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Editor's Note: I Think; Therefore, I Don't—Tackling the Enormity of Intellectual Inadvertency

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Editor's Note: I Think; Therefore, I Don't— Tackling the Enormity of Intellectual Inadvertency

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Abstract: This is the journal editor's note to the Fall 2013 issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, entitled "Conversations with Enrique Dussel on Anti-Cartesian Decoloniality and Pluriversal Transmodernity." In his invitation for a South-South philosophical dialogue as a prelude to a broader global philosophical conversation to advance anti-Cartesian decoloniality and pluriversal transmodernity, Dussel aptly forewarns those from the South embarking on such a conversation to become aware of and avoid what he calls "inadvertent Eurocentricity." This cautious, self-critical reflexivity not only is indicative of the depth of the project being advanced by Dussel and how he himself biographically arrived at his own world-view, but also points to the enormity of a broader challenge that exists in any liberatory conversation and effort, namely that of intellectual inadvertency. In other words, what can make problems such as ethnocentricity (including Eurocentricity, both as variants of egocentricity), among others, even more of an obstacle in advancing any conversation and practice (be they South-South and/or Global) is the fact that they can also (and often do) take place *inadvertently and subconsciously*, that is, beyond conscious self-awareness of the actors who otherwise explicitly seek with the best of intentions to advance their liberatory cause devoid of such biases. This editorial aims to highlight and further emphasize the significance of the subconscious processes that often accompany all political and cultural, including philosophical, dialogues, and reflects on the ways in which Dussel's conceptual frames and the conversations in the present volume provide opportunities for reflections that may further contribute to understanding the challenge intellectual inadvertency poses in advancing decoloniality and pluriversality. It can be argued that a lack of adequate appreciation of this challenge may also be traceable to the prevailing interpretations of the Cartesian dictum: "I think; therefore, I am"—one that fails to acknowledge the multiplicity and plurality, simultaneously both personal and global, of the selves that constitute the reality of human voice uttering that dictum, leading to a subjective fragmentation in discourse that precipitates intellectual inadvertency.

The present, Fall 2013, issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* was originally proposed by the issue co-editors Ramón Grosfoguel and

George Ciccariello-Maher in late 2011. In their view, despite the long established recognition and reputation of Enrique Dussel as being "without a doubt the most prolific,

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creative, and influential Latin American philosopher alive," an astonishingly limited portion of his writings had appeared in English by the time they wrote their proposal. Exiled to Mexico from his native Argentina more than 35 years ago, the co-editors noted, Dussel has written more than 70 books and hundreds of articles ranging from theology to history, from philosophy to politics. Following the publication of Dussel's *Twenty Theses on Politics* (Duke, 2008), the co-editors added, increasing interest in his work has been emerging among students and educators interested in developing liberating social theories and philosophies from the Global South.

The co-editors' own introduction to the present issue following this editorial note provides a brief, helpful overview of the purpose of this volume, one that was aimed, in their words in the original proposal, at contributing to fill "the gap in available secondary material about Dussel's work while also stimulating further interest in the burgeoning field of Latin American philosophy." As the journal editor, I would like to take this opportunity to thank both issue co-editors, George Ciccariello-Maher and Ramón Grosfoguel, for their original proposal and subsequent collaboration in realizing this endeavor.

I also thank all the authors contributing, directly or indirectly, to the conversation on Dussel's work published in this issue of *Human Architecture*. Other than the essay by Dussel entitled "Agenda for a South-South Philosophical Dialogue"—reprinted here by kind permission from the editors of *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture*—authors Eduardo Mendieta, Oscar Guardiola-Rivera, Linda Martín Alcoff, Lewis R. Gordon, Ramón Grosfoguel, and Dustin Craun contribute to the issue while directly engaging with the works and ideas of Enrique Dussel. As for the contributions of the two other authors, Rehnuma Sazzad (regarding both her article on Said and Darwish and her review of the book of poetry by the Palestin-

ian-American poet Lisa Suhair Majaj) and Linda Weber, even though they do not directly engage with Dussel's work, they can be appreciated in terms of their own contributions and—as I will try to briefly elaborate—in terms of how they, in meaningful ways, shed important light on and provide illustrations for the conversations other authors pursue on the issue's main theme, which is "Conversations with Enrique Dussel on Anti-Cartesian Decoloniality and Pluriversal Transmodernity."

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What I most appreciate in Dussel's work, one that makes his work highly relevant to the focus of *Human Architecture* as a journal of the sociology of self-knowledge, is that his philosophical-political career has been seriously inspired by a self-critical spirit, one that subjects his prior views and inclinations to continual scrutiny. In his "Transmodernity and Interculturality: An Interpretation from the Perspective of Philosophy of Liberation,"¹ for instance, Dussel chronicles in a detailed way how he became, early on in his career, aware of the Eurocentric biases in his own training and education as a philosopher. He writes,

It is difficult to evoke in the present the firm hold that the European model of philosophy had on us... With my trip to Europe—in my case, crossing the Atlantic by boat in 1957—we discovered ourselves to be "Latin Americans," or at least no longer "Europeans," from the moment that we disembarked in Lisbon or Barcelona. The differences were obvious and could not be concealed. Consequently, the problem of culture—humanistically, philosophically, and existentially—was an obsession for me: "Who are we

