

9-22-2013

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Recommended Citation

Craun, Dustin (2013) "Exploring Pluriversal Paths Toward Transmodernity: From the Mind-Centered Egotry of Colonial Modernity to Islam's Epistemic Decolonization through the Heart," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1, Article 9.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol11/iss1/9>

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Exploring Pluriversal Paths Toward Transmodernity

From the Mind-Centered Egotry of Colonial Modernity to Islam's Epistemic Decolonization through the Heart

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Abstract: This paper explores the intersections between the decoloniality/transmodernity school of thought and Islamic spirituality, popularly known as Sufism. Beginning with an in depth study of the egotry of Western epistemology which places white Western man and the mind on a false god like pedestal, this work explores two modes of being. One that is centered in coloniality/modernity what is called here the pyramidal construction of man, versus a decolonial process centered in the seat of human perception/ consciousness centered in the heart as understood in Islamic/sufi epistemology, called here the pyramidal construction of the human. As these pyramids clearly demonstrate, needed is a shift from the ego/nafs/self at the top or center of Man's onto-epistemological existence, to the ego/nafs/self being placed in a state of spiritual peace at the bottom of one's existence where the ego/nafs/self is placed last. To make this shift in the geo-politics of knowledge in the context of Islam, he argues that what is needed is a shift away from Descartes and Western modernity's centering of human consciousness in the mind, to a re-centering of consciousness in the spiritual heart (*qalb*). This in turn requires a shift back to a *Tassawuf* (Islamic Sufism) and thus a heart (*qalb*) centered understanding of Islam in relation to modernity. Since the Islamic spiritual science of *Tassawuf* has been de-centered and scapegoated in relation to Islamic discourses such as "modern revivalist Islam" (Wahabism/Salafism) and secular modernists, in this paper the author seeks to show that as it relates to the Muslim world, Islamic Sufism can make an important epistemological contribution to the perspective of decoloniality. Pulling from the decoloniality/transmodernity thinkers such as Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and Ramon Grosfoguel, this paper also engages the work of Fanon, Cesaire, Laura Perez, and the Muslim thinkers Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, and Sherman Jackson.

I. INTRODUCTION

In his major work *Ethics of Liberation* (2013), Enrique Dussel's "point of departure is a world system of globalized exclusion,"

which can be placed against his imagining of what he calls "the Transmodern" (xv), i.e., to move beyond modernity to a pluriversal-ity of existence. Similarly, according to Sylvia Wynter, "The struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing

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imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves."¹ If so, then to move towards an actual theorization of the human, we must first shatter and expose the "overrepresentation of Man"² as it has been molded into marble, bronze, and the psyche of peoples throughout the world as the normative construction of a universalized Western/white male being.

In imagining the human, the images that instantly come to mind are those of this overrepresentation, from global images of a supposed white/blue eyed Jesus, the anthropomorphic rendering of the elderly white bearded Christian God as painted in the *Sistine Chapel* creating Adam, Michelangelo's *David*, statues of Christopher Columbus pointing West, Santa Claus and his rosy red cheeks, George Washington's angel-like representation emblazoned atop the rotunda in the United States capitol building, and today, that of the lifestyle branded white male celebrity jet setting across the planet to "save" children in Africa at one moment, then wearing the latest Giorgio Armani suit at his movie premier the next. While these altruistic images are central to the construction of "egology,"³ which sits atop the pyramidal construction of Man, it is primarily on its epistemological and ontological basis that I will focus my attention here. To properly understand, and to expose the "clay

feet" of these false gods of what W.E.B. DuBois called "the religion of whiteness,"⁴ we must shift the study to focus on what Walter Mignolo terms the "geo-politics of knowledge"—that is, the epistemological and ontological roots of the overrepresentation of a false universal Western Man, rooted in Renaissance and Enlightenment epistemology and ontology. To make this decolonial move it is necessary to ally my critique with that of the modernity/coloniality school of thought, to first properly understand the discourses of modernity, and also to privilege epistemologies of the South—which help us in shattering the falsely-universalized conception of Man—in order to move towards the transmodern understanding of the Human.

In this paper I will follow the line of thought of key decolonial theorists as I attempt to map what I have termed the pyramidal construction of Man, and the inverted pyramid as constructing the Human. Placed together with the pyramid representing the logic of modernity at the top, and the inverted pyramid as representing the logic of coloniality at the bottom, this visualization of these theoretical matrixes will help us in understanding the processes that are necessary to create an "epistemic geo-political move"⁵ to a politics of what Nelson Maldonado-Torres terms, "epistemological decolonization."⁶ As these pyramids clearly demonstrate, needed is a shift from the ego/*nafs*/self at the top or center of Man's onto-epistemological existence, to the ego/*nafs*/self being placed in a state of spiritual peace at the bottom of one's existence where the ego/*nafs*/self is placed last.

To make this shift in the geo-politics of

1. See: Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/ Power/ Truth/ Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3:3, (Fall 2003): 260.

2. *Ibid*, 262.

3. This term was first used by Walter Mignolo. He defines "egology," as "a frame of knowledge having "ego" instead of "theo," as the center and point of reference." See: Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005):10.

4. See: W.E.B. DuBois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Schocken, 1999): 18.

5. Mignolo describes this as a, "a move that shifts the geo-politics of knowledge." Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*: 39.

6. See: Nelson Maldonado Torres, "Lewis Gordon: Philosopher of the Human," *The CLR James Journal* (The Caribbean Philosophical Association: Volume 14. Number 1. Spring 2008b): 124.

knowledge in the context of Islam, I argue that what is needed is a shift away from Descartes and Western modernity's centering of human consciousness in the mind, to a re-centering of consciousness in the spiritual heart (*qalb*). This in turn requires a shift back to a *Tassawuf* (Islamic Sufism) and thus a heart (*qalb*) centered understanding of Islam in relation to modernity. Since the Islamic spiritual science of *Tassawuf* has been de-centered and scapegoated in relation to Islamic discourses such as "modern revivalist Islam" (Wahabism/Salafism) and secular modernists, in this paper I will show that as it relates to the Muslim world Islamic Sufism can make an important epistemological contribution to the perspective of decoloniality.

In his classic decolonial manifesto, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aime Cesaire writes that "a poison has been distilled into the veins of Europe."⁷ The poison Cesaire speaks of is a poison that has been spread to the planet starting in 1492, when Christopher Columbus' march of death and genocide came to the Americas in full force, and then spread swiftly to the rest of the world atop piles of bodies and enslaved millions. While the papal bulls of the crusades and the conquest of the Americas set the legal stage for Western colonization, a genocidal Christian supremacism spread colonization to the far reaches of the earth.⁸ While the logic of conquest and enslavement began with Western religious fanatics, it would become further racialized and move to an epistemological level with the Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophers led by Rene Descartes. Descartes' philosophical move was to replace the conception of the Christian God-centered soul as eternal, to an understanding of the mind in the place of the soul as what is eternal. Descartes' famous dic-

tum, 'Cogito ergo sum' / 'I think, therefore I am' would ultimately have the effect of shifting the center of Western thought away from the sacred, and would create Western white Man as the supreme being at the center of the universe. From Descartes' moment on, the idea of Western thought as 'objective' or 'unbiased' and as 'rational' and 'scientific,' became the most explicit form of racism that still lives with us today. This is an epistemological racism that universalizes Western knowledge as applicable to all people in the world, while also delegitimizing other knowledge forms as 'unscientific' or 'pre-modern.'

