Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges*

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Modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking.[1] It consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of "this side of the line" and the realm of "the other side of the line". The division is such that "the other side of the line" vanishes as reality, becomes nonexistent, and is indeed produced as nonexistent. Nonexistent means not existing in

[1] I do not claim that modern Western thinking is the only historical form of abyssal thinking. On the contrary, it is highly probable that there are, or have been, forms of abyssal thinking outside the West. This paper does not claim to characterize the latter. It merely maintains that, whether abyssal or not, nonwestern forms of thinking have been treated in an abyssal way by modern Western thinking. This is to say that I do not engage here with either pre-modern Western thinking or the marginal or subordinate versions of modern Western thinking which have opposed the hegemonic version, the only one I am concerned with.

any relevant or comprehensible way of being.[2] Whatever is produced as nonexistent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other. What most fundamentally characterizes abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. To the extent that it prevails, this side of the line only prevails by exhausting the field of relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only nonexistence, invisibility, non-dialectical absence.

To give an example based on my own work, I have characterized Western modernity as a socio-political paradigm founded on the tension between social regulation and social emancipation.[3] This is the visible distinction that founds all modern conflicts, both in terms of substantive issues and in terms of procedures. But underneath this distinction there is another one, an invisible one, upon which the former is founded. Such invisible distinction is the distinction between metropolitan societies and colonial territories. Indeed, the regulation/emancipation dichotomy only applied to metropolitan societies. It would be unthinkable to apply it to colonial territories. The regulation/emancipation dichotomy had no conceivable place in such territories. There, another dichotomy would apply, the dichotomy between appropriation/violence, which, in turn, would be inconceivable if applied on this side of the line. Because the colonial territories were unthinkable as sites for the unfolding of the paradigm of regulation/emancipation, the fact that the latter did not apply to them did not compromise the paradigm's universality.

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[2] On the sociology of absences as a critique of the production of nonexistent reality by hegemonic thinking, see Santos 2004, 2006b and 2006c.

[3] This tension is the other side of the modern discrepancy between current experiences and expectations about the future, also expressed in the positivistic motto of "order and progress". The pillar of social regulation is constituted by the principle of the state, the principle of the market and the principle of the community, while the pillar of emancipation consists of three logics of rationality: the aesthetic-expressive rationality of the arts and literature, the cognitive-instrumental rationality of science and technology and the moral-practical rationality of ethics and the rule of law (Santos, 1995: 2). See also Santos 2002a.

Modern abyssal thinking excels in making distinctions and in radicalizing them. However, no matter how radical such distinctions are and how dramatic the consequences of being on either side of such distinctions may be, they have in common the fact that they belong to this side of the line and combine to make invisible the abyssal line upon which they are grounded. The intensely visible distinctions structuring social reality on this side of the line are grounded on the invisibility of the distinction between this side of the line and the other side of the line.

Modern knowledge and modern law represent the most accomplished manifestations of abyssal thinking. They account for the two major global lines of modern times, which, though being different and operating differently, are mutually interdependent. Each one creates a sub-system of visible and invisible distinctions in such a way that the invisible ones become the foundation of the visible ones. In the field of knowledge, abyssal thinking consists in granting to modern science the monopoly of the universal distinction between true and false, to the detriment of two alternative bodies of knowledge: philosophy and theology. The exclusionary character of this monopoly is at the core of the modern epistemological disputes between scientific and nonscientific forms of truth. Since the universal validity of a scientific truth is admittedly always very relative, given the fact that it can only be ascertained in relation to certain kinds of objects under certain circumstances and established by certain methods, how does it relate to other possible truths which may even claim a higher status but which cannot be established according to scientific methods, such as reason as philosophical truth or faith as religious truth?[4]

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[4] Although in very distinct ways, Pascal, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were the philosophers that more profoundly analyzed, and lived, the antinomies contained in this question. More recently, mention must be made of Karl Jaspers (1952, 1986, 1995) and Stephen Toulmin (2001).

These tensions between science, philosophy and theology have thus become highly visible but, as I contend, they all take place on this side of the line. Their visibility is premised upon the invisibility of forms of knowledge that cannot be fitted into any of these ways of knowing. I mean popular, lay, plebeian, peasant, or indigenous knowledges on the other side of the line. They vanish as relevant or commensurable knowledges because they are beyond truth and falsehood. It is unimaginable to apply to them not only the scientific true/false distinction, but also the scientifically unascertainable truths of philosophy and theology that constitute all the acceptable knowledge on this side of the line.[5] On the other side of the line, there is no real knowledge; there are beliefs, opinions, intuitive or subjective understandings, which, at the most, may become objects or raw materials for scientific inquiry. Thus, the visible line that separates science from its modern others is grounded on the abyssal invisible line that separates science, philosophy and theology, on one side, from, on the other, knowledges rendered incommensurable and incomprehensible for meeting neither the scientific methods of truth nor their acknowledged contesters in the realm of philosophy and theology.