1. <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/6591j76r>

culturally? What is our historical identity?" This was not a question of the possibility of describing this "identity" objectively; it was something prior. It was the existential anguish of knowing oneself. (Dussel, *ibid.*, pp. 28-29)

Dussel's work demonstrates his continuing efforts to, in a self-conscious way, critically learn from and avoid inherited pre-deterministic and reductionist frameworks of the past that in an a priori manner favor one-sided explanations in understanding social change. However, he is also aware of the significance of the philosophical, ontological, and epistemological foundations of the world-views that enable coloniality and, in contrast, those that can alternatively equip liberatory efforts toward ending it. His emphasis on the need for adopting a *creative* approach in pursuing long-delayed conversations among philosophers and intellectuals of the South as part of a critical global conversation in favor of decoloniality is refreshing. His intellectual work demonstrates a genuine effort in reaching out to help others unearth their cultural and philosophical heritage in order to build alternative foundations for contributing to the global conversations on the meaning of human existence, the horrors brought on human life and culture by legacies of colonialism, and in seeking ways out of the present crisis in favor of decolonized and pluriversal human realities.

Judging from the intellectual practices of those scholars attracted to Dussel's work, with whom I have collaborated, I can see the extent to which they have been open to alternative liberatory perspectives, theories, and practices from other cultural traditions. What has impressed me most in Dussel's work, in other words and as noted earlier, however, is the extent to which he invites all joining his conversations to be mindful of their own biases, and to recognize that, simply, a scholar's coming from the South does

not mean that he or she is free from Eurocentric and ethnocentric biases.

In his invitation for a South-South philosophical dialogue (as reprinted in this issue) as a prelude to a broader global philosophical conversation to advance anti-Cartesian decoloniality and pluriversal transmodernity, Dussel aptly forewarns those from the South embarking on such a conversation to become aware of and avoid what he calls "inadvertent Eurocentricity." He writes, for instance, about how a philosopher from the South, not having been adequately informed of and trained in his or her own philosophical tradition, may regard the positions of his colleagues from the center as more universal than they are and thereby be unable to establish a symmetry in balancing the conversation with a strong argument in favor of the authenticity of his or her own philosophical heritage. He writes,

When I refer to "symmetry" in this context, what I am suggesting is the need to develop a psychological attitude and approach representative of a certain normality that would make it possible for those of us in the South to consider and treat academic colleagues in Europe and the U.S as "equals." We should free ourselves of false respect for a knowledge with universalist pretensions. This false respect could be overcome by philosophers in the South once they possess the historical, cultural, and philosophical tools of the same quality as their colleagues in the metropolitan centers, which at minimum would enable our peers in the South to uncover the signs within us of an *inadvertent Eurocentrism* which has been ignored. (Dussel, p. 14, this issue; italics added)

This cautious, self-critical reflexivity not only is indicative of the depth of the

project being advanced by Dussel and how he himself biographically arrived at his own world-view, but also points in my view to the enormity of a broader challenge that exists in any dialogue and liberatory effort in global social transformation, namely that of intellectual inadvertency. In other words, what can make problems such as ethnocentricity (including Eurocentricity, both as variants of egocentricity), among others, even more of an obstacle in advancing any conversation and practice (be they South-South and/or Global) is the fact that they can also (and often do) take place *inadvertently and subconsciously*, that is, beyond conscious self-awareness of the actors who otherwise explicitly seek with the best of intentions to be advancing their liberatory cause devoid of such biases.

From what I have highlighted above about Dussel's work, and based on what I have read from him so far, and also considering the thoughtful contributions made by various authors in this issue, therefore, I have a sense that Dussel would appreciate a frank dialogue that may make the conversation he is inviting others to join more fruitful, beyond simply highlighting the (deserved) significance of the liberatory intellectual and philosophical-political project he has been building over the decades.

In this editorial note, I wish to briefly highlight and further emphasize the significance of the subconscious processes that often accompany all political and cultural, including philosophical, dialogues, and reflect on the ways in which Dussel's conceptual frames and the conversations in the present volume provide opportunities for reflections that may further contribute to understanding the challenge intellectual inadvertency poses in advancing decoloniality and pluriversality. I will further argue that a lack of adequate appreciation of this challenge may also be traceable to the prevailing interpretations of the Cartesian dictum: "I think, therefore I am"—one that fails

to acknowledge the multiplicity and plurality, simultaneously both personal and global, of the selves that constitute the reality of human voice uttering that dictum, leading to a subjective fragmentation in discourse that precipitates intellectual inadvertency.

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Let me provide some examples of how the issue of inadvertency may manifest itself amid conversations that journal issues such as the present seek to foster.

In his essay published in this volume entitled "Agenda for a South-South Philosophical Dialogue," in footnote 17, Dussel appreciatively critiques Randall Collins for not referring even once to the Latin American philosophical tradition in his major work. He writes,

There is not a single sentence dedicated to Latin America in the brilliant book by Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1998), although it does include a good description of the philosophies of China, India, the Islamic world, and Bantu Africa. (Dussel, p. 15)

I recall reading a similar observation on Collins's book in another of Dussel's articles, titled, "A New Age in the History of Philosophy: The World Dialogue Between Philosophical Traditions"² where he states,

We also need a complete reformulation of the history of philosophy in order to be prepared for such a dialogue. A 'world philosophy', the pioneering work by the sociologist Randall Collins (2000), points to key aspects that must taken into account. His comparative analysis crosses the geography (space) and history