This philosophical stand is a spiritual poison that has deeply infected the white West. It's attribution of Godhood to its Western self has caused epistemological, cultural, and planetary ecological destruction which we are only now beginning to understand. This desacralization of the European self, life worlds, and the accompanying status of 'non-being' given to colonized bodies of Third World peoples, can leave our spiritual hearts dead and void of almost any connection to the sacred. In the American Indian Scholar/ Activist Vine Deloria Jr's final book titled *The World We Used to Live In*, he writes that "The secularity of the society in which we live must share considerable blame in the erosion of spiritual powers of all traditions, since our society has become a parody of social interaction lacking even an aspect of civility. Believing in nothing, we have preempted the role of the higher spiritual forces by acknowledging no greater good than what we can feel and touch."⁹

To make this critique which I have briefly sketched above, I will start by looking at how Nishitani Osamu and Nelson Maldonado-Torres understand the process of constructing Modernity/Man in its current state of "egology." After this I will look at the work of Joseph Massad to show the ways in

7. See: Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2005): 36.

8. See: Robert Williams Jr, *The American Indian and Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992): 3-58.

9. See: Vine Deloria, Jr. *The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*. (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006): xviii.

which this normalization of the Western overrepresentation of Man has been internalized by Muslim/ Arab populations in the secular-progressive/neo-conservative call for reforms throughout the Muslim world. Finally in my attempt to theorize an epistemic geo-political move, I will look at the work of Timothy Winter (Shaykh Abdul Hakim Murad) and Sherman Jackson who have been two of the central Muslim scholars in the West calling for a shift back to a *Tassawuf* (Islamic Sufism) centered understanding of Islam in relation to modernity. Since the Islamic spiritual science of *Tassawuf* has been decentered and scapegoated in relation to Islamic discourses such as “modern revivalist Islam”¹⁰ (Wahabism/ Salafism) and secular modernists, I will show that as it relates to the Muslim world Sufism can make an important epistemological contribution to the decolonial perspective.

II. HUMANITAS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

The self-deception of Europe, the delusion of US patriotism, the bad-faith of Euro-American whiteness, and the Westernized mind are in a global crisis—a global

10. This term is used by Abdul Hakim Murad, in the article Abdul Hakim Murad, “Islamic Spirituality: the Forgotten Revolution,” (Masud, UK, no date given), Available at: <http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/ahm/fgtnrevo.htm>. I should note here that the British convert to Islam Timothy Winter who is a professor at Cambridge University, in Cambridge, England, is also Abdal-Hakim Murad, the Shaykh of the Cambridge Mosque and a prominent Islamic thinker in the West. He seems to publish under the name Timothy Winter when publishing in Western academic presses, and the name Abdal-Hakim Murad when publishing articles strictly related to the traditional Islamic sciences. What is often referred to as the “traditional Islamic sciences” refers generally to the religious study (ilm in Arabic) of the Quran, *Tafsir* (Qur’an Commentary), *Aqida* (Theology), Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), Seerah (the life of the Prophet Muhammad), *Fiqh* (Islamic Law), Usul al-fiqh (Legal Theory), Arabic grammar, and Tassawuf (Sufism).

crisis which has dehumanized humanity, and in its hybrid form of neoliberal multiculturalism¹¹ continues its global ravages at a breakneck speed. With its placement of Man at the center of modernity, the West has taken its discourses of supremacism—and what Enrique Dussel calls the *ego conquisiro*¹²—to their heights by creating secular-

11. I use the term “neoliberal multiculturalism” here as Jodi Melamed defines it in her article, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism.” She writes that, “Multicultural reference masks the centrality of race and racism to neoliberalism. Race continues to permeate capitalism’s economic and social processes, organizing the hyperextraction of surplus value from racialized bodies and naturalizing a system of capital accumulation that grossly favors the global North over the global South. Yet multiculturalism portrays neoliberal policy as the key to a post-racist world of freedom and opportunity. Neoliberal policy engenders new racial subjects, as it creates and distinguishes between newly privileged and stigmatized collectivities, yet multiculturalism codes the wealth, mobility, and political power of neoliberalism’s beneficiaries to be the just desserts of “multicultural world citizens,” while representing those neoliberalism dispossesses to be handicapped by their own “monoculturalism” or other historico-cultural deficiencies. A language of multiculturalism consistently portrays acts of force required for neoliberal restructuring to be humanitarian: a benevolent multicultural invader (the United States, multinational troops, a multinational corporation) intervenes to save life, “give” basic goods or jobs, and promote limited political freedom.” See: Jodi Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism,” *Social Text*, 89 Vol. 24, Number 4, (Winter 2006), Duke University Press: 1.

12. Following Dussel, according to Maldonado-Torres, the *ego conquisiro* is a central attitude in the construction of modernity, “what was born in the sixteenth century was something more pervasive and subtle than what at first transpires in the concept of race: it was an attitude characterized by a permanent suspicion. Enrique Dussel states that Hernan Cortes gave expression to an ideal of subjectivity that could be defined as the *ego conquisiro*, which predates Rene Descartes’ articulation of the *ego cogito*. This means that the significance of the Cartesian *cogito* for modern European identity has to be understood against the backdrop of an unquestioned ideal of self expressed in the notion of the *ego conquisiro*. The certainty of the self as a conqueror, of its tasks and missions, preceded Descartes’ certainty about

ized bodies and rational thought in the form of Descartes *ego-cogito* ('Cogito ergo sum' / 'I think, therefore I am') that create the Western white Man as the supreme being at the center of the universe.

Through this desacralization¹³ of the European self, life worlds, and the accompanying status of 'non-being' given to colonized bodies of Third/Fourth World¹⁴ peoples, the Western world has spread its physical, epistemological and ontological conquests throughout the planet. The identitarian logic of this genocidal violence of the 'West' versus the 'non-West' started with the first crusade, and the absolute annihilation of the Muslim population of Jerusalem. It then re-mapped Western conceptions of reality and was globalized at the outset of modernity in 1492. While our moment is one that is often theorized as being 'post-colonial,' the legacies of genocide, colonialism, and the resulting historical trauma, and systemic hierarchies still live with us today. The best theorization of these legacies have been put forth by the Modernity/Coloniality research project¹⁵ led by Anibal Quijano¹⁶, En-

the self as a thinking substance (*res cogitans*) and provided a way to interpret it." Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos. 2-3 March/ May 2007: 245.

13. The term desacralization was first used by the Islamic/perennialist philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr. See his seminal work: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989): 1.

14. The Fourth World refers to the indigenous "nations forcefully incorporated into states which maintain a distinct political culture but are internally unrecognized." Richard Griggs, "Background on the term "Fourth World,"" *Center for World Indigenous Studies*, Available at: <http://cwis.org/GML/background/FourthWorld/>

15. For an overview of this project, and a listing of the work by its primary contributors see Walter Mignolo, "DELINKING: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality," *Cultural Studies* Vol. 21, Nos. 2-3 March/ May 2007: 449-450 and especially the end notes numbers 1 and 2 on pages: 500-502.

16. See Anibal Quijano, "Colonialidad y

rique Dussel¹⁷, Walter Mignolo¹⁸, Ramon Grosfoguel¹⁹, Nelson Maldonado-Torres²⁰,

modernidad/ racionalidad," *Los Conquistados. 1492 y la poblacion indigena de las Americas*, Heraclio Bonilla (editor). (Ecuador: Libri Mundi, Tercer Mundo Editores, 1992) for his original articulation of the idea in Spanish, and the translation into English of the same article see: Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/ Rationality," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos. 2-3 (March/ May 2007).

17. See: Enrique Dussel, "Beyond Eurocentrism: The World-System and the Limits of Modernity," Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (editors). *The Cultures of Globalization*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). For Dussel's philosophy of liberation see: Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, Translated by Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkovsky. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985). For the best summation of Enrique Dussel's thought, and particularly his ideas of "philosophy of liberation" see generally Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008a). While Dussel is discussed in relation to the thought of Levinas and Fanon throughout the text, the specific chapters on Dussel are on pages 162-236.

18. Walter Mignolo's major contributions to this field of thought include his books: Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/ Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); And Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*. 2nd Ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); And most recently his article: Walter Mignolo, "DELINKING."

19. See the volume he edited: Ramon Grosfoguel, (editor), *Latin@s in the World-System: Decolonization Struggles in the Twenty-First Century U.S. Empire*, (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005); and his article Ramon Grosfoguel, "World-Systems Analysis in the Context of Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality," *Review: Fernand Braudel Center*. Vol. XXIX. Number 2, 2006.