In the field of modern law, this side of the line is determined by what counts as legal or illegal according to the official state or international law. The legal and the illegal are the two only relevant forms of existing before the law and, for that reason, the distinction between the two is a universal distinction. This central dichotomy leaves out a whole social territory where the dichotomy would be unthinkable as an organizing principle, that is, the territory of the lawless, the a-legal, the non-legal and even the legal or illegal

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[5] For an overview of the recent debates on the relationships between science and other knowledges, see Santos, Nunes and Meneses, 2007. See also Santos 1995: 7-55.

according to non-officially recognized law.[6] Thus, the invisible abyssal line that separates the realm of law from the realm of non-law grounds the visible dichotomy between the legal and the illegal which organizes, on this side of the line, the realm of law.

In each of the two great domains — science and law — the divisions carried out by the global lines are abyssal to the extent that they effectively eliminate whatever realities are on the other side of the line. This radical denial of co-presence grounds the affirmation of the radical difference that, on this side of the line, separates true and false, legal and illegal. The other side of the line comprises a vast set of discarded experiences, made invisible both as agencies and as agents, and with no fixed territorial location. Actually, as I suggested, originally there was a territorial location and historically it coincided with a specific social territory: the colonial zone.[7] Whatever could not be thought of as either true or false, legal or illegal was most distinctly occurring in the colonial zone. In this respect, modern law seems to have some historical precedence over science in the creation of abyssal thinking. Indeed, contrary to conventional legal wisdom, it was the global legal line separating the Old World from the New World that made possible the emergence of modern law and, in particular, of modern international law in the Old World, on this side of the line.[8] The first modern global line was probably the Treaty of

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[6] In Santos 2002a, I analyze in great detail the nature of modern law and the topic of legal pluralism (the co-existence of more than one legal system in the same geo-political space).

[7] In this paper, I take for granted the intimate link between capitalism and colonialism. See, among others, Williams, 1994 (originally published in 1944); Arendt, 1951; Fanon, 1967; Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972; Wallerstein, 1974; Dussel, 1992; Mignolo, 1995; Quijano, 2000.

[8] Imperialism is thus constitutive of the modern state. Unlike what the conventional theories of international law affirm, the latter is not a product of the pre-existing modern state. The modern state and international law, national constitutionalism and global constitutionalism are the product of the same historical imperial process. See Koskenniemi, 2002; Anghie, 2005; Tully, forthcoming.

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Tordesillas between Portugal and Spain (1494),[9] but the truly abyssal lines emerge in mid sixteenth century with the amity lines.[10] The abyssal character of the lines manifests itself in the elaborate cartographic work invested in their definition, in the extreme precision demanded from cartographers, globe-makers and pilots, and in the vigilant policing and harsh punishment of violations. In its modern constitution, the colonial represents, not the legal or illegal, but rather the lawless. The maxim then becoming popular - "Beyond the equator there are no sins"- is echoed in the famous passage of Pascal's *Penseés* written in the mid seventeenth century: "Three degrees of latitude upset the whole jurisprudence and one meridian determines what is true… It is a funny sort of justice whose limits are marked by a river; true on this side of the Pyrenees, false on the other" (1966: 46).

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[9] The definition of abyssal lines occurs gradually. According to Carl Schmitt (2003: 91), the cartographic lines of the fifteenth century (the *rayas*, Tordesillas) still presupposed a global spiritual order in force on both sides of the division — the medieval *respublica Christina*, symbolized by the Pope.This explains the difficulties confronting Francisco Vitoria, the great Spanish theologian and jurist of the XVI century, in justifying the land occupation in the Americas. Vitoria asks if the discovery is sufficient title for juridical possession of the land. His response is very complex, not just because it is formulated in late Aristotelian style, but mainly because Vitoria does not see any convincing response that is not premised upon the superior power of the Europeans. This fact, however, does not confer any moral or statutory right over the occupied land. According to Vitoria, not even the superior civilization of the Europeans suffices as the fundamental basis of a moral right. For Vitoria, the conquest could only be sufficient ground for a reversible right to land, a *jura contraria*, as he says. That is, the question of the relationship between conquest and right to land must be asked in the reverse: if the Indians had discovered and conquered the Europeans, would they have a right to occupy the land as well? Vitoria's justification of land occupation is still embedded in the medieval Christian order, in the mission ascribed to the Spanish and Portuguese kings by the Pope, and in the concept of just war. See Carl Schmitt, 2003:101- 125. See also Anghie, 2005: 13-31.Vitoria's laborious argumentation reflects the extent to which the crown was at the time much more concerned with legitimating property rights than sovereignty over the New World. See also Pagden, 1990:15.