2. <http://psc.sagepub.com/content/35/5/499.abstract>

(time) of the great Chinese, Indian, Arab, European, North American and African philosophers, which he categorizes in generations and in terms of their relative importance, although glaring omissions include his failures to devote a single line to 500 years of Latin American philosophy, and to the nascent philosophies of the urban cultures prior to the conquest. . . . (Dussel, p. 512; italics in the original)

Now, while reading the latter article, I recall thinking, why does Dussel not refer, even once, to Zoroastrianism alongside other religious or philosophical traditions he lists throughout the latter article in order to argue for his otherwise important project of rethinking the history of philosophy in a more inclusive way? So, at the very same time he is consciously aware (and rightly so) of what another scholar has totally ignored about a particular philosophical tradition he himself is more closely familiar with, Dussel totally omits in the same writing another spiritual/philosophical tradition from his map of world philosophy.

I don't think the omission of Zoroastrianism is warranted, even as an example or simply in passing, in such an article aimed at the project of building an inclusive history of world philosophy. In making the above point, of course, it is obvious that the reason I thought of this point has something to do with my own Iranian heritage as a scholar, even though I am not a Zoroastrian. As I read the article, I also noticed that even when Dussel acknowledges the contribution of "Persian Gnostic thinking" to the Islamic philosophy, his commentary is offered via conversations he has had with non-Iranian Arab scholars³ of Islam studying, among others, the Iranian contribution to

3. It is important to note that Iran is a multi-ethnic population, comprised, among others, of also an ethnic Arab population. Others include Persian, Azeri, Baluchi, Turkmen, Kurd, Gilaki, Mazandarani, Armenian, Assyrian, and Jewish ethnic groups.

Islamic philosophy. In other words, knowledge of Iranian (including Persian) contributions to Islamic, and world, philosophy was mediated through the work of Arab scholars.

This reminded me of another example. In my reading as editor of the manuscript of Dussel's article that was eventually included in this journal issue as a reprint of a previously published essay by him, I recall noticing how in several references to Iran, there was an ambiguity of representation of the Iranian heritage in distinction from that of Arabs—interestingly amid a passage devoted by Dussel to pointing out the reality that often all regional philosophies are ethnocentric. For instance, where Dussel had written,

My point of departure is that all philosophies (Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Amerindian, etc.) have inevitably been ethnocentric in character, since their origin lies in a certain ontological ... (p. 5, this volume)

I recall that I commented on the passage as follows:

I wonder if just mentioning Arabs without specifying Islam (which covers a broader field to which the Iranian culture contributed key achievements) is itself limiting. It is impossible to consider Arab contribution to philosophy without considering Islam, and it is impossible to consider Islamic philosophy without considering the contribution of Iranian philosophers (Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Ghazzali, Farabi, Khayyam, Rumi, ...).

Or, consider elsewhere in his manuscript, where Dussel had written,

... modernity denied any validity to the philosophical narratives (which

contained myths) of the cultures of the South, including those of China and India which go back for millennia, as well as those of the Iranian-Aristotelian tradition of scientific and empirical inquiry in the Arab world. ... (ibid., p. 12)

Obviously, as I noted in a commentary on the above, there was no doubt in my mind that Dussel is generally aware of the distinction (as well as intersections) of Iranian and Arab cultural heritages. However, when reading Dussel for whom respect for and inclusion of all cultural and philosophical traditions in his effort in building a decolonized world philosophy is a vital and central consideration, I, as a scholar from an Iranian heritage that happens also not to be of Arab ethnic background, cannot help but feel somewhat left out. Read his passage below, for instance, in his "A New Age in the History of Philosophy: The World Dialogue Between Philosophical Traditions":

We must lay the pedagogical foundations by educating future generations in multiple philosophical traditions. For example, in the first semester in the history of philosophy in our universities at the undergraduate level, we should begin with the study of the 'First Great Philosophers of Humanity'—the thinkers who developed the original categories of philosophical thinking in Egypt (Africa), Mesopotamia (including the prophets of Israel), Greece, India, China, Meso-America or the Incas. In the second semester we should continue with study of the 'Great Ontologies', including Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, the Greeks (such as Plato, Aristotle and up to Plotinus), the Romans, etc. A third course should explore later stages of philosophical develop-

ment in China (beginning with the founding of the Han Empire), later examples of Buddhist and Indian philosophy, Byzantine Christian philosophy, Arab philosophy, the medieval European philosophy and so on. This is how a new generation can begin to think philosophically from within a global mindset. The same approach should be reflected in the courses specializing in ethics, politics, ontology, anthropology and even logic (should not we have some notion of Buddhist logic as well?). (p. 511)

Again, let me reiterate, that there is no doubt in my mind that Dussel is aware of and attributes high significance to any contribution the Iranian culture has made to the world's philosophical and spiritual traditions. In his *Politics of Liberation: A Critical World History* (SCM Press, 2011), he does devote pages to delineating the share of Iran in human history, by dwelling, for instance, on the contributions of Farabi. However, the point I am trying to convey here is that the omission of any references in the specific writings considered earlier to Iranian culture (including the Zoroastrian tradition, for instance, but for the same reason one can cite Manichaeism or Mithraism, etc.) and the significant part they played in the development of world spirituality and philosophy is noteworthy as an example of "inadvertent" omission, or, where the heritage is acknowledged, it is "inadvertently" considered as part of the Arab world.

