Humanities University in Minsk, Belarus. It has not previously been published. Like the second chapter, it outlines the philosophical project of developing a phenomenology of globalization from below. The assumption is that at very ontic and mundane levels we already have intuitions of what globalizations means. In this chapter I begin from below in a dual sense. I

begin with those most poor, those excluded and exploited, the half of humanity that lives on less than two dollars a day in the megaslums of hyperurbanized humanity. But I also begin from the bottom of phenomenology, which claims that first philosophy is disclosedness.¹⁰ The primacy of phenomenology is not a mark of obscurantism or philosophical purism. Thought begins with wonderment, and phenomenology begins with the wonder of human existence. In our case, it is the wonder, the outraged and aghast wonder at the poverty of human existence in an age of affluence and plenty. Philosophy can only be practiced responsibly today if it squats with living human beings in the squalor of a world so unequally shared and squandered.

The second part gathers fragments of what I called “Latinamericanisms,” or, more precisely, the Latinamericanisms of globalization. These chapters are haunted by a tired but unconsumed nostalgia, the kind of mature but also bittersweet realization that we all seek to return to imaginary homelands—to use the felicitous expression by Salman Rushdie. In this age of easy identities, it is wonderful to be homeless and to yearn for something that is impossible. And to paraphrase Adorno, in the age of global mass culture, to be homeless, “not to be at home in one’s own home,” is perhaps one of the only traces left of ethics.¹¹ They are thus also haunted by the realization that “strategic essentialism” will not do, for it will continue to fuel an unhealthy nostalgia, the nostalgia for home, when home itself has succumbed to commodification. The chapters in the second part thus waver and quiver between the extremes of affirming that Latin America is but a geopolitical and imperial imaginary and affirming that there is a kind of Wittgensteinian family story that holds us together in the soothing embrace of the memory of suffering, with its ethical imperatives and moral duties. At least this is how I felt when I wrote them, although I also took them as occasions to educate myself about the philosophical struggles being waged in Latin America, Europe, and the United States about how to make sense of the relationship between theory and geopolitics. Still, while they are about Latin America, both real and imaginary, these chapters are also about the geohistorical chronology of master ideas and the idea of masters: modernity, postmodernity, and globalization. Each chapter offers, thus, a case study in the acculturation of ideas and the itinerary of traveling ideas and ideologies. However, insofar as these chapters all deal with different chronotopes—that is, ways of mapping time and temporalizing space—they are contributions to what I have called “chronotopology.”¹²

The third part of *Global Fragments* gathers four chapters about three public intellectuals who have influenced, guided, and inspired my thought. In these chapters, I have tried to think with these titans of thought in unusual and unexpected ways. I have studied and read them from the standpoint of my own unusual location—but we all do that. I have deliberately sought to read these thinkers in tangential, although appositional ways.

Enrique Dussel, whom I have translated and edited for a long time, for instance, I read as contributing to a critical theory of globalization. I also seek to place him within a less nationalistic, Eurocentric, geopolitics of ideas. I think he is not just a Latin American philosopher. He is also a thinker of the West, of and against globalization. Dussel should be perhaps more aptly characterized as a post-Latin American and postoccidentalist philosopher.¹³ This entire book labors under the shadow of his monumental *Ética de la Liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión*.¹⁴

I read Jürgen Habermas, another of my major influences, from the angle of religion and theology, and especially from the angle of how he inherits the central European Jewish roots of a critique of religion that still sees religion as a source of critical thought. For this tradition the critique of religion is also a religious critique of the world.¹⁵ Indeed, Habermas, “the Jew and theologian,” could have been the subtitle of my chapter on him in this volume. As preposterous as this may sound to some, Habermas has thought out of, with, and against this unfathomably generative tradition of Jewish romantic, messianic, prophetic, posttheological, and postphilosophical social critique. In fact, the chapter was first written for the introduction to a volume of Habermas’s selected chapters on religion, theology, and rationality.¹⁶ The volume, which was first published in Spanish with the more appropriate title of *Israel or Athens*,¹⁷ gathered only a portion of the many chapters Habermas has written on these themes. With this edited volume I wanted to document Habermas’s long involvement with the tradition and thematic of religious critique. Thus, Habermas is not a latecomer to the question of the relationship between religion, democracy, modernity, and now globalization. Nor is he an opportunistic philosemite. (And by the same token, he cannot be accused of antisemitism when he criticizes the United States for its disastrous policies in the Middle East.¹⁸)