[10] From the sixteenth century onwards, cartographic lines, the so-called amity lines — the first one of which may have emerged as a result of the 1559 Cateau-Cambresis Treaty between Spain and France — dropped the idea of a common global order and established an abyssal duality between the territories on this side of the line and the territories on the other side of the line. On this side of the line, truce, peace and friendship apply; on the other side of the line, the law of the strongest, violence and plunder. Whatever occurs on the other side of the line is not subject to the same ethical or juridical principles applying on this side of the line. It cannot, therefore, give rise to the kinds of conflicts which the violation of such principles originates. This duality allowed, for instance, the catholic king of France to have an alliance with the catholic king of Spain on this side of the line, and, at the same time to have an alliance with the pirates that were attacking the Spanish ships on the other side of the line.

From the mid sixteenth century onwards, the legal and the political debate among the European states concerning the New World is focused on the global legal line, that is, on the determination of the colonial, not on the internal ordering of the colonial. On the contrary, the colonial is the state of nature where civil society's institutions have no place. Hobbes explicitly refers to the "savage people in many places of America" as the exemplars of the state of nature (1985 [1651]: 187), and Locke thinks likewise when he writes in *Of Civil Government*: "In the beginning all the world was America" (1946 [1690]: §49). The colonial is thus the blind spot upon which the modern conceptions of knowledge and law are built. The theories of the social contract of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are as important for what they say as for what they silence. What they say is that modern individuals, that is, metropolitan men, enter the social contract in order to abandon the state of nature to form the civil society.[11] What they don't say is that a massive world region of state of nature is thereby being created, a state of nature to which millions of human beings are condemned and left without any possibility of escaping via the creation of a civil society.

Western modernity, rather than meaning the abandonment of the state of nature and the passage to civil society, means the coexistence of both the civil society and the state of nature, separated by an abyssal line whereby the hegemonic eye, located in the civil society, ceases to see and indeed declares as nonexistent the state of nature. The present being created on the other side of the line is made invisible by its being reconceptualized as the irreversible past of this side of the line. The hegemonic contact converts simultaneity into noncontemporaneity. It makes up pasts to make room for a single

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[11] On the different conceptions of the social contract, see Santos, 2002a: 30-39.

homogenous future. Therefore, the fact that the legal principles in force in the civil society, on this side of the line, do not apply on the other side of the line does not in any way compromise their universality.

The same abyssal cartography is constitutive of modern knowledge. Again, the colonial zone is, *par excellence,* the realm of incomprehensible beliefs and behaviors which in no way can be considered knowledge, whether true or false. The other side of the line harbors only incomprehensible magical or idolatrous practices. The utter strangeness of such practices led to denying the very human nature of the agents of such practices. On the basis of their refined conceptions of humanity and human dignity, the humanists reached the conclusion that the savages were sub-human. Do the Indians have a soul? - was the question. When Pope Paul III answered affirmatively in his bull *Sublimis Deus* of 1537, he did so by conceiving of the indigenous people's soul as an empty receptacle, an *anima nullius*, very much like the *terra nullius.*[12]

On the basis of these legal and epistemological abyssal conceptions, the universality of the tension between regulation and emancipation, applying on this side of the line, is not contradicted by the tension between appropriation and violence applying on the other side of the line. Appropriation and violence take different forms in the abyssal legal line and in the abyssal epistemological line. But, in general, appropriation involves incorporation, cooptation and assimilation, whereas violence involves physical, material, cultural, and human destruction. It goes without saying that appropriation and violence are deeply

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[12] According to the bull, "the Indians are truly men and… they are not only capable of understanding the Catholic Faith but, according to our information, they desire exceedingly to receive it". "*Sublimis Deus*" is at http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm, and was accessed on September 22, 2006.

intertwined. In the realm of knowledge, appropriation ranges from the use of locals as guides[13] and the use of local myths and ceremonies as instruments of conversion, to the pillage of indigenous knowledge of biodiversity, while violence ranges from prohibition of the use of native languages in public spaces and the forcible adoption of Christian names, to conversion and the destruction of ceremonial sites and symbols, and to all forms of racial and cultural discrimination. As regards law, the tension between appropriation and violence is particularly complex because of its direct relation with the extraction of value: slave trade and forced labor, instrumental use of customary law and authority in the indirect rule, pillage of natural resources, massive displacement of populations, wars and unequal treatises, different forms of apartheid and forced assimilation, etc. While the logic of regulation/emancipation is unthinkable without the matricial distinction between the law of persons and the law of things, the logic of appropriation/violence only recognizes the law of things, of both human and non-human things. The almost ideal typical version of such law is the law of the "Congo Free State" under King Leopold II of Belgium.[14]

There is, therefore, a dual modern cartography: a legal cartography and an epistemological cartography. The other side of the abyssal line is the realm of beyond legality and illegality (lawlessness), of beyond truth and falsehood (incomprehensible beliefs, idolatry, magic).[15] These forms of radical negation together result in a radical

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[13] As in the famous case of Ibn Majid, an experienced pilot who showed Vasco da Gama the maritime way from Mombassa to India (Ahmad, 1971). Other examples can be found in Burnett, 2002.

[14] Different views on this "private colony" and on King Leopold can be read in Emerson, 1979; Hochschild, 1999; Dumoulin, 2005; Hasian, 2002:89-112.