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Is this "inadvertency" just a matter of error and omission, or does it arise from a conceptual frame that informs Dussel? For instance, consider what in my previous writings (Tamdgidi 2006⁴), I have argued for

4. "Toward a Dialectical Conception of Imperiality: The Transitory (Heuristic) Nature of

regarding the value of considering a typology of imperialism in a world-history context, identifying the modern (economic) form as only one form among a trilogy of political, cultural, and economic modes of imperialism appearing in world-history. Without going into its details here, I wish to suggest, for instance, that one can regard Islamic practice of imperialism (which should always be distinguished from Islam's genuine, original source of spirituality—a distinction that can be made in regard to all genuine spiritual traditions that were later put to imperial practice by some or other of their adherents) as a type of cultural imperialism aimed at subjugating others via cultural conversion. It is in such light that one can understand, for instance, the complaints of scholars such as Omar Khayyam, himself an Islamic scholar, who vehemently resisted, openly or not, the oppressive colonialism of Islamic orthodoxy being imposed on him and his time via the rise of Turkish imperial expansionism spreading under the banner of Islamic Caliphate in Baghdad. So, in a world-historical context, subsuming an Iranian cultural heritage wholly under an "Arab" culture would be equivalent of all that Dussel rightly abhors in the Western imperial practice, so far as ignoring the distinct identity and contributions of a people subjected to imperialism is concerned.

Should not a liberating philosophy be able to help us become aware of not only actual, but also potential modes of imperialism that may still lurk behind seemingly "anti-systemic movements" challenging the Western status quo at the present? If we use world-history as a whole (and not mainly focus on the modern times) as our unit of analysis, we may discover that it is as necessary for us to be mindful of Western colo-

nialism and imperialism, as it is to be aware of other non-Western forms of imperialism preceding it, ones that may have become marginalized today along with the genuinely humanistic elements in their local cultures, but may raise their head again amid the antisystemic movements challenging Western imperialism (for instance, consider Wahhabism and Al-Qaeda using Islam to revive their imperial dystopia). But not all imperial contents of "traditional" cultures are so easily discernible. The binary logic that may lead us to consider what opposes the 'bad' Western imperialism is necessarily offering a 'good' alternative, I am sure, is not what Dussel advocates. But, inadvertently, the conceptual architecture and historical foci of the unit of analysis thus used may inadvertently precipitate a one-sided attention to getting rid of the presently dominant modes of imperialism while remaining somewhat less cautious regarding the threats posed by imperial elements that have in time become entangled with the genuinely progressive, decolonial traditions sidelined by the Western imperial conquest.

So, as I read across various of Dussel's writings, I felt as if there is one Dussel that is highly sensitive, and rightly so, when he notices the lack of even a single reference to Latin American philosophies in Collins's book, yet, another Dussel that does the same, as what he critiques Collins to be doing, to another tradition in world philosophy in that very same text. One Dussel that is genuinely and explicitly aware of how Western imperialism has subjugated, sidelined, and ignored other cultural and philosophical traditions, and another Dussel that subsumes, say, Iranian contributions to Islamic philosophy under a general "Arab philosophy" rubric.

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the Primacy of Analyses of Economies in World-Historical Social Science" *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center), Vol. 29, No. 4 (2006), pp. 291-328 (<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/40241670?uid=3739696&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&uid=3739256&uid=21102774501037>)

Another conversation that took place among the editors may illustrate intellectual inadvertency in a different way.

I recall a while ago when starting working on this issue with the co-editors, I read for the first time Dussel's *Twenty Theses on Politics*, following which I wrote to them:

I read Dussel's *Twenty Theses* during my trip to Iran. I must say that I found it rather dense and somewhat not convincing at times, somewhat left with questions regarding what is so distinctive or new about what Dussel is contributing that has not been in other forms brought up by others. I can see where he is heading with matters such as "obediential power," etc., but in real social contexts, things get a bit more complicated when constituents [to be "obeyed"] are [themselves] conflicted. ...

In response to my comments, co-editor Grosfoguel wrote:

... The *Twenty Theses on Politics* of Dussel is based on an experience that is quite unknown outside Latin America. The concept and practices of "obeying power" or "commanding while obeying" are coming from indigenous thought in the Americas and is a living practice in many indigenous communities in the region. The concept of pluri-national societies that is now in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia is a radical critique to the nation-state and is a consequent of the indigenous proposals in the region. What Dussel is doing here is taking these experiences as the basis of doing political philosophy. If the French Revolution has been the basis of Eurocentric political philosophy, for Dussel Latina American Revolutions such as the Cuban,

Nicaraguan, Zapatista, Bolivarian revolutions are his raw material for doing a different political philosophy. Moreover, the *Twenty Theses* is just a very brief and sometimes simplified summary of a three volume work entitled *Politica de Liberacion* of which only one volume is out in English and only two volumes are out in Spanish. The only volume in English is this one: *Politics of Liberation: A Critical World History* ... Let me just say about this volume, that this is the first world-history of political philosophy that is non-Helenocentric and non-Eurocentric. This is a masterpiece in my humble opinion.