The final chapter is particularly dear to me because in grappling with Cornel West’s relationship to pragmatism and the black traditions of critical thought in the United States, I come closest to my own philosophical and existential dilemmas.¹⁹ Philosophically, Cornel West is quintessentially an “American” thinker: he combines skepticism of the mind with an optimism of the heart. He is the philosopher clearing the philosophical underbrush but also the religiously inspired visionary that can point in the direction of a better future. He is also confessedly and avowedly on the side of the poor. His philosophizing is always guided by a preferential option for the niggerized, ghettoized, and racialized in the United States and world society. Since I began work on this book, I began with the thought that the only way critical thinking, in the tradition of the Frankfurt School at the Institute for Social Research, can be responsibly carried on is if we combine the kind of thinking that these three figures metonymically embrace. Dussel, thinker of the underside of globalization and modernity; Habermas, thinker of the enlightenment to come and the power of discursive-communicative reason

at work in quotidian existence; West, thinker of a political pragmatism that gives primacy to the empowerment of society's downtrodden. Their thinking is linked by their common preoccupation with the power of reason to break through fetishized social reality, with the promise and hope gathered in the compendium that is religion, and with the historical efficacy of historicized reason as it is plucked from the thorny bush of tortured reality by the engaged democratic praxis of cosmopolitan and ecumenical postnational, and postsecular, agents. Dussel, Habermas, and West, in my analysis (and this is what I argue within the last part of this book), are pivotal centers of thought in a new constellation of critical thought for the twenty-first century in the age of globalization and global fragments.

Cosmopolitanisms

This book, which so insistently defends and affirms the fragmentary, however, should not and cannot be read as condoning a frivolous and insouciant form of postmodernism. The affirmation of the fragmentary that is the mark of this text is an overt denunciation and challenge to all forms of epistemic hubris, which comes in the form of either closing knowledge claims to the claims of those who have been rendered voiceless and unworthy of recognition, or in the form of an epistemic neglect that would not consider the claims of the voiceless as worthy of consideration at all. Thus, it could be said that the critique of epistemic hubris entailed by the celebration of circumscribed and historicized knowledge claims is at the service of the recognition of the other. In all my work, here and elsewhere, the other is not some metaphysical specter. The other is neither pure alterity nor a metaphysical edge. The other is always historical, specific, and most importantly, suffering flesh and clamoring subjectivity. As with Adorno's critique of epistemology and positivistic sociology, which were recruited at the service of a negative moral philosophy,²⁰ my critique of epistemology, comprehensive theories of globalization, and the adverse effects of certain epistemic matrices are also at the service of an ethics that recognizes, affirms, and responds to other. Therefore, notwithstanding the seeming agnostic and nonaffirmative character of most of the chapters in this book, the thrust of my argumentation is to endorse what I call a "dialogic cosmopolitanism." I will now turn to a characterization of this form of cosmopolitanism, which opens up a horizon of encounter and response in space left decolonized and pacified by the work of epistemological critique.

In an essay published in the fall of 1994 in the *Boston Review*, Martha Nussbaum succinctly and eloquently elaborated and defended a form of civic cosmopolitanism, which she juxtaposed to parochial and jingoistic patriotism. The aim of the essay, however, was not just to defend cosmopolitanism and reject patriotism, but also to endorse cosmopolitanism as the focus of civic education. For Nussbaum, who has philosophized extensively

on pedagogy, the relevance of the debate is determined by how it would impact the way we would educate citizens. Thus, for Nussbaum, cosmopolitanism is not an abstract, philosophical stance, but rather a very practical and result-oriented attitude. If we educate citizens to see themselves primarily as citizens of a world community, as opposed to members of narrow, special, chosen, and exceptional communities, then these citizens would be less likely to engage in the rituals of blood that are so indispensable to patriotism, and would instead be more responsive and engaged with the cultures and welfare of communities across the globe. In this essay, therefore, Nussbaum elaborates four arguments for why a cosmopolitan-oriented and -guided civic education is a greater benefit to the United States, and others as well, than patriotically oriented civic education. First, because “through cosmopolitan education, we learn more about ourselves.” Second, we are better prepared to solve problems that “require international cooperation.” Third, “we recognize moral obligations to the rest of the world that are real and that otherwise would go unrecognized.” Fourth, we learn to “make consistent and coherent” arguments that we are prepared to defend intelligibly.²¹ One can quickly unfurl myriad arguments against Nussbaum’s defense of cosmopolitanism, which can easily be confused with a rootless form of universalism and abstract humanism (as several of the commentators on her original essay already have). Yet, it is difficult not to be sympathetic with the pedagogical aims of her defense of cosmopolitanism. While it is true that we are socialized and nurtured in local ethical communities, we are faced with global problems that command that we look to the world, even as we are indisputably rooted in specific ethical traditions. What I want to underscore and take from Nussbaum’s four arguments in defense of a cosmopolitan-focused civic education is her fourth reason. Being educated to think as a member of global community raises the epistemic bar on what kinds of distinctions and arguments we are capable of making. What Nussbaum is pointing out, I think, is that cosmopolitanism is not just an emotive or affective stance toward the claims of others, but that it is also a theoretical and conceptual stance that commands us to assess the cogency of our claims from the standpoint of sometimes abstract others (but sometimes very concrete others) who happen to be on different continents. Cosmopolitanism is also an epistemic stance.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, who was one of the respondents to Nussbaum’s chapter, published in 2006 a book entitled *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*.²² Appiah, who has written on questions of identity, multiculturalism, race, imperialism, and nationalism extensively, frames this book in terms of what is the proper rubric to use in order to confront the challenges of the modern world: globalization, multiculturalism, or cosmopolitanism? He settles on the last, although he notes that its meaning is contested and it can be argued that cosmopolitanism is both an ideal and a particular stance. Appiah, however, proceeds to profile two distinct