20. His article on the coloniality of being is especially important, see: Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being"; He is also the only author to thus far theorize secularism as it relates to coloniality/ modernity, see: Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Secularism and Religion in the Modern/Colonial World-System: From Secular Postcoloniality to Postsecular Transmodernity." Mabel Morana, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jauregui (editors). *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008c). And most recently his book length project: Nelson Maldonado-Torres,

and Maria Lugones.²¹ Starting with Quijano's idea of "colonialidad de poder" (the coloniality of power), this idea has been expanded to include the concepts: the coloniality of knowledge, the coloniality of being, and perhaps most importantly de-coloniality. Grosfoguel, expanding upon Quijano, has theorized the complexity and scale of the coloniality of power. He writes that,

The sixteenth century initiated a new global colonial power matrix that by the late nineteenth century covered the whole planet...I conceptualize the coloniality of power as an entanglement of multiple and heterogeneous hierarchies ("heter-archies") of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic, and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide transversally reconfigures all other global power structures. What is new in the "coloniality of power" perspective is how the idea of race and racism becomes the organizing principle that structures all of the multiple hierarchies of the world-system.²²

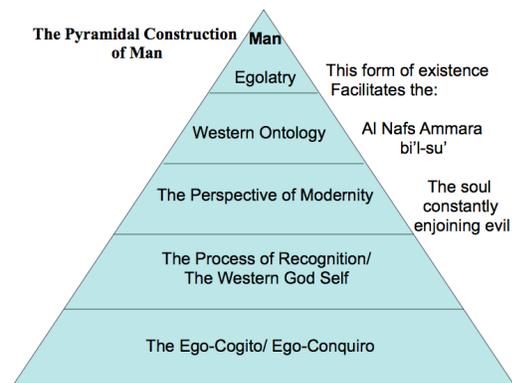
As the heter-archies of the coloniality of power have been constructed over the last five hundred years, it is important to recognize as the modernity/coloniality research project does, the centrality of modernity's philosophical roots in Renaissance and Enlightenment thought. The basis of the pyramidal construction of Man, is Rene Des-

Against War.

21. For the most important contribution made thus far that engages ideas pertaining to Gender and Coloniality see: Maria Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/ Modern Gender System," *Hypatia*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Winter 2007).

22. Ramon Grosfoguel, "World-Systems Analysis in the Context of Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality," 172.

cartes' "first philosophy," as a break from a theo centered episteme to an ego centered one, where Man displaces God as the center of existence. Descartes' first philosophy, coupled with Hegel's understanding of the struggle for recognition, construct the perspective of modernity where Western Man as the egolatrous being is placed at the top of existence for all others to look towards for recognition. Here I will look at the work of Osamu and Maldonado-Torres to gain a perspective on how this standpoint of what Maldonado-Torres calls the "Imperial Man" takes shape.



Maldonado-Torres has written of the centrality of Descartes to the West's "first philosophy" when he states that,

Following Rene Descartes' legacy modern Western philosophy has been highly invested in figuring out the extent and limits of the powers of the mind in general and of perception in particular in a context where revelation has lost a high degree of legitimacy. In this context, epistemology becomes *philosophia prima*. This epistemology, as Descartes also made clear, presupposes an anthropology and an ontology that are both well expressed in the Cartesian split of *res extensa* (matter) and *res cogitans* (thinking sub-

stance).²³

It is in this context of the West's thinking substance of rationality, that it would philosophically move away from Christianity as an organizing principle towards one that would similarly see itself as the only proper form of existence—but here organized around the epistemological foundations of a 'rational' Western 'civilization.' From this foundation Nishitani Osamu writes about *Humanitas* and *Anthropos* as the "two terms that signify "human being" within European languages.²⁴ *Humanitas* here represents the terms "human being" or "human nature"²⁵ while *Anthropos* is always an object of Western study. While keeping these categories central to his argument, Osamu states that the first interpretation of the Other was through the lens of "the Greek code of barbarian." In time the salvation narrative of Christianity was added on top of this, with the discourse eventually shifting to secularism and the "progress of civilization" that would ultimately be reinforced by Darwin's theory of evolution.²⁶

According to Osamu this "discovery of difference," beyond being spatiotemporally located, is also central to the consciousness of modernity and its onto-epistemological existence where,

...humans who possess "civilization" are "*humanitas*" never "*anthropos*." These two designations, moreover, are not selected according to the differing contexts of the same object, nor do they create a simple oppositional binary within a genre called human being. Rather,

23. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Lewis Gordon: Philosopher of the Human.," 111.

24. See: Nishitani Osamu, (Translated by Trent Maxey), "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of "Human Being." Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon (editors), *Translatoin, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006): 259.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid: 262.

there exists an inextricable and fundamentally asymmetrical relation between the two. That asymmetry performs a systemic function related to the regime of modern "knowledge" itself (for that very reason, this distinction is made automatically whenever people speak "knowledgeably"), a function that constitutes the "double standard" of modern human, or humanistic, knowledge. In other words, "*anthropos*" cannot escape the status of being the object of anthropological knowledge, while "*humanitas*" is never defined from without but rather expresses itself as the subject of all knowledge.²⁷

The key idea here as Walter Mignolo discusses in his book, *The Idea of Latin America*, is the point of enunciation of what he terms "Occidentalism." He states that,

Occidentalism" as O'Gorman's thesis on the "universalism of Western culture" suggests, has two interrelated dimensions: First, it served to locate the geo-historical space of Western culture. But, less obviously, it also fixed the privileged locus of enunciation. It is from the West that the rest of the world is described, conceptualized, and ranked: that is, modernity is the self-description of Europe's role in history rather than an ontological historical process. Without a locus of enunciation self-conceived as Occidental, the Oriental could not have been thought out.²⁸

It is this epistemological racism as constructing the world and its standards that the rest of humanity must struggle against within for recognition, and it is to this argu-

27. Ibid: 260.

28. See: Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*: 35.

ment that I will turn next.

Here, I will look at the work of Nelson Maldonado-Torres, as it relates to the construction of the overrepresentation of Man. According to him, from the beginning of global modernity the *ego conquiro* emerges as the “paradigm of war,”²⁹ and becomes the central facet of human life. In his book *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*, Maldonado-Torres centrally argues that since 1492 European modernity has become,

...inextricably linked with the experience of the warrior and conqueror and the modern colonization, racism, and other forms of social and geopolitical dynamics in the modern world can be understood in terms of the naturalization of the paradigm of war.³⁰

It is within this paradigm of existence where war has become naturalized that, according to Maldonado-Torres, ethics as applicable to Western Man are replaced by what he calls the “death ethic of war,”³¹ or the “non-ethics of war.”³² As a radical proj-

29. According to Maldonado-Torres, the “paradigm of war” has been best described by Enrique Dussel who states: “From Heraclitus to Karl von Clausewitz and Henry Kissinger, ‘war is the origin of everything,’ if by ‘everything’ one understands the order or system that world dominators control by their power and armies. We are at war—a cold war for those who wage it, a hot war for those who suffer it...” (See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*: 3).

30. Ibid: 4.

31. With the term “death ethic of war,” Maldonado-Torres is expanding on the work of Steve Martinot. Maldonado-Torres’s definition of the term refers to the “constitutive character of coloniality and the naturalization of human difference that is tied to it in the emergence and unfolding of Western modernity.” See: Ibid: xii.

