

Who Speaks for the Human in Western Humanism?

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the letter of invitation Mr. Candido Mendes, General Secretary, reflects on the trajectory of the Academy de la Latinite in the recent past and the quest for a possible universal for a global dialogue that he finds “the plus and plus improbable.” The road of the dialogue if not close at least under repair, turned the attention of the Academy toward “human rights” investigating the “laicity and post-laicity underscored by the profile of contemporary terrorism.” He finds out that as the research path of the Academy becomes more and more epistemic, themes of this encounter would focus on the question

of humanism “dans sa dialectique contemporaine de la difference.”

2. HUMANISM IS A EUROCENTERED CONCEPT

“Humanism” is a Eurocentered concept that, with all its diverse Eurocentered meanings, is untenable today. “Humanism” of any kind presupposes the distinction between *humanitas* and *anthropos* (barbarians, primitives, blacks, yellows, brown, Arabs, Indians, Chinese, third world, underdeveloped, terrorists) a distinction that you can imagine was not created by the *anthropos* but the *humanitas*. More than ever today than in the past 500 years of history the *anthropos* is theorizing how s/he has been turned into *anthropos*. S/he is not claiming for recognition in the garden of *humanitas*, for the *anthropos*, now that someone who made such a distinction, cannot be *humanitas* or *civilized*. What the *anthropos* is asking is “what does it mean to be *human*,” from his or her perspective as *anthropos*. The *anthropos* is neither asking for recognition nor for the centrality of the *anthropos* (for it will be accepting the rules of the *humanitas* and believing that a uni-versal is needed) in responding to the question “what does it mean to be *human*.” He and she know that the standard of *humanitas* spreads all over the globe as it was and it is a powerful weapon of Western hegemony in some cases, dominance in others. Consequently, *humanitas*, whether we belong to or are in the realm of the *anthropos* is in all of us. Therefore, what the

anthropos is claiming is that a) “what does it mean to be human” is a question that can no longer be answered from the perspective of the *humanitas*; b) *humanitas* was not a problem for the *anthropos* until he or she became *anthropos* in the discourse of *humanitas*; c) therefore, the “what does it mean to be human” is a question that requires a pluriversal answers and border epistemology: since the answer cannot be given from the universal perspective of the *humanitas*, and the *anthropos* is not interested in proposing another universal concept of the human, the answer from the perspectives of the *anthropos* are being put forward by appropriating the universal *humanitas* and dispersing it into the global and pluriversal “what does it mean to be human.”

I am using the word “Eurocentered” here in the same sense that Carl Schmitt has used it in the *nomos* of the earth. He used as a descriptive term to say, clearly and loudly, that what he called the “second *nomos* of the earth” and the international law of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* was built and managed by Europe, for European interests and had in Europe its center.¹ I do not know

1. The *Nomos* of the Earth in the International Law of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Translated and annotated by G.L. Ullmen, New York, Telos Press, 2003. I do not know if Slavoj Žižek would have run to grab a gun when he read Schmitt’s book: “When one says *Eurocentrism*, every self-respecting postmodern leftist intellectual—said Žižek—has as violent a reaction as a Joseph Goebbels had to culture—to reach for a gun, hurling accusations of protofascist Eurocentrist cultural imperialism. However, is it possible to imagine a leftist appropriation of

if Schmitt was aware that his history was half of the story or if he assumed that in spite of being Eurocentered was uni-versal. That is, that in spite of being Eurocentered once the second *nomos* was put in place was, for better or worse, the global *nomos* to which every body would have to bend. Today we know that if he wasn't aware that his story was regional, China and Bolivia, to mention two antithetical examples are saying loudly that the second *nomos* of the earth was Eurocentered and never erased the plurality of *nomos* existing before Eurocentrism.

“Humanism” is a *nomos's* companion and therefore Eurocentered. Consequently, “humanism” has been the paradigmatic concept upon which modern/imperial racism was built. Although the word *nomos* was not used in the European Renaissance, international law originated in the sixteenth century demanded by European needs to justify appropriation of land outside of Europe and control and management of a population of non-Christians. The concept of “Man” and of “Humanism” were

the European political legacy?,” *Critical Inquiry*, volume 24/4. Since I am not a “self-respecting postmodern leftist intellectual” but a “self-respecting decolonial intellectual,” I have no interest in Zizek problem/question (the appropriation of European political legacy from the left), and *Eurocentrism* for a self-respecting decolonial intellectual is a necessary and unavoidable word. Which means that self respecting leftist and self respecting decolonial intellectual have truly different skin and different agendas. I suspect that Zizek is wearing a coat made of the skin of the “European Man.”

born at the intersection of the internal history of Europe itself and its self-affirmation through the expulsion of Jews and Moors on the one hand, the enslavement of Africans and dismantling of the civilizations of Anahuac and Tawantinsuyu. The concept of “Man” and of “Humanism” worked in tandem with international law to secure the ontological and epistemic privilege of a Christian ethno-class that by controlling knowledge were able to establish themselves as “humanists” in contradistinction with the Christian ethno-class of “scholastic” and as models of “man” in contradistinction with Jews, Moors, African Blacks and Indians in the New World. In order for international law to justify Christian appropriation of non-Christian lands it was necessary to diminish the “humanity” of those whose lands were there for grab. This was the role of Francisco de Vitoria and the school of Salamanca in the sixteenth century. Hugo Grotius followed suit when Holland started its expansion to the East at the same time that the internal battle in Europe began not only among Catholics and Protestants but also among imperial countries disputing the control of land and sea.²

As it is well known, “humanists” during *the* Renaissance were the forerunners of the secular movement that overcame the control of the church in eighteenth centu-

2. Francisco de Vitoria, *Relectio de Indis* (1532), and *The Juri belli Hispanorum in barbaros* (1532). Hugo Grotius, *Mare Liberum* (1609).

ry Europe.³ “Humanists” were not Muslims or Chinese, Persian or Slaves. They were European Christians males. Directly or indirectly, the image of “Vitruvian Man” in which the “proportion of Man” (generally referred to as “Canon of Proportions”) run parallel to the image of the “humanist.” Both notions work together to build and impose as a reality the changing distinctions between *humanitas* and *anthropos*.