[15] The deep duality of abyssal thinking and the incommensurability between the terms of the duality was enforced by well policed monopolies of knowledge and law with a powerful institutional base –

absence, the absence of humanity, modern sub-humanity. The exclusion is thus both radical and nonexistent, as sub-humans are not conceivably candidates for social inclusion.[16] Modern humanity is not conceivable without modern sub-humanity.[17] The negation of one part of humanity is sacrificial, in that it is the condition of the affirmation of that other part of humanity which considers itself as universal.[18]

My argument in this paper is that this is as true today as in the colonial period. Modern western thinking goes on operating through abyssal lines that divide the human from the sub-human in such a way that human principles don't get compromised by inhuman practices. The colonies provided a model of radical exclusion that prevails in modern Western thinking and practice today as it did during the colonial cycle. Today as then, both the creation and the negation of the other side of the line is constitutive of hegemonic principles and practices. Today as then, the impossibility of co-presence between the two sides of the line runs supreme. Today as then, the legal and political civility on this side of the line is premised upon the existence of utter incivility on the other side of the line. Guantánamo is today one of most grotesque manifestations of abyssal legal thinking, the creation of the other side of the line as a non-area in legal and political terms, an unthinkable ground for the rule of law, human rights, and

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universities, research centers, scientific communities, law schools and legal professions – and the sophisticated linguistic technology of science and jurisprudence.

[16] The supposed externality of the other side of the line is, in effect, the consequence of its doubly belonging to abyssal thinking: as foundation and as negation of the foundation.

[17] Fanon denounced this negation of humanity with unsurpassing lucidity (Fanon, 1963, 1967). The radicalism of the negation grounds Fanon's defense of violence as an intrinsic dimension of the anti-colonial revolt. The contrast between Fanon and Gandhi in this regard, even though they both shared the same struggle, must be the object of careful reflection, particularly because they are two of the most important thinkers-activists of the last century. See Federici, 1994 and Kebede, 2001.

[18] This founding negation allows all that is possible to become the possibility of everything, on the one hand and, on the other, the exalting creativity of abyssal thinking to trivialize the price of its destructivity so easily.

democracy.[19] But it would be an error to consider it exceptional. There are many other Guantánamos, from Iraq to Palestine and Darfur. More than that, there are millions of Guantánamos in the sexual and racial discriminations both in the public and the private sphere, in the savage zones of the mega-cities, in the *ghettos*, in the sweatshops, in the prisons, in the new forms of slavery, in the black market of human organs, in child labor and prostitution.

I argue, first, that the tension between regulation and emancipation continues to coexist with the tension between appropriation and violence in such a way that the universality of the first tension is not contradicted by the existence of the second one; second, that abyssal lines continue to structure modern knowledge and modern law; and, third, that these two abyssal lines are constitutive of Western-based political and cultural relations and interactions in the modern world system. In sum, I argue that the metaphorical cartography of the global lines has outlived the literal cartography of the amity lines that separated the Old from the New World. Global social injustice is, therefore, intimately linked to global cognitive injustice. The struggle for global social justice must, therefore, be a struggle for global cognitive justice as well. In order to succeed, this struggle requires a new kind of thinking, a post-abyssal thinking.

The abyssal divide between regulation/emancipation and appropriation/violence

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[19] On Guantánamo and related issues, see, among many others, McCormack, 2004; Amann, 2004a, 2004b; Human Rights Watch, 2004; Sadat, 2005; Steyn, 2004; Borelli, 2005; Dickinson, 2005; Van Bergen and Valentine, 2006.

The permanence of abyssal global lines throughout the modern period does not mean that they have remained fixed. Historically, the global lines dividing the two sides have been shifting. But at any given historical moment, they are fixed and their position is heavily surveyed and guarded, very much like the amity lines. In the last sixty years, the global lines suffered two tectonic shake-ups. The first one took place with the anti-colonial struggles and the processes of independence.[20] The other side of the line rose against radical exclusion as the peoples that had been subjected to the appropriation/violence paradigm got organized and claimed the right to be included in the regulation/emancipation paradigm (Fanon, 1963, 1967; Nkrumah, 1965; Cabral, 1979; Gandhi, 1951, 1956). For a time, the appropriation/violence paradigm seemed to have come to an end, and so did the abyssal division between this side of the line and the other side of the line. Each one of the two global lines (the epistemological and the juridical) seemed to be moving according to its own logic, but both of them in the same direction: their movements seemed to converge in the shrinking and ultimately the elimination of the other side of the line. However, this is not what happened, as shown by dependency theory, modern world system theory, and postcolonial studies.[21]

In this paper, I focus on the second tectonic shake-up of the abyssal global lines. It has been under way since de 1970s and 1980s and it goes in the opposite direction. This time, the global lines are moving again, but in such a way that the other side of the line seems to be expanding, while this side of the line is shrinking. The logic of

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[20] On the eve of World War II, colonies and ex-colonies covered about 85 percent of the land surface of the globe.