“strands” within cosmopolitanism. One strand underscores the idea that we have “obligations” to others. The other strand affirms that we must “take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance.”²³ Human difference, for this second strand, is an intrinsic good and must be preserved, celebrated, and most importantly, learned from. As with Nussbaum, for Appiah cosmopolitanism has eminently pedagogical benefits, and like her, he also thinks that cosmopolitanism entails a moral orientation. This moral orientation imposes on all certain duties and responsibilities. Much of what follows in this book is about profiling these duties and responsibilities, the contexts in which they become most evident, and what elements and forms of thinking and knowing obscure these obligations toward strangers. There is, however, an argument in Appiah’s book that is implicit in his distinction between two strands within cosmopolitanism but that only becomes explicit much later in the book. In the chapter entitled “The Counter-Cosmopolitans,” in which Appiah discusses the neofundamentalist, Christian, Muslim (etc.) reaction to the cosmopolitan challenge, he writes: “If cosmopolitanism is, in a slogan, universality plus difference, there is the possibility of another kind of enemy, one who rejects universality all together. ‘Not everybody matters’ would be their slogan.”²⁴

Indeed, whether you are a religious, market-economy, or American-supremacy *überalles* fundamentalist, and thus you think that there are a lot of others who do not matter and that their interests, knowledge claims, local histories, threatened traditions, and endangered forms of life are unimportant or worth our respect and concern, you’re still within the space of reason. Appiah is clear about this: “Once you start offering reasons for ignoring the interests of others, however, reasoning itself will usually draw you into a kind of universality.”²⁵ This is an extremely important insight, one that Appiah arrives at through a *via negative*—that is, when those who want to take a stance against cosmopolitanism draw up their reasons, they are unwittingly in the grip of universal reason. Yet, I would argue, not only the countercosmopolitan but also the avowed cosmopolitan is in the grip of some sort of “universality.” Both are in the space of reason. Consequently, I can make the claim that cosmopolitanism is an ethical orientation that puts reason on call, on guard. Universality, consequently, must be rearticulated, defended, expanded, and made concrete. Cosmopolitanism must therefore entail a self-critique of one’s prejudices, as well as a confession and disclosure as to one’s own epistemic standpoint.

The reason of the cosmopolitan must be a cosmopolitan reason and yet-to-be-specified universality. For this reason, one can speak of a naïve, or ideological cosmopolitanism, the kind that makes communitarians and conservatives bristle with contempt but that also makes those critical of cultural imperialism impatient and highly critical of dehistoricized enunciations of universal reason. This type of cosmopolitanism, which refuses to

submit its own universality claims to critique, to enter the space of reason in a symmetrical and egalitarian way with others who are at the table of cosmopolitanism, can turn into a form of epistemic arrogance that, like a fig leaf, barely conceals contemptuous disregard and brutal self-interest. Unfortunately, the history of the modern world furnishes plenty of examples of such forms of naivete, and in most cases, imperial cosmopolitanism. Neither Nussbaum nor Appiah are naive cosmopolitans. Nor can one accuse them of offering fodder for the canons of neoliberal globalism and Western neoimperialism. Their work on cosmopolitanism, absolutely indispensable, must be extended and supplemented.