3. *ANTHROPOS AND HUMANITAS: TWO WESTERN CONCEPTS OF “HUMAN BEINGS”*⁴

It is not by chance or by scholarly insight only (although a scholarly insight it is), that Nishitani Osamu, professor of Transcultural Studies at the Gradual School of Tokyo University would engage (brilliantly I must add), with the same literature and historical moment that Schmitt engaged to trace the history of the second *nomos* of the earth: de Vitoria, the school of Salamanca, the birth of international law and of Western racism. He did

3. The image of Man has been visualized by Leonardo and the image of the humanist by Sebastiano del Piombo (born in Venezia 1483, died in Rome, 1547).

4. I found this article of the essence, particularly because it was argued by Japanese scholar. Which means what is of the essence is not the “object enunciated” but the “enunciation of the object.” See: Nishitani Osamu, “Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of ‘Human Beings.’” In *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference*, edited by Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon, Hong-Kong, Hong-Kong University Press, 2006, p. 259-74.

not do it because he read Schmitt and was influenced by him. He did it, I surmise, because he knows he belongs to “the Yellow race” according to Western imperial nomenclature, and the “yellow race” is in that Western nomenclature, not a the lowest level of *anthropos* like Indians and Blacks, but of course not quite up to the expectations of Man and of the standards of Humanity which all Western Humanism is about.

Saying that *anthropos* are two Western concepts have several implications. One, in arbitrary order, is that there is not such a thing like *anthropos* beyond Western discourse. Second, that *humanitas* controls the discourse and by controlling discourse it defines itself as such by *creating the difference: the anthropos*. Third, since *anthropos* is not an entity but a concept that depends on *humanitas* in which the enunciation is located, *anthropos* is deprived of reason and discourse and placed in the *exteriority* of *humanitas*. The exteriority of *humanitas* is not an ontological outside that exists without the discourse and the *humanitas* just described of name. Thus, *anthropos* is a consequence of the epistemic racism that runs through the philosophy of Western knowledge from the Renaissance through today.

However, the *anthropos* is becoming aware of that situation. The article by Nishitani Osamu is just one instance. This article is not just a contribution to the Western history of ideas but an act of de-colonial scholarship. By de-colonial scholarship I mean investigations that dispute the

control and management of imperial knowledge that set up categories of thought to the benefit of those who control and produce knowledge. Thus “humanism in his contemporary dialectic of difference” reproduces *the colonial and imperial differences by means of which racist distinctions have been created and maintained*.

What do I mean by colonial and imperial differences? I am not talking about *cultural differences*, but about *imperial and colonial differences*. Both, imperial and colonial differences run through the space that divide and unite *humanitas* and *anthropos*. And, once again, this distinction doesn't exist in the histories told by living organisms whom given their capacity to engage in languaging and through languaging⁵ conceive themselves as a particular kinds of living organisms among all living organism on earth, until the European Renaissance.

It is in the European Renaissance that the distinction between *humanitas* and *anthropos* began to be built through *imperial and colonial differences*. Or, if you wish, the main consequence of the imperial and colonial differences is the self-fashioning of *humanitas* as the model and the *anthropos* as the difference that has to be conquered, eliminated or assimilated. Thus, “humanism in its contemporary dialectic of difference” has to deal

5. I describe the concept in “Bilanguaging Love” (El amor en el bilenguaje). See *Local Histories/Global Designs. Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 2000.

with the “dialectic of imperial and colonial differences.” But it cannot do it “dialectically” for the problems that imperial knowledge created cannot be solved with the same tools that imperial knowledge used to create the problem. So, let me briefly describe the logic and history of the imperial and colonial difference.

3A. “HUMANISM” AND THE LOGIC OF THE IMPERIAL DIFFERENCES

The expulsion of the Moors and at the same time the recognition by Western Christians that the Ottoman Sultanate was a sophisticated civilization, forced the articulation of the *imperial external difference*. They were equal to a certain degree, but since they have the wrong God, that put them among the *anthropos* or *barbarians* according to the terminology of the time. On the other hand, by the mid of the sixteenth century, Catholic Christians saw Protestants as enemies of the Church rather than a difference within the Church. Simultaneously (mainly with Elizabeth I ascending to the throne of England), an Anglican attack against the brutalities of Peninsular Christians was launched labeled “the Black Legend” at the beginning of the twentieth century. What emerges here is the *internal imperial difference*. But, contrary to the *external one*, we can hear the voices of both sides—for Catholic and Protestants, Latinos and Anglos are part of the same family: the family that controls knowledge, they are both builders of imperial

knowledge, from Christian theology in the South to secular philosophy in the North. With the *external imperial difference* things are different. Ottomans of yesterday and Muslims of today, they dwell in the *exteriority* and as such inhabit the house of the *anthropos*, barbarians of yesterday are terrorists of today. The same story can be traced between the formation of the West and, in the process, the changing faces of the *exteriority* of imperial difference with Asia, mainly China and Japan (I will deal with India below). Today, the tensions between China and the West (United States and the core countries of the European Union), are not so much economics (for they all share the same type of economy, an economy that liberal and Marxists describe as “capitalism”) as it is a question of “human dignity.” What I am saying is that “racism” is not something that is felt by dispossessed and subalterns (e.g., such as Indians, Africans in the Americas or migrants from Asia, Africa and Latin America in the United States and Western Europe or Bolivian in Argentina), but is felt across social classes and across inter-state relations. When Kishore Mahbubani asked publically (that is, presented in a public forum and then published it), “Can Asian Think?” he was addressing, head on, epistemic racism.