32. Maldonado-Torres’s term, the “non-ethics of war,” refers to “the suspension of what usually goes by ethics not only in war, but in civilization. It is this suspension that allows the production of premature death to become normative, at least for well-selected sectors in society and in the globe.” Ibid.

ect of “de-colonial love,”³³ Maldonado-Torres uses Emanuel Levinas, Frantz Fanon, and Enrique Dussel as philosophers of the “de-colonial reduction” while making his own theoretical contributions towards a “philosophy of liberation.”³⁴ He chooses to use these three philosophers together because,

Levinas, Fanon, and Dussel respond critically to the realities of war as they encounter them in the context of Nazism, French imperialism, intolerable Eurocentrism, and the menace of U.S. Americanism and its salvific mission of freedom, all of which are preceded if not tied to each other by a long history of racialization and colonization that goes back to at least 1492.³⁵

I think Maldonado-Torres’ understanding of the “paradigm of war” has made an important philosophical contribution to our understanding of Man. Most important to my discussion here are the first of two chapters on Frantz Fanon at the center of the book titled, “God and the Other in the Self-Recognition of Imperial Man.”³⁶

In the anti-black colonial world in which Fanon was writing, the Manichean opposition characterized for him “modern/colonial thinking and power”³⁷—a modern/colonial world where the pathological became normal as the colonial and racist context in which he lived in its totality was “a metaphysical transformation of the world.”³⁸ In this transformed world “Imperial Man”

33. Maldonado-Torres borrows this term from Chela Sandoval. See: Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000): 169-170.

34. This is Enrique Dussel’s term, and also the title of his multi-volume work of the same title.

35. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*: 6.

36. Ibid: 93-121.

37. Ibid: 95.

38. Ibid: 99.

would hold itself up as God, while its colonial subjects would be relegated to the realm of “non-being.” It is here that the “non-beings” of colonialism would experience the “colonial death world” which would become,

the ethical limit of human reality. It is a context in which violence and war are no longer extraordinary, but become instead ordinary features of human existence. This perverse expression of the conversion of the extraordinary into the ordinary represents a “limit” situation, or perhaps even a post-limit situation in the sense that the excess of abnormality goes beyond its climax and begets another reality in which it comes to define the normal.³⁹

As the status of “non-being” had become normal, the question then became how did the white colonizers recognize themselves as the ‘supreme beings at the center of the universe.’ While Fanon did not take up a serious analysis of white consciousness until *The Wretched of the Earth*,⁴⁰ to address his argument pertaining to white consciousness Maldonado-Torres begins with a discussion of the “dialectics of lordship and bondage.”

Here Maldonado-Torres, taking his lead from Fanon,⁴¹ discusses Hegel’s understanding of the “struggle for recognition” which, “takes the form of a dialectic whose terms are those of lordship and bondsman, or master and slave.”⁴² In this discussion he points out that while the slave must look to the master for recognition, and thus his humanity, “In an Imperial World lordship is the position of a privileged self that does not even turn toward the slave to achieve recog-

niton.”⁴³ The ultimate question then, that also has relevance for us today, is

If the master/slave dialectic is not overcome by other forms of Spirit but remains a constant explicative factor of human relations defined by the experience of imperialism and colonialism, then we must ask how is it that the master, who in the colonial relation does not look for recognition from the slave, achieves recognition and sustains his position as master?⁴⁴

According To Suha Sabbagh, it was not until *Wretched of the Earth* that Fanon focused on this understanding of white consciousness, but it is through this text that we understand that,

The West was able to do without the recognition of the ‘non-whites’ because it has created an image of this native as an inferior entity within the confines of Western discourse. Against the other, Western positional superiority and identity could be established.⁴⁵

It is here through the continuous Manichean production of negative and positive images that the picture of the self and the Other is constructed. According to Maldonado-Torres, this “imperial self-assertion” is constructed through what he calls “the positive.”⁴⁶ This positive image of the self—or what I call white benevolent innocence⁴⁷—is taken to its height in the imperial world where, “In empire, God becomes the privileged other who alone can provide authentic recognition to the imperial self.”⁴⁸ So in this

39. Ibid: 100.

40. Quoted in Ibid: 107.

41. Fanon discusses Hegel’s Master/Slave dialectic in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, 2007): 220-221.

42. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*: 103.

43. Ibid: 106.

44. Ibid: 107.

45. Sabbagh, quoted in Ibid: 107.

46. Ibid: 108.

47. See my forthcoming book: Dustin Craun, *White Benevolent Innocence: The Genocidal Mentality of Colonial Modernity*.

48. Ibid: 113.

construction, consciousness of God becomes knowledge of the superior self, and thus the making of God in the image of man, as in the imperial Christian form, which takes on great significance in the production of the modern/colonial self. As Maldonado-Torres understands, in one of his many important contributions to the theory, this form of recognition produces the “egolatry” of Imperial man. He writes,

A logic of sub-alteration is contained in the process of recognition of Imperial Man. God recognizes Man, Man takes the shape of God, and then others come to be *seen* as the very incarnation of evil. This logic does not respond so much to interests in the conciliation with nature as, more fundamentally, to interests in the subordination of other human beings. Modern imperial man is no pagan. He does not divinize nature, but rather becomes himself God with the sole purpose of enslaving others. Idolatry becomes egolatry, a perverse egolatry that works in the function of the rejection of otherness. At the end, narcissism becomes homicidal, and the command “Thou shall not kill” is transformed into a project of identity based on the principle “I kill, therefore I am.”⁴⁹

Despite secularism becoming the center of Western life, according to Maldonado-Torres, Imperial Man through race, the nation-state, and free market capitalism, is able to sustain, “the position of the master as the one and only lord.”⁵⁰ Despite the shift from a religious center to a mostly secular space, the production of Western/white lordship is still produced through a constant bombardment of Manichean images of the West and the non-West.

49. Ibid: 114.

50. Ibid: 119.

III. STRIVING FOR *HUMANITAS* IN THE MUSLIM/ARAB WORLD

Imperial Man has reared its ugly head consistently at the Muslim/Arab community over the last twelve years, which has resulted in an increasing attempted movement into the world of *Humanitas*. This attempted escape from “the station of “*anthropos*” and becoming a subject who possesses and produces knowledge, i.e. “*humanitas*,”⁵¹ has further augmented this movement that has been going on over the last two-hundred plus years as Muslims have struggled to affirm their humanity in relation to modernity/coloniality. In the early part of the twentieth century the European convert to Islam, Muhammad Asad (Leopold Weiss), already was seeing the cultural destruction brought on by European colonialism in the Muslim world. As he wrote, “For how long will... [Muslims] be able to keep their souls together in the face of the danger that is so insidiously, so relentlessly closing in on them?... A thousand forces – political, social and economic – are hammering at the doors of the Muslim world. Will this world succumb to the pressure of the Western twentieth century and in the process lose not only its own traditional forms but its spiritual roots as well?”⁵²

Of course the best example of Muslims/Arabs striving for Western recognition is in the desert-turned-neoliberal-dreamworld of Dubai. This desert fantasy land that boasts of itself that it is making ‘supreme lifestyles’ for its inhabitants, is obsessed with gigantism, and outdoing the West in every material way possible, in a manner that would frighten Muhammad Asad if he were alive today. In his brilliant essay “Fear and Money in Dubai,” Mike Davis writes that the CEO and Emir of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed al-Maktoum has taken his obses-

51. Nishitani Osamu, “Anthropos and Humanitas”: 269.

52. See: Muhammad Asad, *The Road to Mecca* (St. Louis: Fons Vitae, 2000): 103.

sion with gigantism to such extremes that, "he seems to have imprinted Scott and Venturi's bible of hyper-reality, *Learning From Las Vegas*, in the same way that pious Muslims memorize the *Qur'an*."⁵³ One of the grossest manifestations of this striving for *Humanitas* is the Burj Dubai, now the tallest building in the world, which when completed will stand 2600 feet tall and will have the world's largest shopping mall, with an area equaling more than 12 million square feet, at its base. This, along with the holy city of Mecca undergoing rapid redevelopment with the biggest (in terms of square feet) and second tallest building in the world, the *Abraj Al Bait Towers*, directly outside of the Grand Mosque, as the most explicit example.



The Ka'ba inside the grand mosque, with the *Abraj Al Bait Towers* in the background.
Photo - Dustin Craun, 2013

53. See: Mike Davis, "Fear and Money in Dubai." Mike Davis (editor), *Evil Paradises: the Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism* (New York: Verso, 2007): 51.