[21] The multiple origins and the subsequent variations of these debates can be traced in Memmi, 1965; Dos Santos, 1971; Cardoso and Faletto, 1969; Frank, 1969; Rodney, 1972; Wallerstein, 1974, 2004; Bambirra, 1978; Dussell, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Chew and Denemark, 1996; Spivak, 1999; Césaire, 2000; Mignolo, 2000; Grosfoguel, 2000; Afzal-Khan and Sheshadri-Crooks, 2000; Mbembe, 2001; Dean and Levi, 2003.

appropriation/violence has been gaining strength to the detriment of the logic of regulation/emancipation. To such an extent, that the domain of regulation/emancipation is not only shrinking but becoming internally contaminated by the logic of appropriation/violence.

The complexity of this movement is difficult to unravel as it unfolds under our eyes, and our eyes cannot help being on this side of the line and seeing from inside out. To capture the full measure of what is going on requires a gigantic decentring effort. No single scholar can do it alone, as an individual. Drawing on a collective effort to develop an epistemology of the South,[22] I surmise that this movement is made of a main movement and a subaltern counter-movement. The main movement I call the return of the colonial and the return of the colonizer, and the counter-movement I call subaltern cosmopolitanism.

First, the return of the colonial and the return of the colonizer. The colonial is here a metaphor for those who perceive their life experiences as taking place on the other side of the line and rebel against it. The return of the colonial is the abyssal response to what is perceived as the threatening intrusion of the colonial in the metropolitan societies. Such return takes three main forms: the terrorist,[23] the undocumented migrant worker[24] and the

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[22] Between 1999 and 2002 I carried out a research project titled "Reinventing Social Emancipation: Toward New Manifestos" which involved sixty social scientists in six countries (Brazil, Colombia, India, Mozambique, Portugal and South Africa). The main results will be published in five volumes, of which three are already out: Santos, 2005, 2006a and 2007. For the epistemological implications of this project see Santos, 2003 (forthcoming in English by Lexington Books) and Santos, 2004. For the conections between this project and the World Social Forum, see Santos, 2006c.

[23] Among many others see Harris, 2003; Kanstroom, 2003; Sekhon, 2003; C. Graham, 2005, N. Graham 2005; Scheppele, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Guiora, 2005.

[24] See Miller, 2002; De Genova, 2002; Kanstroom, 2004; Hansen and Stepputat, 2004; Wishnie, 2004; Taylor, 2004; Silverstein, 2005; Passel, 2005; Sassen, 1999. For the extreme right view on this topic, see Buchanan, 2006.

refugee.[25] In different ways, each carries along with her the abyssal global line that defines radical exclusion and legal non-existence. For instance, in many of their provisions, the new wave of anti-terrorism and immigration laws follow the regulatory logic of the appropriation/violence paradigm.[26] The return of the colonial does not necessarily require that she be physically present in the metropolitan societies. It suffices that she have a relevant connection with them. In the case of the terrorist, such connection may be established by the secret services. In the case of the undocumented migrant worker, it will suffice her being hired by one of hundreds of thousands of sweatshops operating in the Global South[27] sub-contracted by metropolitan multinational corporations. In the case of refugees, the relevant connection is established by their request to obtain refugee status in a given metropolitan society.

The colonial that returns is indeed a new abyssal colonial. This time, the colonial returns not just in the former colonial territories but also in the metropolitan societies. She is now intruding or trespassing on the metropolitan spaces that were demarcated from the beginning of Western modernity as this side of the line and, moreover, she shows a level of mobility immensely superior to the mobility of runaway slaves.[28] Under these circumstances, the abyssal metropolitan sees herself trapped in a shrinking space and

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[25] Based on Edward Said's Orientalism (1978). Akram (2000) identifies a new form of stereotyping , which she calls neo-Orientalism, affecting metropolitan evaluation of asylum and refugee claims by people coming from the Arab or Muslim world. See also Akram, 1999. Menefee, 2004; Bauer, 2004; Cianciarulo, 2005; Akram and Karmely, 2005.

[26] On the implications of the new wave of anti-terrorism and immigration law, see the articles cited in footnotes 23, 24, and 25 and Immigrant Rights Clinic, 2001; Chang, 2001; Whitehead and Aden, 2002; Zelman, 2002; Lobel, 2002; Roach, 2002 (focusing on the Canadian case); Van de Linde *et al.,* 2002 (focusing on some European countries); Miller, 2002; Emerton, 2004 (focusing on Australia); Boyne, 2004 (focusing on Germany); Krishnan, 2004 (focusing on India); Barr, 2004; N. Graham, 2005.

[27] Here I refer to the peripheral and semi-peripheral regions and countries of the modern world system, which were to be called, after the Second World War, the Third World (Santos, 1995: 506-519).