Now, Mahbubani is not a radical thinker and activist that you can meet at the World Social Forum or on the street manifestations in Davos. Rather, if you would like to meet him, you will meet him inside Davos. And

can read his op-eds contributions to the *Financial Times*. A Former Ambassador for Singapore in the United Nations and current Dean of the School of Public Policy Lee Kwan Yew at the National University of Singapore, Mahbubani like many others at his level (Dean, Ambassador or Professor, like Osamu), know they are “yellow” and “yellow people” cannot think. He states:

Can Asian think? This is obviously a sensitive question. In this age of political correctness that we live in, just imagine the uproar that could be caused if I went to Europe or Africa and posed the same question: “Can European think?” or “Can African think?” You have to be Asian to ask the question “Can Asian Think?”⁶

I want to speculate on the meaning of the last sentence (“You have to be Asian to ask the question “Can Asian Think?”), but before I would like to pursue a little bit further the frame of the argument Mahbubani unfolds:

Given the sensitivity, let me explain both the reasons why and the context in which I am posing the question. First, if you had to ask one single, key question that could determine the future of the globe, it may well be “Can Asian think?” In 1996 Asians already made up 3.5 billion out of a global population of over 5 billions (or about 70 per cent of the world population) By conservative projections, the Asian portion of the world population will increase 5.7 percent in 2050, out of a global population of 9.87 billion, while the population of North America and Europe will remain relatively constant at 374 millions and 721 millions respectively. (...) By 2050, when Europeans and North Ameri-

6. Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think?* London, Marshal Cavendish, 1998

cans make up one-tenth instead of one six of the world's population, would it be fair for the remaining 90 percent of mankind to expect this 10 percent to continue to bear this burden? (...) If Asians double in population in the next 50 years, will they be able to carry their fair share of this burden?

Second, I am not asking this question about individual Asians in terms of limited thinking abilities. Clearly, Asians can master alphabets, add two plus two to make four and play chess. However, throughout history, there have been examples of societies that have produced brilliant individuals year experienced a lot of grief collectively.⁷

Other reasons why he is asking the question appears in his latest book.⁸ Muhibubani explains at lengths and historically the procedures used by Western imperial officers and intellectuals to devalue Asian way of being. He gives examples of how British taught Indians to devalue their own culture and therefore themselves and among them, Katherine Mayo *Mother India* (1927), who wrote the book seeking US support for British colonialism in India stating the need to make war on those states and to subdue them, for Hindu India appears as irredeemably and hopelessly impoverished, degraded, depraved and corrupt.

Needless to say, the enunciation although by a woman presupposes the superiority of the Western Man, and of *humanitas* over *anthropos*. Mahatma Gandhi, the *an-*

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

8. *The New Asian Hemisphere. The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, New York, Public Affairs, 2008, p. 128.

thropos, responded to Mayo, the voice of the *humanitas*:

(...) the impression it leaves [Mayo's book] on my mind is that it is the report of a drain inspector sent out with the one purpose of opening and examining the drains of the country to be reported upon, or to give a graphic description of the stench exuded by the opened drains. If Miss Mayo has confessed that she had come to India merely to open out and examine the drains in India, there would be perhaps little to complain about her compilation. But she declared her abominable and patently wrong conclusion with a certain amount of triumph: "the drains are India."⁹

Historically, Mahbubani traces the belief in Western superiority (meaning, the control of knowledge, the assumption of the superiority of the *humanitas* and the belief that 80% of the world is *anthropos*), and notices that by 2008 the belief in Western moral superiority (that is, Western *humanitas*, my note) continues in the West, even though it is usually not expressed explicitly and concludes:

Such unthinking pro-Western reflexes (meaning, core of the European Union and the United States, since he is not talking just about anti-Americanism, my addenda), are shifting on a tectonic scale. Increasingly, the 5.6 billion people who live outside the West no longer believe in the innate or inherent superiority of Western civilization. Instead, many are actually beginning to question whether the West remains the most *civilized* part of the world.¹⁰

9. Mahbubani, *op .cit.*, p. 126-7.

10. Mahbubani, *op .cit.*, p. 129.

That is to say, the *anthropos* are no longer biting the bite of *humanitas*. The entire concept of Man based idea of Humanity and of Humanism is still there, but going, moving away. And the fact that it is still there, it impinges on the difficulties to carry on in a dialogue among civilizations and to make “human rights” not suspicious of complicity with the West. For, the question is, who speaks for the “human” in human rights”? The accent has been placed on “right” not on “human,” and the problem of “human rights” lies precisely in the concept of “human.” Since at stake is the control of knowledge, and the control of knowledge is at once an epistemic, political and ethical issues, “humans” with rights are those who fit or get closer to the model of *humanitas* or whom *humanitas* for matter of political and economic convenience decides that X’s rights have been violated and human rights must be defended.