Despite the fact that Frantz Fanon was writing centrally about the Muslim/Arab world while fighting with the FLN in Algeria, I am always shocked to see how few Muslims know his name today, let alone his work. Of course Fanon is central in understanding the processes of epistemic and cultural destruction brought on by colonialism. As he wrote, "...colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverse logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts it, disfigures and destroys it."⁵⁴

In his masterful work *Desiring Arabs*, Joseph Massad⁵⁵ lays out an important intellectual history at the beginning of the book that shows the ways in which Orientalist discourses were internalized by major Muslim/Arab thinkers since 1798, when Napoleon first invaded Egypt. These discourses existed primarily between the signifying binaries of "decadence/renaissance and tradition/modernity."⁵⁶ As the French carried the ideologies of the Enlightenment with them to Egypt, they along with compliant Arab scholars quickly made a call for *Nahda* or a renaissance in the Arab/Muslim

54. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1963): 61

55. Massad's work is groundbreaking in the way that Maria Lugones' is, in that he shows how colonialism and Western progressive movements like the Gay International have played a role in shifting sexuality to a more oppressive and different place than it occupied previous to colonization, and Westernization. As he writes, "In adopting this Weltanschauung, Arab intellectuals also internalized the epistemology by which Europeans came to judge civilizations and cultures along the vector of something called "sex," as well as its later derivative, "sexuality," and the overall systematization of culture through the statistical concept of "norms," often corresponding to the "natural" and its "deviant" opposite." See: Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008):6; for his larger arguments around sexuality see pages 99-418.

56. Ibid: 3.

world. Intellectuals like Jamal al-Din Al Afghani, Butrus al-Bustani, and Muhammad Abduh developed deep “epistemological affinity” with Western conceptions of Man or *Humanitas*. As Massad writes,

These Arab writers would approach the topic at hand by adopting and failing to question these recently invented European notions of “civilization” and “culture” and their commensurate insertion in a social Darwinist idiom of “evolution,” “progress,” “advancement,” “development,” “degeneration,” and most important, “decadence” and “renaissance.”⁵⁷

These discourses that internalize the idea of Islamic civilization as decadent needing a Renaissance, would lead to radical reactions still being felt all over the world today as “modern revivalist Islam,” i.e., Wahabism/Salafism, are now very powerful global forces that spread a version of Islam disconnected from its intellectual and spiritual roots, as an almost solely *Fiqh* (Law/Legal) based version of the religion. Massad adds that,

As Talal Asad explains, ‘Abduh, among others, drew on existing Islamic tradition, even when he disagreed with some of it to effect a reform whose ideological lineaments were European. Thus even though the medieval ibn Taymiyyah and the eighteenth-century Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s strict and literal interpretation of the Qur’an stripped Sufism of religious legitimacy, the project of modern religious reformers banished (parts of) it in accordance with modernist European ideas while remaining within a certain strand of tradition.⁵⁸

57. *Ibid.*: 5.

58. *Ibid.*: 12.

Despite the modernist reformers’ arrogance, Sufism is a vital part of Islam, and if we are to make reforms to move away from the oppression of modernity/coloniality, then it must be through a deep engagement with the spiritual as it relates to the destruction brought about by these reformers in alliance with modernity. As Shaykh Abdal-Hakim Murad has written, what is necessary in this context is a

revival of the spiritual life within Islam. If it is ever to prosper, the ‘Islamic revival’ must be made to see that it is in crisis, and that its mental resources are proving insufficient to meet contemporary needs. The response to this must be grounded in an act of collective *muhasaba*, of self-examination, in terms that transcend the ideologised neo-Islam of the revivalists, and return to a more classical and indigenously Muslim dialectic.⁵⁹

While the spiritual is central here, and it is where I will turn to in my argument next, it is also central that this spiritual guidance and self-examination lead us to a process of epistemic decolonization; no matter how difficult, and complex that self-examination may be. In this regard, Maldonado-Torres states,

The mutual reinforcement of epistemological and misanthropic skepticism creates peculiar challenges for people of color. For, while they are aware that modernity promises them full recognition of humanity through the adoption of methodic epistemological skepticism, it often passes unnoticed that the unconditional affirmation of the value of this form of skepticism reinforces the form of skepticism from which they are trying to es-

59. See: Abdul Hakim Murad, “Islamic Spirituality: The Forgotten Revolution.”

cape. It is from here that the project of liberation necessitates a process of epistemological decolonization and not one of epistemological assimilation. Epistemological decolonization as a project is not only relevant for people of color. In a way, it is the Europeans' only way out from the hellish circle that they have created. For, while misanthropic skepticism may intend to eliminate skepticism about the value of Man—by making Man more like a God and less than animal-like people—it instead spreads skepticism about the value of humanity as a whole, which in turn foments attitudes of violence and self destruction.⁶⁰

For many of the American Muslim authors I quote in what follows, Islam has been a spiritual and epistemological form of decolonization that has led them to live their lives in alliance and solidarity with Muslims throughout the world.

IV. TURNING *ANTHROPOS* ON *HUMANITAS*: COLONIALITY AT THE EDGE OF ISLAM

If what is called for according to Osamu “is rendering ‘*humanitas*,’ which insists upon its ‘universality,’ an object of ‘*anthropologique*’ consideration as one version of ‘*anthropos*,’”⁶¹ then the question becomes what sort of critique do we make when this inversion takes place as we turn to study *Humanitas*? Are we to critique the new *anthropos* by its own standards that it has constructed, or do we dare to construct critiques outside the Western canons of philosophy? To think about these issues it is necessary to turn to Enrique Dussel’s idea of Transmo-

60. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Lewis Gordon: Philosopher of the Human”: 124.

61. Nishitani Osamu, “*Anthropos* and *Humanitas*”: 270.

dernity.

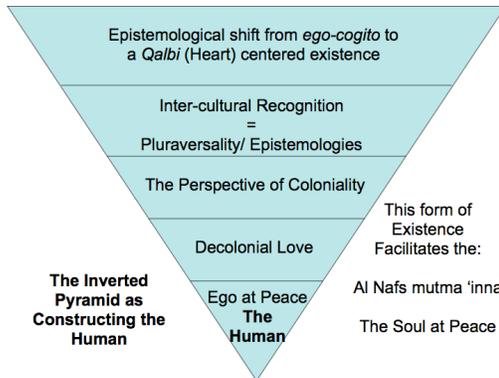
For Dussel, transmodernity refers to the self-affirmation of cultures that have been occluded by Western modernity... Transmodern thought is postsecular and, therefore, post religious as well... Transmodern thought also recognizes that what is often referred to as religion can be as colonizing as secularism itself... Transmodernity transgresses and transcends. While the first task may be more strictly defined as decolonization, the second indicates the emergence of a transmodern way of thinking. Transmodernity could be thus defined as the complex reality that comes into being through decolonizing processes and transmodern proposals. Transmodernity designates a future beyond the pitfalls of modernity/ coloniality. This is the future that a transmodern way of thinking would aim to promote.⁶²

In thinking about transmodern critique I turn instantly to the thought of the marginalized spiritual and an attempt to move from the *ego-cogito* to experience, or more properly as the Arabic terms it: *dhawq*, a spiritual tasting, as an attempt to free myself from repetitive forms of *taqlid*, or conformism/ imitation through tired forms of critique.⁶³ Thinking through existence from the same epistemology can only make us dizzy, so it is important that we bring in culturally specific epistemologies to critique the new *anthropos*, so as to properly understand what it is, and what it has done from

62. See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Secularism and Religion in the Modern/ Colonial World-System”: 383.

63. For further definitions of these terms see: T.J. Winter, “Introduction,” *Al-Ghazali On Disciplining the Soul-Kitab Riyadat al-nafs & On Breaking the Two Desires-Kitab Kasr al-shahwatayn-Books XXII and XXIII of The Revival of the Religious Sciences-Ihya’ Ulum al-Din*, (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1997): LXVI.

multiple perspectives, and in specific locations.