[28] See, for instance, David, 1924; Tushnet, 1981:169-188

reacts by redrawing the abyssal line. From her perspective, the new colonial resistance cannot but be met with the ordering logic of appropriation/violence. The time of a neat divide between the Old and the New world, between the metropolitan and the colonial, is over. The line must be drawn at as close a range as is necessary to guarantee security. What used to be unequivocally this side of the line is now a messy territory cut through by a meandering abyssal line. The Israeli segregation wall in Palestine[29] and the category of the "unlawful enemy combatent"[30] are probably the most adequate metaphors of the new abyssal line and the messy cartography it leads to.

A messy cartography cannot but lead to messy practices. Regulation/emancipation is becoming increasingly disfigured by the growing pressure and presence in its midst of appropriation/violence. However, neither the pressure nor the disfiguring can be fully acknowledged, precisely because the other side of the line was from the beginning incomprehensible as a sub-human territory.[31] In many different ways, the terrorist and the undocumented migrant worker illustrate both the pressure of the appropriation/violence logic and the inability of abyssal thinking to acknowledge such pressure as something foreign to regulation/emancipation. It is increasingly evident that the just mentioned anti-terrorist legislation, now being promulgated in many different countries following the UN Security Council Resolution[32] and under strong pressure of US diplomacy, hollows out

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[29] See International Court of Justice, 2005.

[30] See Dörmann, 2003; Harris, 2003; Kanstroom, 2003; Human Rights Watch, 2004; Gill and Sliedregt, 2005.

[31] As an illustration, legal professionals are called upon to accommodate the pressure by remanaging conventional doctrine, changing interpretation rules, redefining the scope of principles and the hierarchies among them. A telling example is the debate on the constitutionality of torture between Alan Dershowitz and his critics. See Dershowitz, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Posner 2002; Kreimer, 2003; Strauss, 2004.

[32] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566. This anti-terrorism resolution was adopted on 8 October 2004, following UN Security Council Resolution 1373 which was adopted as a response to the

the civil and political content of basic constitutional rights and guarantees. As all this occurs without a formal suspension of such rights and guarantees, we are witnessing the emergence of a new state form, the state of exception, which, contrary to the old forms of state of siege or state of emergency, restricts democratic rights under the guise of safeguarding or even expanding them.[33]

More broadly, it appears that Western modernity can only spread globally to the extent that it violates all the principles upon which it has historically grounded the legitimacy of the regulation/emancipation paradigm on this side of the line. Human rights are thus violated in order to be defended, democracy is destroyed to safeguard democracy, life is eliminated to preserve life. Abyssal lines are being drawn both in a literal and a metaphorical sense. In the literal sense, these are the lines that define borders as fences[34] and killing fields, divide the cities between civilized zones (more and more, gated communities)[35] and savage zones, and prisons between legal confinement sites and sites of brutal and lawless destruction of life.[36]

The other leg of the current main movement is the return of the colonizer. It involves resuscitating the forms of colonial ordering in both the metropolitan societies, this time

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September 11 terrorist attacks on the US. For a detailed analysis of the process of adoption of resolution 1566, see Saul, 2005.

[33] I use the concept of state of exception to express a legal-political condition in which the erosion of civil and political rights occurs below the radar of the Constitution, that is, without formal suspension of those rights, as happens when the state of emergency is declared. See Scheppele, 2004b; Agamben, 2004.

[34] A good example of the abyssal legal logic underlying the defense of the construction of a fence separating the US southern border from Mexico in Glon, 2005.

[35] See Blakely and Snyder, 1999; Low, 2003; Atkinson and Blandy, 2005; Coy, 2006.

[36] See Amann, 2004a, 2004b; Brown, 2005. A new report by the European Parliamentary Temporary Committee on illegal CIA activity in Europe (November, 2006) shows how European governments acted as the willing facilitators of CIA abuses, such as secret detention and rendition to torture. This lawless investigative field involved 1,245 overflights and stopovers by CIA planes in Europe (some of them involving prisoner transfers) and the creation of secret detention centers in Poland, Romania and probably also in Bulgaria, Ukraine, Macedonia and Kosovo.

governing the life of common citizens, and in the societies once subjected to European colonialism. This is most notably the case of what I call the new indirect rule.[37] It is emerging as the state withdraws from social regulation and public services are privatized. Powerful non-state actors get thereby control over the lives and the wellbeing of vast populations, be it the control of health care, land, potable water, seeds, forests, or the quality of the environment. The political obligation binding the legal subject to the *Rechtstaat*, the modern constitutional state, that has prevailed on this side of the line, is being replaced by privatized, depoliticized contractual obligations under which the weaker party is more or less at the mercy of the stronger party. This latter form of ordering bears some disturbing resemblances with the ordering of appropriation/violence that prevailed on the other side of the line. I have described this situation as the rise of social fascism, a social regime of extremely unequal power relations which grant to the stronger party a veto power over the life and livelihood of the weaker party.