Why did he write this volume? Because in order to begin his political philosophy with the "commanding while obeying" or the "obeying power" of indigenous peoples in the Americas and not with Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant, Marx or Hegel, he needed to justify it with a different world history of political philosophy. For philosophers—remember Dussel is a philosopher—it would have been awkward to begin his political philosophy this way without a radical questioning of Helenocentric and Eurocentric narratives of political philosophy. His original intention was to write one chapter on world-history of political philosophy, but it turned out into a volume of more than 700 pages. I highly recommend it! He begins in Mesopotamia 5000 years ago, he discusses Chinese philosophy and other philosophies before the Greeks. Then the Greeks political philosophy arrive about 2500 years later and the Europeans about 4500 years later as a crossroad of concepts of political philosophy

coming from Egyptian, Persian, Phoenician and other civilizations in the case of the Greeks or Byzantine, Roman and Muslim civilizations in the case of Europe.

Grosfoguel continued:

I am saying this to say that there is more to Dussel's political philosophy than what is portrayed in the *Twenty Theses*. Why did he then write the *Twenty Theses*? He wrote it fundamentally for activists in Latin America. He organized seminars with political activists all over Latin America using his *Twenty Theses* as a starting point to discuss his political philosophy. So, what you are reading in the *Twenty Theses* is a material he uses to provoke debate in order to explain orally and more in-depth his political philosophy. It is not his definitive work on the topic.

I wanted to clarify this because in English his first publication on his political philosophy is the *Twenty Theses*. This led to many misunderstandings because people did not know about his trilogy in *Politics of Liberation*. While in Spanish he published his *Twenty Theses* once the first two volumes of his *Politica de Liberacion* were already published. In the Spanish-speaking world, when people read the *Twenty Theses*, many already knew that this was just a condensed summary of his volumes on *Politica de Liberacion*. For those who did not know and wanted to know more, Dussel could always refer them to the volumes. In English this was not possible because the volumes were not out in English language when his *Twenty Theses* were published. The only volume that has been published so

far is the first volume on world-history of political philosophy. By the way, George [Ciccariello-Maher] is the translator of the *Twenty Theses* into English.

In response to Grosfoguel's thoughtful clarifications, I shared the following:

Thanks for taking the time to comment on Dussel. I appreciate George's translation work, and I don't think my sense of any critique I may have reading the book had to do with its translation—which I think is well done. It is just that even in a synopsis some outline of the overall work must be apparent, and it is worthwhile and useful in that capacity as well to consider the book for what it is, while not forgetting all the good points you have brought up regarding the broader context of Dussel's writings and historical context of them in turn. I will try to keep all that in mind as I am reading him and in providing feedback. I have a copy of the first volume in English and make sure to consult it as well. ...

I hope that in my reading and feedback via editorial note I can also contribute somewhat as an outsider to all the contributors' conversations, hoping for the spirit of what may be regarded, borrowing from Dussel, as obediential scholarship (I am not particularly fond of the notion of anyone obeying anything or anyone, though I see the point Dussel is making in critiquing top-to-bottom leadership models). As I was reading him, I did not help but notice that at times, what he rightly critiques as the Eurocentric may be coming around unconsciously from another entry in the form of

disciplinary boundaries and conceptions that, at least, from other indigenous context he wishes to converse with, may be regarded as divided knowledge.

The very notion and identity one may have as a “philosopher” or even the very focus on “politics” as such, may be problematized sub-textually as a practice in disciplinarity and particular ways of knowing and relating to the object. One thing I appreciate in him is his openness to learn from other traditions, even though, at times I feel some opportunities are missed in taking other traditions seriously. Even though *Twenty Theses* is a synopsis, still, some trace of the detailed work elsewhere should be present to indicate some sensitivity to other traditions. For instance, I have marked in *Twenty Theses* all the times the issue of reflexivity and self has come up, and I can clearly demonstrate that except in one or two places, it is referred to in a derogatory way, in its capitalistic selfish (rightly so, in this case when referring to capitalist notions of selfhood) interpretations/application, but then the value of that gets lost in the analysis. When a whole synopsis is constructed, even then one should be able to know to what extent consciously and intentionally someone has taken a particular issue seriously. His notion of the ‘social’ purposely, and I can show consciously, defines sociality in interpersonal terms [only, and not also intrapersonally] (he is clear in that, and frankly, I find that to be very much an inheritance from Marx⁵ that, despite other critiques

5. For a detailed discussion of my critique of Marx in this regard, see *Advancing Utopistics: The*

of him, has not left him—and as such, the question raises whether in fact the traces of Marx’s Eurocentricity are continued, intentionally or not, in Dussel). This brings up other issues regarding historical unit of analysis used, and attention to alternative modes of thinking, and other matters, that perhaps I can expand on further when I draft my editor’s note.

My point here is, if we regard how Dussel has himself read world-history, and done so via a particular regional experience of it, we may lose his other and more important point that his synthesis and/or detailed reading may be coming from a particular standpoint when this is supposed to be a broader dialogue intended to show both the contributions and limits of present thinking in favor of more inclusive ones. Given his stature intellectually among those interested in him, it would then be important to borrow from his notion and advance an obediential type of scholarship where the leadership pays attention to the differences people may have with them or others, for otherwise we will miss the forest for the tree.

I think the journal issue is serving its purpose well by generating a dialogue, and hopefully it will be done in a constructive way taking us in new directions in favor of what Dussel appreciates in opening new conversations creatively, and not habitually, which is a good point that emerges from his *Twenty*

Three Component Parts and Errors of Marxism (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007/9; <http://www.paradigmpublishers.com/Books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=151470>).