The pyramidal construction of Man from an Islamic perspective shifts our understanding of the seriousness of placing the egolatrous Man above God in constructing reality, while simultaneously allowing us to imagine what would be necessary in creating a transmodern critique in constructing the Human. It is in seeking this spiritual tasting, that I pursue what the great Islamic mystic philosopher of the eleventh century, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, understood to be the highest level of knowledge. According to al-Ghazali, "The highest type of knowledge...is not that of Reason or that of faith, but that of direct experience. Thus the genuine knowledge of God belongs to this 'experiential' order."⁶⁴

To shift the geo-politics of knowledge, and make what Walter Mignolo terms an "epistemic geo-political move," it is necessary to engage in a form of critique that is deeply engaged in *muhasaba* (self-examination) on three primary levels. These being examination of the self and one's spiritual state, an examination of the dominant structurally intersecting hierarchies that we all interact with (Gender, Race, Class, Religious domination, etc.), and finally an examination of one's local knowledge from where the place of critique is emanating. Founda-

64. See: Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 256.

tional to this self/ structural/ societal examination is an understanding of how Western epistemological racism has led towards a global desacralization of knowledge. This to me is the space of critique in-between the pyramidal construction of Man, and the inverted pyramid as constructing the Human. One of the central factors of dehumanization resulting from the colonization of peoples' life worlds that has been grossly under-theorized is this desacralization of knowledge, or what I will call in a forthcoming paper, the coloniality of the sacred. A reality where the sacred or God has been removed from the center of what is considered to be 'valid' or 'scientific' or 'rational' forms of thought. If we are to take seriously epistemologies beyond Western conceptions of knowledge then God and sacred texts must be taken seriously.

In re-centering the sacred in this process of self-examination, many theorists, led by Chicana Feminists, have turned to the idea of "decolonial love." For the UC-Berkeley professor Laura Perez this idea is closely linked to the Mayan "principle of *In'Laketch: tu eres mi otro yo*: you are my other me. Not only are we interwoven, we are one. I am you and you are me. To harm another is thus to literally harm one's own being. This is a basic spiritual law in numerous traditions."⁶⁵ One of the most exciting possibilities about the concept of decolonial love is the possibility of looking at what Love means in different faith and spiritual traditions throughout the world, and how this can help lead towards global understanding, and a decolonial move.

I think here of the possible contribution of the marginalized spiritual within Islam, that of Sufism. To make this shift in the geo-politics of knowledge in the context of Islam, what is necessary is the shift away from Descartes and Western modernity's

65. See: Laura Perez, "Con o Sin Permiso (With or Without Permission): Chicana Badgirls: Las Hociconas," *Chicana Badgirls: Las Hociconas (Exhibition Catalog)* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: 516 Arts, 2009): 5.

centering of human consciousness in the mind, to a re-centering of consciousness in the spiritual heart (*qalb*). This idea is echoed by Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatistas in their motto to center politics below and to the left (where the heart is), as is understood in Aztec and Mayan cosmology. While the secularism of Western modernity imagines itself as solely rational, and indeed has argued its rationality and casting off of any other type of knowledge as what has made the West supposedly superior to all other knowledge forms, in the Muslim world this separation between the Sacred and reason does not exist. Indeed *Aql* or reason is a central part of classical Islamic theology, and the deduction of its tenets. The difference is that Islam, especially Islamic mysticism, has a firm belief that you cannot simply attain total wisdom or knowledge through reason, but that it must be accompanied with spiritual understanding, the *dhawq* or experiential level of knowledge that Imam Ghazali calls for.

Foundationally, Islam and Christianity have completely different understandings of the concept of original sin. While in Christianity humans are “fallen” to Earth as a result of the sins of Adam and Eve, and thus all of humanity is supposedly born into an original state of sin, in Islamic thought it is said that all of humanity is born into a state of *fitra* (primordial state)⁶⁶, “which means that people are born inclined to faith—born with an intuitive awareness of divine purpose and a nature built to receive the prophetic message.”⁶⁷ According to Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, a prominent Muslim scholar, and White American convert to

Islam, what is necessary to nurture this state of *fitra* is to “cultivate this inclination to faith and purity of heart.”⁶⁸ The difficulty that Muslims face throughout the world in the context of coloniality is a relationship to existence, that from an Islamic perspective is first committing the only unforgivable sin in Islam, that of *shirk* (association), while simultaneously constructing a reality that can only lead people towards an inclination to evil. I will now take up both of these arguments.

The Blackamerican Muslim thinker, Sherman Jackson, best puts these theoretical perspectives into an Islamic context. When looked at in relationship to Rudolf Otto’s conception of *mysterium tremendum*, which “refers to that ineffable fear that accompanies the experience of encountering the divine,”⁶⁹ it can be seen that as Jackson posits, Man and Whiteness have been made into the all powerful “second creator.” Jackson understands the construction of Man, or what he terms, White supremacists to be “second creators” who falsely construct humans as signified objects that create us as something much different than the original state of *fitra* in which God creates us. Accordingly Jackson believes that these “second creators,” are committing *shirk* as,

it is neither graven images nor idols that pose the greatest challenge to God’s monopoly on divinity; it is false *mysterium tremendum*, second creators and the sociopolitical reality these produce. As such, it is against these, and not against idols, that modern men and women are likely to find the deepest meaning and resonance in Islam’s foundational principle: “There is no god except God (la ilaha illa Allah).” And, on this understanding, the

66. This is based on a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, which states that “every child is born in a state of *fitra*.” While many Muslims often translate *fitra* here as ‘every child is born a Muslim,’ Hamza Yusuf writes that the statement here actually means that people are born inclining towards faith in a general term. See Hamza Yusuf, *Purification of the Heart: Signs, Symptoms, and Cures of the Spiritual Diseases of the Heart* (Starlatch Press: 2004): 20-21.

67. Ibid: 21.

68. Ibid.

69. See: Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2005): 172-173.

proper response to the problem of human contingency is not to seek to overcome it but to resist and oppose false...“re-creation,” *both as subjects and as objects*. In this context, it becomes clear that opposition to white supremacy—or for that matter, any supremacy, including male supremacy or Arab supremacy—is not the exclusive preserve of black nationalism. On the contrary, opposition to white supremacy should be embraced as a manifestation of ultimate allegiance to God and the preservation of God’s status as the *only* noncontingent Definer of ultimate value. On this understanding, God, not “the man,” becomes the true motivator and ultimate concern of resistance. Indeed, resistance in this context becomes part of the struggle to remain within the penumbra of primordial meanings where God occupies the center of human consciousness. In this light, resisting false *mysterium tremendum* and “second creators” acquires meaning not only for Blackamerican Muslims but for Muslims, period. Whatever color they may be.⁷⁰

It is with this form of resistance in mind that I have written this paper. In attempting to make a decolonial move against these ‘second-creators’ I have theorized the pyramidal construction of Man, and the inverted pyramid as constructing the Human from an Islamic epistemology centered in the sciences of *Tasawwuf* (Sufism). In Islamic thought the human being as created by God is made up of five parts: the body (*jism*), the mind (*aql*), the spirit (*ruh*), the self (*nafs*), and the heart (*qalb*). The heart as a spiritual organ is central to existence and the human being’s relationship with God. As Ibn al-Arabi, who is considered to be one of the greatest mystic-philosophers in the history

70. Ibid: 182.

of Islam, has written,

The infinite capacity of the heart places it beyond delimitation (*taqyid*) by anything whatsoever. Like Being it is Non-delimited (*mutlaq*), free and absolved from all limitations and constraints. To the extent a person verifies the nature of things by means of [her/his] heart, [she/he] can understand God and the cosmos. But to the extent that [she/he] follows the way of [his/her] reason or rational faculty (*‘aql*), [they] will remain in constant constriction and binding. Here the Shaykh points out the root meaning of the term *‘aql*, closely connected to the “fetter” (*‘iqal*) used to hobble a camel. Reason strives to define and delimit God, but that is impossible. The heart frees God of all constraints and absolves [God] of all limitations. The heart alone is able to perceive God’s self disclosures through the faculty of imagination.⁷¹