3B. “HUMANISM” AND THE LOGIC OF THE EXTERNAL COLONIAL DIFFERENCES

External imperial differences generated de-westernizing responses while internal imperial differences set the rules of internal conflicts within Europe. The logic of colonial differences was put in place under different historical circumstances. The first, chronologically, to suffer the consequences were the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. They became since then Europe “internal colonial subjects.” The native population

of the Anahuac and Tawantinsuyu, classified as “Indians” were chronologically the first target of the *external colonial differences* and enslaved Africans the second ones. While the internal colonial difference was infringed upon people (nations) without state, colonial external differences were established at once upon people whose state was destroyed (the Indians) and people who were extricated from their native kingdoms in forced migrations to the New World.

Responses to both external imperial differences can be found both in the sphere of international law, interstate relations and economic regulations (Mahbubani) as well as in the sphere of the “political society” (Osamu). Responses to the external colonial differences are mainly articulated in the sphere of the “political society.”¹¹ However, both responses, to imperial and colonial external

11. Partha Chaterjee observed the process by which the elite in India, since independence, manage to bring under its wing subaltern classes, a process of entanglement so to speak. “It is to understand these relatively recent forms of the entanglement of elite and subaltern politics that I am proposing the notion of *political society*. *The Politics of the Governed. Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, New York, Columbia UP, 2004, p. 40-1. My use of “political society” refers to political organizations emerging from the civil society, which I see as the sector of the population complacent with the rule of order and with civil obedience. The political society engages in epistemic and civil disobedience in order to delink from the delinquencies of capitalist world order and built a world based on care and the regeneration of life rather than on competence, recycling and the proliferation of death.

differences have in common the shared history of Western (both Western Europe and the United States) humiliation, racism and disregard for human dignity, as we have seen in the examples of Osamu and Mahbubani.

Harvard sociologist and Afro-American activist W.E.B. Dubois predicted, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that the problem of the century will be that of the color line. He was not wrong. Following in his steps we can predict that the problem of the twenty-first century will be that of the epistemic line. They are two sides of the same coin: one, the color line, is an ontological argument that put the accent on ontic racism. The second, the epistemic line, is an epistemological argument that puts the accent on epistemic racism. They are two sides of the same coin for, paraphrasing Frantz Fanon one can say, "I am inferior and irrational because I am Black, I am Black because I am inferior and irrational." *Humanitas* is, instead, where ontological and epistemological arguments join forces to set forth a model of *humanity* to be attained by Christianization, civilizing mission, development and modernization, and market democracy. So that the variety of Humanisms that scholars have identified and described ("Renaissance Humanism," "Literary Humanism," "Philosophical Humanism," "Marxist Humanism," etc. etc.), are all variety or branches from the same trunk: they serve the small portion of the population who identifies with an image of the world and of the "human" that derives from the European Renaissance.

Beyond that, beyond the small portion of the world that produces and consumes such concept of *humanitas* and humanism, is the rest, the *anthropos* radically questioning the provincial Western concepts.

Native American scholar Angela Cavender Wilson is one of the many voices, among Native Americans, for whom it is of the essence “decolonization and recovery of indigenous knowledge.” In the case of Du Bois and Carvender Wilson we are no longer in the sphere of the states, the market, public policy and international relations but at the level of the civil and political society. And in both instances we witness how important the struggle for the control of knowledge is in the struggle for freedom and liberation.¹² From Du Bois and Wilson we learn how in the academia the dispute for knowledge transcends the academy and spills over the communities. We are also witnessing what *identity in politics* means and how different it is from *identity politics*. From here to the so called “social movements” is only one step—“social movements” cannot “move” so to speak without challenging the structure of knowledge that makes possible the global injustices they are struggling against. Social injustice presupposes asymmetric relations of inequalities, for it is difficult to be unjust and oppressive with an equal. And asymmetric relations of inequalities are

12. W.B. E. Dubois, “Race Concepts and the World of Color,” in *W.E.B Dubois, A Reader*, edited by David Levering Lewis, New York, Henry Hold and Company, 1995, p. 17-100.

structured on external imperial and colonial differences that structure the relationship between *humantias* and *anthropos*.

But let me give you a better sense of what Native Americans understand by decolonization, in the academy and in the non-academic political society (e.g., social movements).

As Indigenous scholars long exposed to intellectual imperialism, we often search for national justifications to defend our cherished worldviews against attack by those who consistently wish to denigrate them. In the academy, this is a common occurrence. We realize that it is not just our individual academic freedom or right to an opinion that is at stake. We know that in our home communities our people are continuing to die at exceptionally early ages and that our lands and rights as Indigenous peoples are under constant threat. Our empirical and scholarly understandings substantiate the connection between the reality of our circumstances today and the five hundred years of terrorism and injustice we have faced as a consequence of European and American colonialism.¹³

You have noticed the repeated use of “we” and “our” referring simultaneously as “we” Indigenous scholars and “we” people of our communities. Thus the epistemic struggle to undo the *humanitas* and *anthropos* distinction is a struggle that encroaches upon the life of Native

13. Angela Cavender Wilson, “Reclaiming Our Humanity. Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge,” in *Indigenizing the Academy. Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, edited by Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson. Lincoln, Nebraska, Bison Books, 2004, p. 69.

American communities. At the core lays bare the question of *humanity* and *humanism*.