The opposite of naive—and imperial—cosmopolitanism, it may be argued, would be a critical cosmopolitanism. Walter D. Mignolo has in fact defended and articulated such a form of cosmopolitanism. He has done so weaving in a magisterial way a critical history of Western colonialism with incisive insights into key philosophical figures in a decolonized philosophical canon. Since I discuss in greater detail Mignolo's work in the second part of this book, I want to abstain from extensive commentaries. In a brilliant chapter entitled "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism,"²⁶ Mignolo illustrates in actu the virtues of a critical cosmopolitanism by distinguishing among three different global-imperial designs and what were their corresponding cosmopolitan projects. According to Mignolo, to the global designs of the Spanish and Portuguese empires from the sixteenth through the seventeenth century, corresponded the cosmopolitanism of the Christian mission—that is, cosmopolitanism as evangelization and Christianization of the pagan and heathens. To the French and English imperial designs during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries corresponded the cosmopolitan mission of civilizing, that is, cosmopolitanism as civilizing the barbarians. To the United States, translational, global, and neocolonial imperial designs during the twentieth century, corresponded the cosmopolitan mission of modernizing, that is, cosmopolitanism as modernization, or globalization, of the premodern and traditional. One does not need to subscribe to this particular chronology or the corresponding organizing principles (missionizing, civilizing, modernizing) in order to recognize the validity of the critique of the ways in which certain embodiments of cosmopolitanism have, explicitly or implicitly, condoned, justified, and legitimated colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism. Mignolo's task, in this essay as well as in most of his work, is not just deconstructive and critical; it is also positive and constructive. The point of this critical cosmopolitanism is to open it up to other voices and others who challenge the reason of imperial and global designs that have resulted in so much inequality and human suffering. The task of critical cosmopolitanism, then, is to rescue, retrieve, and made audible and visible the voices of those local histories that have been rendered subaltern and

silent by the imperial ethos that heeds the call of “you’re either with us or against us,” to use the language of George W. Bush’s Manichean theodicy. As Mignolo put it “Critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism as a regulative principle demands yielding generously (“convivially” said Vitoria; “friendly” said Kant) toward diversity as a universal and cosmopolitan project in which everyone participates instead of “being participated.”²⁷ Critical cosmopolitanism, therefore, is oriented to a form of universality that Mignolo calls “diversality,” a combination of diversity and universality. To paraphrase what was written above, the reason and universality of critical cosmopolitanism is a cosmopolitan diversity and rationality, or more precisely diversal rationality. In Mignolo’s words: “Diversality should be the relentless practice of critical and dialogical cosmopolitanism rather than the blueprint of a future and ideal society projected from a single point of view (that of abstract universality).”²⁸

What Mignolo is noting is that cosmopolitanism is caught in what has been called by Karl-Otto Apel a “performative contradiction,” that is to say, there is a way in which all cosmopolitan claims are *defacto* deferred and thus awaiting further specification by that in the name of which we are called to respect, celebrate, and heed: the claims of the others, the claims of strangers, as Appiah calls them. Interestingly, Judith Butler has made this exact point in her response to Martha Nussbaum’s essay “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism.” Butler’s response takes up the “performative contradiction” character of universality claims implied in cosmopolitan claims and argues for a universality that must be articulated by and through the challenges to “its existing formulation, and this challenge[s] emerge[s] from those who are not covered by it, who have not entitlement to occupy the place of the ‘who,’ but who nevertheless demand that the universal as such ought to be inclusive of them.”²⁹ This universality that is always deferred and caught in its own insufficiency is what Mignolo has called “diversality.” Both Mignolo and Butler agree on something far more important than on signaling that all cosmopolitan enunciations of universality demand that the universal itself be held in suspension, as an asymptotic horizon, a counterfactual, without which but also against which, we must engage in order to enable a proper response to the other. They agree more dramatically on the place of the other in this pedagogy of the universal, in the expansion and enlightenment of universality itself. Mignolo has argued that critical cosmopolitanism is sustained in its critical stance when it adopts what he calls the locus of enunciation of the subaltern.³⁰ Butler has argued that it is the “who” that is excluded from a given articulation of the universal that constitutes the “contingent limit of universalization.” Both, in my view, are arguing that cosmopolitanism is made cosmopolitan by the diversity of the subaltern, the excluded other, the stranger, the marginalized. For this reason, one can speak of a cosmopolitanism from below, one that matches the sociopolitical

effects of a globalization from below, as I argue in part one of this book. Mignolo and Butler give voice to what can be called the cosmopolitanism of the subaltern, and it is one that has been educating those in the metropolises of the West and who claim to speak univocally and unequivocally for the universal as such. I argue in the part three of this book that Dussel, West, and Habermas have been articulating this type of cosmopolitanism when they have sought to think from the standpoint of the voice of those hitherto silence, excluded, and niggerized.