Theses continually in terms of the whole problematization of fetishism. Ultimately, I think Dussel himself would prefer not to be fetishized. Sorry, I don't mean to say anyone is doing so, but overall we wish not to give the impression that the journal issue devoted to him inclines in that direction. (all email exchanges in July 2013)

Now that I have a chance to further elaborate on the conversation I had with Grosfoguel on Dussel, and having read more of the latter's texts since then, I can see the issues I was raising then from another vantage point. Now, on one hand, I do recognize how seriously Dussel has taken the issue of self-critical reflexivity in moving beyond his own and his intellectual roots in order to embrace a decolonized vision of world philosophy, one in which he is always mindful of the diverse forms in which philosophy itself has been defined and practiced across cultures, and one in which he is highly critical of the Eurocentric efforts to belittle other philosophical traditions simply because the West's own ways of defining and practicing philosophy does not conform to the mythical, religious, artistic, and other forms human questions about the nature of existence and the place of humanity in it have been reflected upon.

While recognizing this, I also see, on the other hand, that textual practice is not always intentional and entirely wakeful. I may think one thing, but at the very same time say or do something that contradicts it in a practical way. I simply don't see Dussel's attention to reflexivity, and the role it played in his own autobiographical making, present in *Twenty Theses*. Somehow in the process of "synopsis" writing, the most essential elements of what made Dussel who he is are lost, to the point where self-reflexivity is not only not made a central attribute to be cultivated by the people or leaders alike, but the notion of "self" is only

touched upon mostly (except for a few instances where there is a reference to self-management) in its negative and derogatory sense prevalent in capitalist society. When speaking of reflexivity, I am not only speaking of it in collective terms, but also of individual, and highly personal terms. When reading Dussel in his autobiographical writings, one can appreciate the very personal nature of the revelations he arrived at with regard to the Eurocentric foundations of his early educational training. Why should not such a highly personal self-inquiry be an attribute to be cultivated by others, especially political leaders, who are his audience in *Twenty Theses*? Somehow, it appears to me that it is as if *Twenty Theses* is written by another self in Dussel, whose thoughts are less accessible, more "philosophically" abstracted in the conventional and academic sense of the term, and one that disciplinary foci on "theoretical" work and seeking of a "philosophy of politics" has led to a distancing of the voices of the two Dussels across the texts. And the very central focus of that synopsis on "politics" sounds to me like a fetishization of it, as if the most effective way of exerting power is through the traditional, organizational or movement forms of it, rather than via knowledge, culture, and philosophy itself, or even poetry, for instance. And the disciplinary fragmentations that inadvertently manifest themselves amid our busy-bodied professional activities and self-identities as "philosophers" of "politics" play a part in shaping our epistemic orientations.

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Having felt the depth of sincerity with which Dussel has written and practiced his scholarship, I wish to use these examples of my editorial experience to highlight an important matter that I think should also be a part of the conversation Dussel is inspiring us to engage in when writing his "Agenda for a South-South Philosophical Dialogue."

Dussel himself has critically demonstrated the problematic meaning in a world-history context of the Cartesian dictum, “I think, therefore I am”—one that in the context of Western imperialism and colonialism served well to philosophically justify an egocentric elevation of the West’s own philosophical insight onto an allegedly universal world-view.

One interpretation of such a dictum from a critical point of view, and as one that may be relevant to this editorial commentary, is the observation that when I think, the “I” that thinks is not a singular entity, as the Western “universalist” philosophy amid an individualistic culture proclaims, but is multiple. There is still a reluctance on our part to recognize that this presumption of human selfhood as a singular entity is also a significant, culturally perpetuated artifact of the West enabling its imperial practices. At the same time that one imperial ‘I’ thinks, another forgets; one ‘I’ fights Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan, while another “I” continues to promote a policy toward its “friendly” Islamic states in the regions that has been one of the primary causes of the modern rise and spread of Islamic fundamentalism.⁶

An important reason why this happens may be that “thinking” itself is isolated from feelings of empathy toward others, and from sensing of others’ suffering resulting from one’s own actions. This multiplicity of not only the thinking ‘I’s but also across the thinking-feeling-sensing faculties of our being, may itself also be a product of a Euro-

6. For further commentaries on this theme see my article entitled, “Beyond Islamophobia and Islamophilia as Western Epistemic Racisms: Revisiting Runnymede Trust’s Definition in a World-History Contest,” *Islamic Studies Journal*, vol. 1, issue 1, 2012. (<http://islamiccommentary.org/2012/11/new-islamophobia-studies-journal-debuts/#sthash.B2UJsciZ.dpuf>). Also see my “Abu Ghraib as a Microcosm: The Strange Face of Empire as a Lived Prison,” *Sociological Spectrum*, Vol. 27, Issue 1, 2007, 29-55 (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02732170601001185?journalCode=usls20#preview>)

centricity in which the splitting of the “rational” from the feeling and sensing makes it possible to engage in the kinds of scientific, political, and philosophical practices that justify relating with others without feeling or sensing empathy toward them.

It is in the context of such an awareness of the limits of philosophy and politics itself as universally defined and practiced that one can arrive at an appreciation of what other authors in the present issue of *Human Architecture* contribute, directly or indirectly, to the conversation. The co-editors have commented on the contributions of those directly engaging with Dussel in this issue. What I wish to further highlight in what remains of this editor’s note are the contributions of Dustin Craun, Rehnuma Sazzad (and through her book review, of Lisa Suhair Majaj), and Linda Weber, who make equally relevant contributions as those by Mendieta, Guardiola-Rivera, Alcoff, Gordon, and Grosfoguel.