Cavender Wilson's concerns are shared from Bolivian Quechuas and Aymaras to Maoris in New Zealand. Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith, herself a Maori, has been appointed to a Top Post at Waikato University in 2007. Her book on *Decolonizing Methodologies—Research and Indigenous People* has been as influential as Frantz Fanon's or Karl Marx's work. Certainly, there is an imperial geopolitics of knowing that makes Marx's work better known than Fanon and Smith. But that is because Marx, in spite of being *an internal colonial European* is after all, European and recognized by *humanitas* (after all Marxism is basically a "white people" phenomenon before it is taken up by people of color in the Third World). As Marx was concerned with "the liberation of Man," Linda T. Smith and Cavender Wilson are concerned with the liberation of Indians, men and women and, by the same token, the liberation of those whose suffer not only class exploitation but were "deprived" of their humanity: the colonial wound is something different than economic and social exploitation. Certainly, white men are social and economically exploited, but racialization adds the question mark on "human nature" of the *anthropos*.

It is then to be expected that one of the initial questions in Linda T. Smith's book would be "on being human." In this section, she says:

One of the supposed characteristics of primitive peoples was that we could not use our minds or intellects (*humanitas* decide and classifies the *anthropos*, my addition, wm). We could not invent things; we could not create institutions or history; we could not imagine; we could not produce anything of value, we did not know how to use land and other resources from the natural world; we did not practice the “arts” of civilization. *By lacking such virtues we disqualified ourselves, not just from civilization but from humanity itself. In other words, we were not fully humans; some of us were not fully human.*

Ideas about what counted as human in association with the power to define people as human or not human were already encoded in imperial and colonial discourses prior to the period of imperialism covered here. Imperialism provided the mean through which concepts of what counts as human could be applied systematically as for of classification, for example, through hierarchies of race and typologies of different societies. In conjunction with imperial power and with “science,” these classification systems came to shape relations between imperial powers and indigenous societies.¹⁴

British arrived to New Zealand by mid nineteenth century. By then, the question of the “Indians” had been settled in the New World during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The British were continuing and adapting what they learned from the Spaniards. Coloniality, the logic of imperial management, goes beyond time and space. It glues “Western Civilization” together in all its diversity.

“Recognition” is not the point here, and I will say, it is no longer the point. Although it can still be found, the

14. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous People*, London, Zed Books and Dunedin, University of Otago Press, 1999, p. 25.

era of claims for recognition is over. “Recognition” was defended by honest liberals, honest Marxists and honest Christians and was accepted by discriminated sectors of the population that sees in “assimilation” a solution. Assimilation means a step forward, for the person or population assimilated, in enjoying some of the benefits of capitalist society: at least a salary, if not social security, and perhaps education, depending on circumstances. Assimilation is a claim to belong to the civil society while freedom and liberation are the claims put forward by the political society.

And for the political society for whom the stake is the very concept of “human” and “humanity,” recognition by liberal, Christian or Marxism “humanism” won’t do. That is the time that has passed. We are now at the point of non-return, both in the struggle for de-Westernization that Mahbubani advances and the struggle for de-colonization that has been always there, since the sixteenth century, but that toward the end of the twentieth century has become clearly and loudly a struggle for the control of knowledge and, consequently, of being.

4. SOCIOGENESIS: “AFTER MAN, TOWARD THE HUMAN”

It is common knowledge in certain sectors that the problems we are here facing (epistemic racism with all its political, economic and ethical consequences) cannot be solved within the same cosmology and categories

of thoughts of the civilization that created the problems. More bluntly: the problems created by Western Civilization cannot be solved within and by Western Civilization. The problem of “humanity and humanities” is irrevocably tied up with the Western distinction between *humanitas* and *anthropos*. It is that distinction that another humanism, a la Fanon, shall undue. And that humanism shall not be new (which would remain within the chronological advance of modernity) but has to be de-colonial.

How would any project of de-colonial humanism look? First of all by accepting that the Humanism is a Eurocentered concept grounded on the imperial and colonial differences that made the distinction between *humanitas* and *anthropos* so profitable for some and so miserable for others. Secondly, and as a consequence, there is no sense in talking about “Western Humanism” because “Humanism” is a Western invention, and when some one refers to “Confucian Humanism” or “Islamic Humanism” it is a post-facto reference: it means that Western Civilization already won the game by imposing the uni-versality of “Humanism.” Thirdly, the first task is to undo the historical foundation of “Humanism,” to disclose its complicity with Western and modern/colonial racism, and to work toward a pluri-versal rather than toward a “new uni-versal” idea of what it means to be Human beyond *humanitas* and *anthropos*.

Consequently, the starting point cannot be found in the genealogy of Western thinkers. It must be found in the genealogies (and I say genealogies, in plural) of decolonial thinkers. Due to the question of time, I will limit myself to two examples, Frantz Fanon and Sylvia Wynter, to whom it belongs the semi-sentence of the title.

There is a célèbre and celebrated passage in Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Mask* that I will quote once again:

Reacting against the constitutionalist tendency of the late nineteenth century, Freud insisted that the individual factor be taken into account through psychoanalysis. He substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man's alienation is not an individual question. Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny. In one sense (...) let's say that this is a question of sociodiagnostic.¹⁵

Now, if we put this epistemic shift of the geography of reasoning in conversation with the imperial distinction *humanitas* and *anthropos*, we are already in plain decolonial terrain. *Humanitas* and *anthropos* not only are Western categories but they have created in the process of building the epistemology of the zero point: either in its theological version or in its secular and scientific version. The epistemology of the zero point assumes an observer who cannot be observed; an observer that registers the way the world is. The epistemology of the zero point is an epistemology that operates on the belief of ob-

15. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann, New York, Grove Press, 1967. p. 11

jectivity and truth without parenthesis. In an epistemology of objectivity and truth without parenthesis, if you control knowledge you control reality. It is like affirming that “natural law” is something that exists independently of the observer and enunciator who affirms that “natural law” is an existing order of things to which society shall submit in order to be a politically ordered and ethically sane society. Well, *humanitas* and *anthropos* has been built and supported by such epistemological principles

Sociogenesis de-links from the rules of objectivity and truth without parenthesis. The experience that made Fanon realize that ontogenetic perspective is neither necessary nor sufficient to account for the alienation of the Black man and, by extension, to the *anthropos* whom, in Fanon’s vocabulary, became *les damnés de la terre*. The experience, narrated by Fanon in the same book, describes his surprise and awakening when, walking in Paris, he crosses a mother walking with his son and at the moment of crossing each other the boy tell her mother: “Look mom, a Negro!” It is not ontogenesis but sociogenesis that made a person to be what he is in the eyes of the other. But that “other” is the gaze of the imperial other. Not that the mother and her son were declared agents of French imperialism but they have internalized the categories that classify and rank “human beings.” The surprise of the son underscores, for the imperial gaze, “the fact of blackness” and presence of the *anthropos*, while for Fanon what counts is

“l’experience vecu des Noires.” Thus, if the fictive distinction between humanity and anthropos can be undone it could not be achieved from Western genealogies of thoughts and experiences. It would have to be led by shifting the geography of reasoning and starting from “l’experience vecu des anthropos.” *Sociogenesis* marks that radical shift in the geopolitics of knowing and understanding and set in place and in motion the process of decolonizing Western imperial notion of *human and humanity*, and by the same token, limiting the variety of *humanism* to its Western regionality.

Jamaican intellectual Sylvia Wynter followed up on Fanon steps. But before going into some specific aspects of her argument, it is important to point out that shifting the geography of reasoning goes hand in hand with moving beyond the discipline, entering the transdisciplinary (not inter) where the problems to be solved cannot be controlled by neither by the norms of individual disciplines nor by interdisciplinary perspective for to be interdisciplinary means that disciplines shall be maintained. If Fanon and Wynter resort to transdisciplinarity it is because both disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity are institutional loci of the *humanitas* that preserve its epistemic control over the *anthropos*. From the perspective of the *anthropos* (that is, knowing that from the imperial gaze he or she is suspect regarding his or her qualities as a human being and more so if he or she inhabits an imperial country (Martinique/France and the Jamaica/Eng-

land/US for Fanon and Wynter, respectively), disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity is an encumbrance rather than a solution. Caribbean writer, noted Jamaican philosopher Lewis Gordon, stated there may be an initial training in some discipline “but in the end, the concern is more about what needs to be said than on the credentialing or locating of disciplinary identities of who says it. Thus the sociologist, historian, philosopher, economist, etc., becomes, ironically, more temporary clothing than the salient body of *thought*.”¹⁶

As a Black women from the Third World, Wynter, (she was born in 1928 so that the experience of the Cold War was strong in her, next to her being a Black Woman), when she talks about Man and about Human, the perspective she introduces is not the same kind of experience implicit in the Western concept of Man, Human and Humanism. These categories have been put forward and in motion, described and analyzed by white European men, of either Christian or secular persuasion. Thus, “after Man, toward the Human” invites not to a “new” (which will be modern and Western) but to a “de-colonial humanism.”

A de-colonial humanism shall, first of all, be grounded on an epistemology that operates on the belief that objec-

16. Lewis Gordon, “Is the Human a Teleological Suspension of Man?”, in *After Man, Towards the Human. Critical Essays on Sylvia Wynter*, edited by Anthony Bogues, Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers, 2006, p 238.

tivity and truth are and shall be in parenthesis. In saying this, a radical distinction shall be made between post-modernity and de-coloniality. Post-modern disdain for macro-narratives and its emphasis on micro-narratives is a problem within Western epistemology: post-modernity is a Eurocentered critique of Eurocentric modernity. For de-colonial thinkers that is not the problem. The problem is that both Eurocentered modern macro- and post-modern micro-narratives are European concerns that only impinges in the ex-colonies because Western expansion from the right, the left and the center. That is why de-colonial options need to de-link from that mirage and to build de-colonial macro-narratives that allow for de-colonial micro-narratives. Without this step, all saying will be subsumed under the universality of modern macro- and post-modern micro-narratives. Epistemic disobedience is necessary for independent thought and de-colonial freedom.

Thus, Wynter as many others engaged in re-writing de-colonial macro-narratives from the renaissance on. A sample related to the problem at hand, that of *humanitas* and humanism:

Man as a new (and ostensibly universal because supracultural) conception of the *human* (my emphasis, wm) had in fact been invented by a specific culture, that of Western Europe, during the sixteenth century (...).

This had been so, Jacob Pandian explains,¹⁷ because while Western Europe was to effect the transformation of its medie-

17. *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, England, Waveland Press, 1985.

val religious identity of the *True Christian Self* into the now secularizing identity of *Man*, it was confronted with the task of inventing a new form of binarity opposed Otherness to *Man*, one that could reoccupy, in secular terms, the place that its conception of the *Untrue Christian Self* had taken in the matrix of the religio-cultural conceptions of *the human* (emphasis mine, *wm*), *Christian*. In consequence, where the Other to be the *True Christian Self of medieval Europe had been the Untrue Christian Self* (with the external others being *Idolaters* and/or *Infidels*), with the invention of *Man* in two forms (one civic humanism, the other in the context of that of Liberal or economic humanism which took place at the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth centuries), Europe was to invent the Other to *Man* in two parallel forms. And, because *Man* was now posited as a supracultural universal, its Other had logically to be defined as the *Human Other*.¹⁸