The heart therefore is the single most important spiritual aspect of one’s life that we can have a constant relationship with as it relates to God and this process of self-purification. It is also the bodily location of our *ruh* which is the “underlying essence of the human individual which survives death.”⁷² Therefore, if purification of the heart is such a central part of the life of a Muslim, then we must question what type of inclination our existence in the world will lead us towards as it relates to our *nafs* (self). The Quran mentions three levels of *nafs*, these being the *nafs ammara bi’l-su’* (the soul constantly enjoining evil), *Al-nafs al-lawwama* (the ‘soul which blames’) and after a long inward

71. See: William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989): 107.

72. Abdul Hakim Murad, “Islamic Spirituality: The Forgotten Revolution.”

struggle, the

Nafs mutma'inna (the soul at peace). This is the *nafs* that one strives for in the process of the purifying the heart.⁷³ Therefore from an Islamic perspective Man as it is constructed in Modernity facilitates the *nafs ammara bi'l-su'*. This is why to make the decolonial shift to the inverted pyramid as constructing the Human, from an Islamic perspective the self should be at the bottom of existence while God is located as the center of all existence. In Islam this would mean a shift from the *ego-cogito* to *Tawheed* (God Consciousness) where you are conscious of God in every aspect of your life, while your spiritual existence is centered in your *qalb*. This is a shift to a God and therefore a *Qalb* or heart centered existence. To facilitate this it is necessary to make central the spiritual sciences of Islam, which have been marginalized by the orientalist discourses surrounding decadence. Using the term "Islamic Psychology" for Sufism here, Sheykh Murad has written that,

Islamic psychology is characteristic of the new *ulum* which, although present in latent and implicit form in the Quran, were first systematized in Islamic culture during the early Abbasid period. Given the importance that the Quran attached to obtaining a 'sound heart', we are not surprised to find that the influence of Islamic psychology has been massive and all-pervasive. In the formative first four centuries of Islam, the time when the great works of *tafsir*, *hadith*, grammar, and so forth were laid down, the *ulema* also applied their minds to this problem of *al-qalb al-salim* (the heart at peace). This was first visible when, following the example of the *Tab'in* [the second generation of Muslims], many of the early ascetics, such as sufyan ibn Uyayna, Su-

73. T.J. Winter, "Introduction": xxviii.

fyan al-Thawri, and Abdallah ibn al-Mubarak, had focused their concerns explicitly on the art of purifying the heart. The methods they recommended were frequent fasting, night prayers, and periodic retreats.⁷⁴

Through re-centering *Tasawwuf* Muslims will be better equipped to respond and create alternatives to modernity, as this heart centered existence will facilitate the possibility of developing the *Nafs mutma'inna* or the soul at peace. From an epistemology centered in Islamic Sufism, then, what is necessary first is to properly understand our consciousness and that it is centered in our heart rather than in our mind. If our hearts are alive, it can be our ultimate center of perception and understanding. Similar to Gloria Anzaldua's understanding of *La Facultad*, which she understands to be a form of "inner knowledge,"⁷⁵ is the Islamic concept of *Al Basira* (the spiritual eye of the heart) where one can spiritually sense, if properly developed, and understand reality much more deeply and thoroughly. As al-Ghazali put it in his masterwork of the inner sciences of Islam, *Ihya' ulum al-din*,

'Creation' refers to the external, and 'character' to the internal, form. Now, [the human] is composed of a body which perceives with ocular vision [*basar*] and a spirit [*ruh*] and a soul [*nafs*] which perceive with inner sight [*basira*]. Each of these things has an aspect and a form which is either ugly or beautiful. Furthermore, the soul which perceives with inner sight is of greater worth than the body which sees with ocular vision.⁷⁶

74. Abdul Hakim Murad, "Islamic Spirituality: The Forgotten Revolution."

75. For the concept of *La Facultad*, see Gloria Anzaldua. *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999).

76. Tim Winter (translator), *Al-Ghazali On Disciplining the Soul-Kitab Riyadat al-nafs & On*

In seeing with the eye of our heart we can begin to differentiate between form and meaning, as the outward form of things are not always their internal and spiritual reality. An example is a supermodel who on the outside may look beautiful based on the standards of Western society, but on the inside she may be stricken with anxiety, eating disorders, drug addiction and any number of maladies from being forced to focus only on their external beauty while not considering the internal realities of the heart and soul. Perhaps building on Aime Cesaire's understanding of the Western imperialism as a poison spreading throughout the world, the best example is the West's view of itself, as its most central significations of itself are those of benevolence and innocence. But as the world has seen for far to long, the reality of endless warfare and global genocide is the meaning/ reality behind the form.

Perhaps this is best explained by the early female sufi saint, Rabi'a al-Adawiyya, who stated in verse, "O children of Nothing! Truth can't come in through your eyes/Nor can speech go out through your mouth to find [God]/ Hearing leads the speaker down the road to anxiety/ And if you follow your hands and feet you will arrive at confusion—/ The real work is in the Heart: Wake up your Heart!/ Because when the Heart is completely awake, Then it needs no Friend."⁷⁷ The vision of our hearts has become blinded by the poison of the overrepresentation of white Western Man, and its solely material make-up. If we are to develop the internal tools necessary to break from the chains of modernity, much deeper consideration beyond thought and through the heart as well is necessary by scholars who are experts in both the sciences of decoloniality and the spiritual sciences of Islam. I

Breaking the Two Desires-Kitab Kasr al-shahwatayn-Books XXII and XXIII of The Revival of the Religious Sciences-Ihya' Ulum al-Din (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1997): 16.

77. See: Charles Upton, *Doorkeeper of the Heart: Versions of Rabi'a* (Putney, Vermont: Threshold Books, 1988): 27.

hope that my small contribution here will be the beginning of many fruitful conversations in this vein. For if we can make ourselves spiritually well, then surely we can develop and incline towards a "decolonial ethics," and "decolonial love," that will help lead us towards a transmodern day, where epistemologies can build from each other, rather than just compete for any opening to speak against the monoculture of the West. As surely the path of love is the one we must walk down, to see each other in the divine light we were born into. As Ibn Arabi most beautifully stated, "I believe in the religion of love/Whatever direction its caravans may take, For love is my religion and my faith."⁷⁸

V. CONCLUSION: DECOLONIZING THE HEART

If we look at the year 2030 as a benchmark, we see the possibility of the transmodern emerging in terms of demographics as Muslims become more than one quarter of humanity and people of color become the majority population in the United States again for the first time in two hundred plus years.⁷⁹ While demographic shifts could produce important political changes, the real question lies in the true heart of the matter, as we think of what an ethical/ theological/ and political decolonial turn would look like. If demographics shift and our epistemological and ontological ways of being stay within the confines of coloniality/ modernity then nothing has really changed. For Muslims this reality is embodied in the verse from the Qur'an that states, "God does not change the condition of a people unless they

78. Ibn 'Arabi. *Perfect Harmony: Sufi Poetry of Ibn 'Arabi* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2002).

79. See: "The Future of the Global Muslim Population," *Pew Research Religion & Public Life Project*, January 27, 2011, Available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/> and: Manuel Pastor, Angela Glover Blackwell and Stewart Kwoh, *Uncommon Common Ground: Race and America's Future* (New York, W.W. Norton, 2010).

change what is in themselves.”⁸⁰ While nearly every form of decolonization has been written about, as this verse attests to, the basis of all decolonial shifts would then begin with the necessary decolonization of the heart.