What I wish to highlight in Dustin Craun’s contribution is how his emphasis on the Sufi way of the heart, in contrast to the way of the mind alone, may provide a way out of the one-sided “rational” way Western epistemology is constructed in the first place. In other words, as we engage in a “conversation,” we should be mindful of the limits of the “mental” apparatuses we use to conduct that conversation, since “thinking” is not, and should not be, the only way we converse. The very notion of why we would care, or not, to engage in a conversation, is pre-verbal and engages faculties of sensation of and empathy toward others who have decided to join a conversation. Dussel himself is highly aware of the diverse ways “philosophy” have been defined and practiced across cultures, and is rightfully critical of the extent to which Western philosophy has marginalized and ignored other cultural, philosophical, and spiritual traditions, simply because they are not offered in the “rational” form in which Western philosophy and scholarship is con-

ducted. This also brings up important question that had been raised thoughtfully by Anders Burman in a recent issue of this journal (Winter 2012⁷) regarding contrasting epistemologies prevalent in what Grosfoguel calls Westernized universities and those advanced by Anders's shaman guide and teacher in Bolivia. The notion that "we think with places" is important, and I think any conversations on Dussel's or even of our own contributions cannot avoid asking the extent to which conversations via academic settings can help or limit the kind of pluriversal and anti-Cartesian conversations we wish to pursue in favor of what Dussel calls trans-modernity.

If we are truly appreciative of Dussel's advocacy of pluriversality—which I think should encourage us to explore *both* the ways of the mind and the heart, *as well as* of sensibility—we should be appreciative of other, including poetic and literary, forms of conversation that have also set their aim at combatting colonialism in favor of just social outcomes. I think Rehnuma Sazzad's work may best be characterized as most poignantly representing that trend in cross/inter/transdisciplinary scholarship focusing on literary studies that puts poetry at the center of what may be an alternative way for bringing about social transformation from within in favor of global social justice, in contrast to the failed efforts of one or another kind in the past. This is perhaps one important reason why I was impressed with her work when she originally submitted her manuscript—leading me to also suggest to her to review the book of poetry by the Palestinian-American poet Lisa Suhair Majaj.

In her essay, Sazzad is highly self-conscious of this agenda, and uses all her creative skills while studying her subjects to press forth the notion that the best way to bring about the good society is to practice

7. See his "Places To Think With, Books To Think About: Words, Experience and the Decolonization of Knowledge in the Bolivian Andes" (<http://www.okcir.com/26HAX1W2012.html>).

what Mahmoud Darwish characterizes as a mode of understanding that 'touches one's heart.' The multidimensional mode of understanding, or what Jürgen Habermas calls "communicative action," is translated in Sazzad's cross-culturally enriched intellectual agenda to an highly focused attention to the integral nature of mental, emotional, and sensual ways of knowing that alone can touch the heart and soul of all those involved in the struggle for a better world. When she studies a poet, say Mahmoud Darwish, or a literary figure such as Edward Said, or reviews the poetry of a scholar such as Majaj, her reflections on the text reflects in turn the lucidity and power of her own intellectual attention to the complexity of the multidimensional nature of what needs to be touched in the human reality to bring about a transformative experience.

When reviewing Majaj, for instance, and regarding the significance of self-transformation as a path to global social change (as one, for instance, also centrally advanced in Gloria Anzaldúa's poetic and literary praxes centering on her thesis of the simultaneity of self and world change as expressed in her expression, "I change myself, I change the world"), Sazzad writes,

In my view, maintaining a complex existence of being both from 'the Iowa farm' and a troubled Arab land by following a beacon of light for the continuous self-transformation towards a better pattern of socio-political existence is the root out of which this beautiful collection of verses branch out. ...

Therefore, beauty, not the horror of the attacks, is the truth that inspires him [Darwish] to knit a strong hope in an otherwise bleak war diary. That is why we are told not to expect the poem to be a journalistic report or a detailed record of the invasion. Rather, the beauty emanates

from the pieces of feelings, fragments of thoughts, and strings of emotions with which Darwish represents the collective suffering of his people. As with most Darwish poems, the personal is political ...

Sazzad is deeply attracted to poets and poetry in the Saidian sense of "amateurism," i.e., a poet that, while being substantively sophisticated, is not detached from people as a professional, but is deeply loving of and dedicated to what he or she does without becoming a professional (ibid.). Sazzad's is also a unique approach to literary studies that strongly favors not severing the poet and the poetry from its social and political context, but embedding it as an integral part of it in terms of the dialectics of simultaneity, of the identity of self and social transformations, and a mode of knowing and changing reality (within and global) in which poetry does not simply reflect reality, but *is it*, and thus the transformation induced by poetry is at the same time a poetic transformation and revolution in the true senses of the words.

Linda Weber's study may seem at first to have little to do with what Dussel has devoted his life to accomplish. However, a closer reading of Weber's article in the context of the theme of this issue may illustrate well that what one may think at first to be not relevant to a subject matter, may prove to be at its heart. As a teacher, Weber is interested in understanding how she can help her students "deeply learn" about why they have habits they may struggle with. She conducts an exercise in class where students abstain from a habit for a couple of weeks so that they can observe their thoughts and feelings (and sensations) in the process to arrive at a better understanding of themselves and the society in which they live. Her study demonstrates the extent to which even the spacetime of a senior seminar classroom can be transformed into a learning experience through which students realize

knowledge is not merely a matter of thinking, but also feeling (and sensing their bodies).