I noted at the outset of this section that I take this book to be defending a form of dialogical cosmopolitanism. I sought to profile my position through engagement with the work of several thinkers who have influenced my thinking on the issue. The work of Nussbaum led me to think of cosmopolitanism as a practical pursuit, and above all as a pedagogical pursuit that would influence civic education, to educating “good citizens.” Appiah led me to recognize that cosmopolitanism is both an attitude and ideal that valorizes difference. His work also led me to recognize the theoretical work this valorization entails. Mignolo led me to see the extreme dangers of a dehistoricized and delocalized cosmopolitanism. Butler articulated in language that is very familiar to people who have been trained in German critical theory the challenges Mignolo articulated in the language of Latin American cultural studies and what he has called the “colonial difference.” All of these thinkers have helped me, and us collectively, to see how honest and disingenuous cosmopolitanism must be critical, from below, obsequious of the subaltern, and above all, always alert to its potential misappropriations. Critical cosmopolitanism requires that we acknowledge our epistemic locus, that is to say, our hermeneutical point of departure, which in some cases may be a point of epistemic privilege but in others may command epistemic humility. Cosmopolitanism, simply put, demands that we situate ourselves, for as Butler wrote in her essay in response to Nussbaum, “the meaning of ‘the universal’ proves to be culturally variable, and the specific cultural articulations of the universal work against its claim to transcultural status.”³¹ One can therefore speak of a *situated* cosmopolitanism, as Lorenzo Simpson has.

In fact, critical theorist Lorenzo Simpson has articulated eloquently what Mignolo and Butler have argued, using singly different terminology, which explicitly takes up the challenge of Rortyan fulminations against vacuous forms of universalism. I quote at length:

A hermeneutically self-aware ethnocentrist, one aware of her transcendental ethnocentrism, would hold others up to the criteria that her lights reveal, but not in a way that dogmatically precludes the possibility (or desirability) that her standards may change, that she could learn from others. To be hermeneutically self-reflexive implies, for me, an openness and a willingness to take seriously the conjecture that there is a disjunction between one’s own stand-

point and the regulative ideal of the “good life.” On the other hand, the post-modern relativist’s refusal to judge can betray a refusal *to be judged*, a refusal both to make claims *on* others and to be claimed *by* those others. Our openness to the claims of the other places our identities in relief. And the critical renegotiation of identity can take place on both sides of the conversation table.³²

Critical cosmopolitanism of the sort that Mignolo advocates is precisely the same thing that Simpson calls “hermeneutically self-aware ethnocentrism.” This form of self-reflexive hermeneutics that implies entering the space of reason symmetrically and in an egalitarian way also implies that one be open to having to give reason for one’s claim to universality and the claims to universality of those others with whom we share many hermeneutical differences. The hermeneutical self-reflexive position is neither arrogant nor blasé, for there is a way in which disregard and ersatz humility are as pugnacious and searing as blunt and unmasked arrogance can be. This is a point that Amartya Sen has made in several occasions and particularly when he wrote with respect to the project of the promotion of democracy across the world: “The apparent Western modesty that takes the form of a humble reluctance to promote ‘Western ideas of democracy,’ in the non-Western world includes an imperious appropriation of a global heritage as exclusively the West’s own.”³³ Hermeneutical humility must be matched by hermeneutical solicitude. For this reason, the giving and requesting of reason must be symmetrical and reversible. Simpson, therefore, calls his form of cosmopolitanism “situated,” as it explicitly confesses the circumscribed hermeneutical horizon from which it is enunciated. By now it should have become clear why it is that I call the type of cosmopolitanism that I defend in this book “dialogical cosmopolitanism.” I call it dialogical not out of disrespect to my colleagues, nor because I am in the grip of the anxiety of influence, nor because my position is fundamentally different from theirs and I want to trace a line on the horizon that separates us. In my view, dialogical cosmopolitanism encompasses within its adjective references to critical, situated, self-reflexive, and most importantly obsequiousness and solicitude toward the pedagogy of the oppressed and subaltern. Just because epistemic purity and completeness are the privilege of only gods and eternal minds does not mean that we cannot learn from others and with others, and most importantly, it does not mean that our moral duties toward others are suspended or unjustifiable. The absence of certitude is not the absence of responsibility. Dialogical cosmopolitanism situates us in our global fragments, but also turns our moral look to our global responsibilities and duties toward others.

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Part 1



GLOBALIZATIONS