Once the invention of *Man*, Human and Humanism is unveiled by a Black *Woman*, then the entire edifice gets exposed in its hidden foundations. Consequently, any *new Humanism* that repeats the patriarchal and racial underpinning of the concept of *Man*, is indifferent to the fact that “what does it mean to be *Human*” was and continues to be the justification for Western imperial expansion and *humanistic interventions*, that is indifferent to the fact that the Western concept of *Human* underwrites the entire foundation of *human rights* (for who,

18. “Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What it is Like to be ‘Black,’” in *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America*, edited by Mercedes F. Duran-Cogan and Antonio Gomez-Moriana, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 30-66.

indeed speaks for the Human in Human rights?),¹⁹ would remain within the Eurocentered and imperial conception of the *Human* and of any derived *Humanism*. For, how could 70% of the world population accept a concept of Human and Humanity invented and maintained by the 30% percent of the world population? De-colonial Humanism can hardly emerge in Europe or in the United States, except from the immigrants in Europe and from Native Americans and immigrants in the United States.

5. THE MANY FACES OF DE-COLONIAL HUMANISMS

Although the majority of people in this planet today are becoming aware that there is no “standard model” for being human that one can attain by conversion to Christianity, by being civilized by French and British or being developed, modernized and democratized the United States, the fact is that “Human, Humanity” modeled on the renaissance of Man was spread, like a virus, all over the planet. Those of us in the putative 70% cannot, at once, accept that there is a model of Humanity to be followed and attained while it cannot be denied that

19. See Walter Mignolo, “Who Speaks for the Human in Human Rights?” *Who Speaks for the “Human” in Human Rights?*, edited by Anna Forcinito, Raul Marrero-Fonte and Kelly McDonough, *Hispanic Issues on Line*, Special Issue: Human Rights in Latin America and Iberian Cultures, vol. 5, n. 1 (2009), p. 7-25; see also “Dipsnesable and Bare Live. Coloniality and the Hidden Agenda of Modernty.” 2009, <http://www.okcir.com/Articles%20VII%202/Mignolo-FM.pdf>

that concept is in all of us, even when we are rejecting it. What is the way out—border thinking or border epistemology. What does it mean? How does it work?

First of all by de-linking from the belief that the Western model of Man *as* Humanity is of universal scope. By accepting it, the way out is to make claims for recognition: I know that in the tradition of the European Renaissance I (Black, Indian, Woman, Gay, Lesbian, Third World people) am less than human but at this age of political correctness I deserve to be accepted as Human in your club. The assimilation-solution cannot be denied, but those who elect this *option* are loosing the game before it started, although they can get some short-term and minor benefits—assimilation means to live under someone else's roof and 99% of the time, in the visitor's cottage is at the end of the garden ("Casa-grande e senzala" in Gilberto Freyre's expression).

Secondly, by recognizing that de-linking from the belief of the universality of Man as Humanity means to accept the fact that such a concept has been imposed as such and still has purchase. That means that there are still many people believing in it, and many institutions that function upon such premise. In Gramscian's terms one could say that it is necessary to de-link from the hegemony of Man at the same time recognizing that it is still hegemonic. Border epistemology or border thinking is what this situation calls for since the problem created by the universality of Man (its racist and patriarchal consequenc-

es) cannot be solved within the principles that today still sustain its hegemony. De-linking means to work toward the restitution and legitimacy of ways of thinking and of being that *being similar to what the West called Man and Humanity are not conceptualized as such. Which means that what is universal is not Man or Humanity but the experience and self-reflection that lead Christian Europeans of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to conceptualize themselves as Man and as the prototype of Humanity.* But working toward the restitution of dissimilar conceptualization of similar experience (by similar experiences I mean that homo erectus self-reflecting in languaging, have the experience of living and dying, of the cycle of the sun and the moon, of the seasons and harvest, of rain and drought, of day and night, etc.), means to work with both simultaneously but *from the perspective of non-Western conceptualizations* of, as Wynter would have it: “what does it mean to be Human?”

People living under an Islamic belief system were as reflective as were Christian Europeans. They conceptualized themselves differently. But now, when they have to reflect on “what does it mean to be Human” and how it was done in the past, they cannot avoid dealing with Western concepts of Man and Human. Ali Shariati’s “Modern Man and His Prisons” is a case in point.²⁰

20. Ali Shariati, “Modern Man and His Prison,” in *Mand and Islam*, translated from the Persian by Dr. Fatollah Marjani, New Jersey, Islamic Publications International.

There are two words for “man” in the Qur’an Shariati informs us, following up on a research of one of his friends and colleague. You see what I mean: in terms of telling us how in the Qur’an “what does it mean to be Human” it was conceptualized, he cannot avoid the reference to “man.” He is already engaged, willingly or not, in border epistemology. And he continues:

There are two words for man in the Qur’an, *Bashar* and *Ensan* (...) by using *Bashar*, Qur’an is talking about the two-footed creature that emerged at the end of the evolutionary chain of which there are two billion (that was by the mid 70s, my note, *wm*) on earth now. On the other hand, *Ensan* is that unusual and enigmatic being that has a special definition that does not apply to any other phenomena in nature. So, there are two kinds of men: one who is the subject matter of poets, philosophers, and religion, and another that is the subject-matter of biology.

Further, the first kind, *Bashar*, is that particular being that contains physiological, biological, and psychological characteristics which are shared by all *men*, regardless of whether they are black, white, yellow, Western, religious or non-religious; it is based upon physical laws that medicine, physiology, psychology, and so forth have discovered—while *man* in the second connotation consists of the truth of being *Ensan*, possessing exceptional characteristics which cause each member of the *human race* to attain certain degrees of *Ensan*iat.