Elsewhere I distinguish five forms of social fascism.[38] Here I refer to three of them, the ones that more clearly reflect the pressure of the appropriation/violence logic upon the regulation/emancipation logic. The first one is the *fascism of social apartheid.* I mean the social segregation of the excluded through an urban cartography which distinguishes between "savage" and "civilized" zones. The urban savage zones are the zones of Hobbes' state of nature, the zones of internal civil war as in many mega-cities throughout the Global South. The civilized zones are the zones of the social contract that see

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[37] Indirect rule was a form of European colonial policy largely practiced in the former Bristish colonies, where the traditional, local power structure, or at least part of it, was incorporated into the colonial state administration. See Lugard, 1929; Perham, 1934; Malinowski, 1945; Furnivall, 1948; Morris and Read, 1972; Mamdani, 1996, 1999.

[38] I analyze in detail the emergence of social fascism as a consequence of the breakdown of the logic of the social contract in Santos, 2002b: 447-458.

themselves more and more threatened by the savage zones. In order to defend themselves, they turn themselves into neofeudal castles, the fortified enclaves that are characteristic of the new forms of urban segregation (private cities, enclosed condos, gated communities, as I mentioned above). The division into savage and civilized zones is becoming a general criterion of sociability, a new hegemonic time-space that crosses all social, economic, political, and cultural relations, and is, therefore, common to state and non-state action.

The second form is c*ontractual fascism.* It occurs in the situations in which the power inequalities between the parties in the civil contract is such that the weaker party, rendered vulnerable for having no alternative, accepts the conditions imposed by the stronger party, however costly and despotic they may be. The neoliberal project of turning the labor contract into a civil law contract like any other foreshadows a situation of contractual fascism. As mentioned above, this form of fascism occurs today frequently in situations of privatization of public services, such as health, welfare, utilities, etc.[39] In such cases, the social contract that presided over the production of public services in the welfare state and the developmentalist state is reduced to the individual contract between consumers and providers of privatized services. In light of the often glaring deficiencies of public regulation, this reduction entails the elimination from the contractual ambit of decisive aspects of the protection of consumers, which, for this reason, become extra contractual. By claiming extra contractual prerogatives, the

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[39] One of the most dramatic examples is the privatization of water and the social consequences therefrom. See Bond, 2000 and Buhlungu *et al*, 2006 (for the case of South Africa); Oliveira Filho, 2002 (for the case of Brazil); Olivera, 2005 and Flores, 2005 (for the case of Bolivia); Bauer, 1998 (for the case of Chile); Trawick, 2003 (for the case of Peru); castro,2006 (for the case of Mexico). Dealing with two or more cases, Donahue and Johnston, 1998; Balanyá et al 2005; Conca, 2005; Lopes, 2005. See also Klare, 2001; Hall, Lobina and de la Motte, 2005.

privatized services agencies take over functions of social regulation earlier exercised by the state. The state, whether implicitly or explicitly, subcontracts these agencies for carrying out these functions and, by so doing without the effective participation or control of the citizens, becomes complicit with the production of contractual fascism.

The third form of social fascism is *territorial fascism*. It occurs whenever social actors with strong patrimonial or military capital dispute the control of the state over the territories wherein they act, or neutralize that control by co-opting or coercing the state institutions and exercising social regulation upon the inhabitants of the territory, without their participation and against their interests. In most cases, these are the new colonial territories inside states that almost always were once subjected to European colonialism. Under different forms, the original land grabbing as a prerogative of conquest and the subsequent "privatization" of the colonies are at work in the reproduction of territorial fascism and, more generally, in the relationships between *terratenientes* and landless peasants. To territorial fascism are also submitted civilian populations living in armed conflict zones.[40]

Social fascism is a new form of state of nature and it proliferates in the shadow of the social contract in two ways: post-contractualism and pre-contractualism. Post-contractualism is the process by means of which social groups and social interests up until now included in the social contract are excluded from the latter without any prospect of returning: workers and popular classes are being expelled from the social contract through the elimination of social and economic rights, thereby becoming discardable populations. Pre-contractualism consists in blocking access to citizenship to social groups

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[40] For the case of Colombia, see Santos and Garcia Villegas, 2001.

that before considered themselves candidates to citizenship and had the reasonable expectation of acceding to it: for instance, the urban youth living in the ghettos of mega-cities in the Global North and in the Global South.[41]

As a social regime, social fascism may coexist with liberal political democracy. Rather than sacrificing democracy to the demands of global capitalism, it trivializes democracy to such a degree that it is no longer necessary, or even convenient, to sacrifice democracy to promote capitalism. It is, therefore, a pluralistic fascism, that is to say, a form of fascism that never existed. Indeed, it is my contention that we may be entering a period in which societies are politically democratic and socially fascistic.