It takes more than thinking to engage in a conversation, since the modes of conversing are also multi-form, and habits can play enormous role in shaping, and limiting, our philosophies and politics in favor of decolonized outcomes in self and broader society. As the saying goes, "the devil is in the detail," and our conceptual and practices all count, even when they take inadvertent turns. I sincerely believe that no significant effort can be made toward anti-Cartesian decoloniality and pluriversal transmodernity, unless we find ways of becoming, first and foremost in our own personal lives and scholarship (to the various extents engaged in), but also as part of the communities to which we belong, aware of our thinking habits that are often accompanied by intellectual inadvertency, since the causes of perpetuation of such habits of thinking cannot be readily found in our thoughts only. They arise from the multiplicities and fragmentations of our being across our thinking-feeling-sensing faculties.

Only a pluriversal epistemology that involves all the pluriversal aspects of our learning faculties can enable us to fully realize what coloniality has done to our nature in a world-history (and not just in the modern) context, and how we can creatively absorb all the liberating aspects of the world's traditions, Eastern and Western, in a pluriversal spirit while discarding the imperial habits of political domination, cultural conversion, and economic exploitation that have been the defining features of imperial practice in world-history.

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In his article published in this issue, Dussel advises,

But together with this dissemination of histories and reflection by

philosophers of the South—researchers, students, professors, and intellectuals in general—upon the most valuable aspects of their own philosophical traditions, it is also necessary to develop a creative discourse which is *properly philosophical* in character, and which thus goes beyond mere commentaries on either one's ancestral tradition or that of Europe. This implies contributions that take the reality and history of the treatment of key specific themes in the corresponding regional or local philosophy of the South. Philosophical reflection should enrich these realities critically with one's own tools, and in dialogue with the best expressions of modern European philosophy (which the philosophers of the South must know *how to select and incorporate into their own projects of distinct, autonomous thought*). All of this should be deployed with an emphasis on producing *clear thinking* which is well-founded, coherent, and understandable by those responsible for the concrete political, economic, aesthetic, technological, and scientific realities of the countries of the South. In sum, what is aimed at is a *proper philosophy*, which is both an expression of the South and a useful contribution to its community of reference. (Dussel, p. 15; italics added)

Dussel writes that in order to engage in South-South philosophical conversation, we need to find ways to interpret the rich philosophical traditions that we come from—all in their multifaceted and pluriversal forms—through a hermeneutic method that brings them to a philosophy “proper.” While what he proposes is an important part of the project to be undertaken, I think a word of caution about the limits of this strat-

egy is also warranted.

I wonder if by doing so we deprive the very nature of alternative philosophical insights of their epistemic multi-dimensionality, reducing them to mere thought forms, and dislodge them from their contextual settings, when they are (as is, for instance, the genuine forms of meditation often practiced in non-“university” settings) holistic practices that engage all of our beings' sensing, feeling, and thinking faculties at the same time. So, in the very process of our translating these rich cultural traditions into “proper philosophy” we may ourselves commit—unconsciously and habitually following Westernized university prevalent practices, what Grosfoguel calls (in his important paper in this issue) while drawing on Boaventura de Sousa Santos—“epistemicide,” and as such engage in an “inadvertent,” subtler form of Cartesian, modern coloniality in the very process of our scholarly conversations about how to transcend them.

I recall a while ago, when working on my editorial note for an issue of *Human Architecture* on Islamophobia, I was asked to delete a quatrain from Khayyam from my draft, simply because someone feared institutional backlash from her (perhaps more orthodox Islamic) peers for using “wine” as a Sufi metaphor while commenting on Islam. It was an odd experience to me, being asked to censor myself in an editorial note to a journal of my own founding. And the substance of the request amid a journal issue dedicated to Islamophobia seemed itself to be surreally interesting. I respected the request at the time, but I can use the experience now and here to illustrate how it is possible to inadvertently and unconsciously commit Islamophobia in our every day intellectual projects at the very lines we devote to conversing about what (unconscious) Islamophobia is and how to rid the world of it.

In fact, the very process of reducing a quatrain into “proper philosophical” lan-

guage can deprive it of the very nature of its creative force in transforming not only our minds, feelings, and senses, but even—if we are persistent enough—of the very contextual “places” with which we think and thereby perpetuate our inner and broader slaveries.

This may explain why Khayyam chose to convey his philosophy via poetry. Perhaps, it may take practicing obediential scholarship to learn from Linda Weber and her students—in our case, of “abstaining” and ‘de-tiring’ from our busy institutionalized academic (and editorial) habits—to come to a better understanding of ourselves and of our world, in favor of happier outcomes. And it may be worth, following Saz-zad’s findings, to become an amateur again so as to detach ourselves consciously from the institutional slaveries and preoccupations that have divided and ruled our colonized inner lives for a while.

ما خرقه زهد بر سر خم کردیم
وز خاک خرابات تیمم کردیم
باشد که ز خاک میکده دریابیم
آن عمر که در مدرسه ها گم کردیم

*We Hung Piety's Cloak on the Barrel of Wine.
And Abluted with Dust in the Ruin's Shrine.
So we may Recover from the Tavern's Dust
The Life that we Lost in the Schools' Confine.*

—Omar Khayyam