Bashar is a “being” while *Ensan* is a “becoming.” And the difference between *Ensan*, *Bashar* and all the other natural phenomena such as animals, trees, etc, is that all are “beings” except *Ensan* who is a “becoming.”²¹

This distinction doesn’t prevent the possibility of racism as we understand it today for according to Shariati,

21. Shariati, *op. cit.*, p. 46-7.

whole all *men* are *Bashar* there “are some who have attained *Ensaniat*, and there are others who are in the process of becoming an *Ensan*.”²² So there is a point of arrival of *Ensaniat* (the moment perhaps in which *Ensaniat* attains the ontological status of “being” although different from “being *Bashar*”). It is this distinction between those who attained *Ensaniat* and who are on the process of achieving it, that the basis for a racist classification is opened. This having said to pre-empt easy reading of this passage and easy charges of idealization, the point here is that both *Bashar* and *Ensan* *have to* be described *through the concept of man and of human*. At this junction lie the splendors and miseries of border thinking: that it still could be appropriated by Western epistemology and placing *Man* at the center will see *Ensan* and *Bashar* as derivative, recognized as such, as subordinated conceptualization of the universal *Man* and *Human*. The task of border thinking is to expropriate *and re-centering the processes by placing at the center the fact that Bashar and Ensan need to be expressed through the concept of Man and Human*. This is crucial because re-centering is not re-versing and placing *Bashar* and *Ensan* at the center instead of *Man*. That is an epistemological issue that if done in this way could lead to the physical violence that the media and the Western state discourse name as “terrorism.” Instead, re-centering means that

22. Shariati, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

Man has no longer the privilege to be the model of “what does it mean to be Human.”

Pluriversality is the process of re-centering from different variegated local histories intervened by Western expansion and Western epistemic hegemony. Fanon, we have seen it introduced a different way for re-centering, as we are seeing that re-centering doesn't mean to a new universal center but a plurality of them, that is what pluriversality means. For Fanon the re-centering of *man* is through the concept of *sociogenesis*. Western concept of Man is a unity divided in two, body and soul or body and spirit scientifically rendered in his phylogenetic history and it of its ontogenetic manifestations. In Fanon *sociogenesis*, white Man as Human is the presupposed model in the boy who tells his mother, “Look, Mom, a negro.” *Sociogenesis* could not have been conceived from the perspective of Western epistemology, for at the center of Western epistemology is Man. Fanon is not saying, neither claiming, that the Negro is Man as the white Man. That will be to leave the concept of Man intact and just opening its scope to “allow” for some who were not, to be in. Fanon is not claiming to be recognized as Man, but to de-link from that concept through *sociogenesis*. *Sociogenesis is occupying the center, and not Negro as (white) Man.*

Let me give you another example. In Quechua, *Runa* is often translated into modern imperial language a Man, hombre, ser humano. But again, that doesn't work because

Runa is not the Quechua version of English Man, French, Homme or Spanish Hombre. As we have seen Man appears in the Renaissance to distance the *humanists* from the *scholastics*, and to liberate that group from those who holding power held the belief that human creatures are creatures of God. Man liberated a group of human creatures from the dominant group who were keeping all captive in the name of God. We have seen also that Man is the measure and the model for all humanity and the point of perfection to be attained. It is, in other words, a concept in which modern racism is founded.

And there is a third instance: Man became the superior being of creation and distinct from Nature. Therefore, *Runa* cannot be translated as Man because there is no such distinction in Quechua, Aymara and all Indigenous languages between Runa and Pachamama. Runa is Pachamama: the materiality of its body emerges and returns, is born and dies, in the eternal life of Pachamama. Pachamama is not an entity outside Runa, because Runa is an entity of and inside Pachamama. However, to make this explanation understandable, one has to run through the Western distinction between Man and Nature.²³ As in the previous case, the displacement doesn't mean to center Runa and Pachamama, but to center the

23. See Marcelo Fernandez-Osco, "El Ayllu y la Reconstitucion del Pensamiento Aymara." Particularly chapter II, "Muyta y amuyt'a, antipodas y ancestralidades," Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Romance Studies, Duke University, Defended December 2009.

fact that Runa and Pachamama, today, has to be re-invested through Man and Nature. This is the task of border thinking and this is the global task of responding, pluriversally, “what does it mean to be Human” in a world in which Man and Human are no longer hegemonic and universal but they are at once, the local self-conceptualization *by* European *men of European Man*. The idea was exported and well received by some non-European elites who dreamed with becoming Man and Human contributing, knowingly or not, to the imperial expansion of European epistemic imperialism.

De-colonial Humanism has the daunting task of demolishing this edifice and constructing figures of the Human at the intersection of *humanitas* and *anthropos* from the perspective of the anthropos. We cannot leave to *humanitas* along to imperialism rebuilt itself in a new campaign to save the Humanity.²⁴

24. This daunting task is already underway, I am not announcing something that has to be done. Is already being done, although coloniality of knowledge continues to privilege modern rather than decolonial critical agendas. I give you two examples (out of many) of which this argument intends to be a continuation of the dialogue. Lewis Gordon, *Europe and the Crisis of European Man. An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, New York, Routledge, 1995, and “Postimperial Reflections on Crisis, Knowledge, and Utopia: Transgressive Critical Hermeneutics and the ‘Death of European Man,’” *Review*, vol. 25, n. 3, 2002.