Perhaps then in expanding beyond Dussel, rather than just a theology of liberation, the question I am asking here is what is a spirituality of liberation? For if we are free from the material confines of colonial modernity within the spiritual plane of existence, then it is from that standpoint that all stages of liberation would emanate. To have a spirituality of liberation would invoke the divine assistance (*tawfiq*) that Muslims believe is necessary to undertake the next stages of theological, philosophical, ethical and political layers of struggle. Indeed beyond the political and philosophical realms of decolonization spiritual realities such as prayer have always played a central role within the life of the oppressed amongst Muslims. As two famous sayings of the Prophet Muhammad state so clearly, “Guard yourselves against oppression and so protect your souls from the cry of the oppressed; for surely no barrier exists between the cry of the oppressed and God—even if that cry should come from an atheist,” and “Supplication is the true weapon of the believer.”⁸¹ Specific supplications for the oppressed have even been collected such as the *Duaa Nasiri* (the prayer of Nasir) which is often recited in groups during great times of conflict and strife in different parts of the Muslim world.⁸² From this baseline of a spirituality of liberation which has always been central to Islamic teachings we can then expand to imag-

ine what other decolonial horizons are which have existed and are emerging from throughout the Muslim world.

As the Muslim majority countries continue to go through their slow process of decolonization between the United States global security state and terror war, monarchs, despots, infiltrations, revolutions and counter revolutions much like Latin America experienced in the twentieth century, an in depth study is necessary and project of liberation is necessary on the level which Dussel was able to undertake in his life and times for Muslims throughout the world. Of course the undertaking involved in this project is perhaps even broader than Dussel’s as the cultural diversity, political differences and different traditions of struggle from throughout the Muslim world are even more diverse than Latin America, while also being made up of Muslims living in Latin America, and growing Latino/a convert populations in the United States and throughout Latin America.

Our question then as a brief sketch here is, who does the Muslim world look for as its own exemplars of decolonization? These figures range over a period of hundreds of years, from those who resisted enslavement in the America’s⁸³, and colonization in North and West Africa, to Malcolm X’s global vision of Islam, what Sohail Daulatzai calls the “Muslim International.” This Muslim International is a call to global solidarity within the Muslim world and with peoples throughout the world who face similar forms of oppression. As Daulatzai so clearly states, “Having shaped and been shaped by U.S.-based Black liberation struggles and Third World decolonization in the post-World War II era, the Muslim International is measured by what Aime Cesaire has called “the compass of suffering,” connecting geographies of violence and shared territories of struggle against racial terror, global

80. Verse 13:11 - M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (translator), *The Qur’an* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 154.

81. Imam Muhammad b. Nasir al-Dar’I; Hamza Yusuf (Translator), *The Prayer of the Oppressed: The Sword of Victory’s Lot Over Every Tyranny and Plot* (Danville, CA: Sandala Press, 2010):53. The full text of this prayer is available here: http://sandala.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Dua_Nasiri_Arabic_Translation.pdf

82. This group recitation happens in places such as the emerging hybrid community of Muslims from throughout the world living in the San Francisco Bay Area at Zaytuna College and the Ta’leef Collective.

83. See: Abu Alfa Muhammad Shareef bin Farid, *The Islamic Slave Revolts of Bahia, Brazil* (Pittsburgh, PA: Sankore Institute of Islamic-African Studies International, 1998) and Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

capital, and war.”⁸⁴

For Malcolm X these struggles were indeed “material as well as spiritual,” and “political as well as religious,” and the interconnectedness of these struggles must be realized in the face of a globalized reality of white supremacy and the facts of coloniality/modernity. As an example of this, Malcolm X stated that the reality of white supremacy facing African Americans in the United States, “must also be the concern of and the moral responsibility of the entire Muslim World—if you hope to make the principles of the Quran a *Living Reality*.”⁸⁵ In an era where Islam has been used for political purposes whose means exceed the confines placed on Muslims by religious law (*Sharia*) related to warfare, we are in no way calling to the base form of oppressive resistance used by Al Qaeda and the Taliban reflective of the worst parts of modern warfare which values life no more than the drones, F-16’s, and contract armies of the American military. What we are calling for here is an in depth study of those spiritual, theological, philosophical and political thinkers and decolonial examples who came before us from throughout the Muslim International, while also imagining anew what these processes of decolonization look like for us today.

These examples range across leaders and scholars who lived and struggled in vastly different times and places, but for Muslims they start with the Prophets and reach their height with the Prophet Muhammad. Within the era of colonial modernity they range from leaders like Emir Abd el-Kader al-Jaza’iri (1808-1883)⁸⁶ who was a religious scholar, a sufi master, and a political and military leader who fought against French colonization in Algeria to Shaykh Amadu Bamba (1853-1927) who fought against the French

non-violently and is now venerated as one of the great Sufi saints of West Africa.⁸⁷ Further an introductory list could also include: Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio (1754-1817) and his daughter Nana Asma’u (1793-1864), Imam Shamail Daghastani (1797-1871), Shaykh Omar Mokhtar (1858-1931), Sayyid Muhammad Abd Allah al-Hassan (1856-1920), Shaykh Muhammad Izz ad-Din al-Qassam (1882-1935), Dagistani, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), Said Nursi (1878-1960), Muhammad ibn Adb al-Karim al-Khattabi (1882-1963), Shaykh Ibrahim Niassa (1900-1975), Badshah Khan (1890-1988) and Imam Warith Deen Muhammad (1933-2008).

For each of these thinkers they combined the spiritual, with the theological for political action in vastly different political times, places and eras. From this body of work as well as the long history of relevant texts we could grow a body of work that could take up the mantle started by Dussel in imagining what a theology of liberation, a philosophy of liberation, an ethics of liberation, a politics of liberation, and foundationally a spirituality of liberation could mean for Muslims as we attempt to decolonize our hearts and minds towards a transmodern future.

Just one example of a text from the Muslim International which has been grossly understudied and could be of great benefit to this undertaking is *Ambiguous Adventure* by Cheikh Hamidou Kane from Senegal. Written in 1962 *Ambiguous Adventure* is seen as a largely autobiographical tale about a young boy Samba Diallo who was raised within a lineage of Sufi Muslim Shaykhs (religious scholars), but instead of following tradition and following his family’s long line of classical Islamic education, he is instead the first generation sent to the newly opened French school in French colonized Senegal. The book is a back and forth between tradition and spirituality, and modernity and the disbelief of Westernized life as lived and embodied by Samba Diallo as he moves to France to study for his PhD and then returns to his village in Senegal years later. As Kane reflects throughout the text

87. See: Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007).

84. Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom beyond America* (Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 2013): xxii.

85. Quoted in: Louis A. DeCaro, Jr., *On the Side of My People: A Religious Life of Malcolm X* (New York, New York University Press, 1996): 239.

86. Ahmed Bouyerdene, *Emir Abd el-Kader: Hero and Saint of Islam* (New York: World Wisdom, 2012).

on the role Western epistemology has played in colonizing the heart, mind and spirit he writes of this key moment,

On the black continent it began to be understood that their true power lay not in the cannons of the first morning, but rather in what followed the cannons... The new school shares at the same time the characteristics of cannon and of magnet. From the cannon it draws its efficacy as an arm of combat. Better than the cannon, it makes conquest permanent. The cannon compels the body, the school bewitches the soul. Where the cannon has made a pit of ashes and of death, in the sticky mold of which men would not have rebounded from the ruins, the new school establishes peace. The morning of rebirth will be a morning of benediction through the appeasing virtue of the new school. From the magnet, the school takes its radiating force. It is bound up with a new order, as a magnetic stone is bound up with a field. The upheaval of the life of man within this new order is similar to the overturn of certain physical laws in a magnetic field. Men are seen to be composing themselves, conquered, along the lines of invisible and imperious forces. Disorder is organized, rebellion is appeased, the mornings of resentment resound with songs of a universal thanksgiving.⁸⁸

88. Cheikh Hamdidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*, (Oxford, London: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1962): 49-50. For an in depth reading of the spiritual aspects of the text see: Rebecca Masterton, "Islamic Mystical Readings of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*," *Journal of Islamic Studies* (Oxford University Press, 20 (1), 2009): 21-45. Available at: <http://jis.oxfordjournals.org/content/20/1/21.short>

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