The new forms of indirect rule also comprise the second great transformation of property and property law in the modern era. Property, and specifically the property of the New World territories, was, as I mentioned in the beginning, the key issue underlying the establishing of modern, abyssal, global lines. The first transformation took place when the property over things was expanded, with capitalism, into a property over the means of production. As Karl Renner (1965) describes so well, the owner of the machines became the owner of the labor force of the workers operating the machines. The control over things became a control over people. Of course, Renner overlooked the fact that in the colonies this transformation did not occur, since the control over people was the original form of the control over things, the latter including both human and non-human things. The second great transformation of property takes place, way beyond production, when the property of services becomes a form of control of people that need them to survive.

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[41] An early and eloquent analysis of this phenomenon can be read in Wilson, 1987.

The new indirect rule gives rise to a form of decentralized despotism, to use Mamdani's characterization of African colonial rule (Mamdani, 1996: ch. 2). Decentralized despotism does not clash with liberal democracy, it rather makes it increasingly irrelevant for the quality of life of increasingly larger populations.

Under conditions of the new indirect rule, rather than regulating social conflict among citizens, modern abyssal thinking is called upon to suppress social conflict and ratify lawlessness on this side of the line, as had always happened on the other side of the line. Under the pressure of the logic of appropriation/violence, the very concept of modern law—the universally valid norm emanating from the state and coercively imposed by it if necessary—is thereby changing. As an illustration of the conceptual changes under way, a new type of law is emerging which is euphemistically called soft law.[42] Presented as the most benevolent manifestation of a regulation/emancipation ordering, it carries with it the logic of appropriation/violence whenever very unequal power relations are involved. It consists of law the compliance with which is voluntary. Without surprise, it is being used, among other social domains, in the field of capital/labor relations, and its most accomplished version are the codes of conduct whose adoption is being recommended to the metropolitan multinationals entering outsourcing contracts with "their" sweatshops

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[42] A vast literature has developed over the last few years that theorizes and empirically studies novel forms of governing the economy that rely on collaboration among non-state actors (firms, civic organizations, NGOs, unions and so on) rather than on top-down state regulation. In spite of the variety of labels under which social scientists and legal scholars have pursued this approach, the emphasis is on softness rather than hardness, on voluntary compliance rather than imposition: "responsive regulation" (Ayres and Braithwaite, 1992), "post-regulatory law" (Teubner, 1986), "soft law" (Snyder 1993, 2002; Trubek and Mosher 2003; Trubek and Trubek, 2005; Morth, 2004), "democratic experimentalism" (Dorf and Sabel 1998; Unger 1996), "collaborative governance" (Freeman, 1997), "outsourced regulation" (O'Rourke 2003) or simply "governance" (Mac Neil, Sargent and Swan 2000; Nye and Donahue 2000). For a critique, see Santos and Rodriguez-Garavito 2005: 1-26; Santos, 2005: 29-63: Rodriguez-Garavito, 2005: 64-91.

around the world.[43] The plasticity of soft law bears intriguing resemblances with colonial law, whose application depended on the whims of the colonizer more than on anything else.[44] The social relations they regulate are, if not a new state of nature, a twilight zone between the state of nature and civil society, where social fascism proliferates and flourishes.

In sum, modern abyssal thinking, which, on this side of the line, has been called upon to order the relationships among citizens and between them and the state, is now, in the social domains bearing greater pressure from the logic of appropriation/violence, called upon to deal with citizens as non-citizens, and with non-citizens as dangerous colonial savages. As social fascism coexists with liberal democracy, the state of exception coexists with constitutional normalcy, civil society coexists with the state of nature, indirect rule coexists with the rule of law. Far from being a perversion of some original normal rule, this is the original design of modern epistemology and legality, even if the abyssal line that from the very beginning has distinguished the metropolitan from the colonial has been displaced, turning the colonial into an internal dimension of the metropolitan.

Subaltern cosmopolitanism

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[43] See Rodriguez-Garavito 2005 and the bibliography cited there.
[44] This type of law is euphemistically called soft because it is soft on those whose entrepreneurial behavior they are supposed to regulate (employers) and hard on those suffering the consequences of non-compliance (workers).

In light of what I have just said, it seems that, if not actively resisted against, abyssal thinking will go on reproducing itself, no matter how exclusionary and destructive the practices it gives rise to. Political resistance thus needs to be premised upon epistemological resistance. As I said in the beginning, there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice. This means that the critical task ahead cannot be limited to generating alternatives. Indeed, it requires an alternative thinking of alternatives. A new post-abyssal thinking is thus called for. Is it possible? Are there any conditions that, if adequately valued, might give it a chance? This inquiry explains why I pay special attention to the counter-movement I mentioned above as resulting from the shaking-up of the abyssal global lines since the 1970s and 1980s: what I called *subaltern cosmopolitanism.*[45]

It bears a real promise in spite of its rather embryonic character at the present time. Indeed, to capture it is necessary to embark on what I call a sociology of emergences

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[45] The current debates on cosmopolitanism do not concern me here. In its long history cosmopolitanism has meant universalism, tolerance, patriotism, world citizenship, worldwide community of human beings, global culture etc., etc. More often than not, when this concept has been used—either as a scientific tool to describe reality or as an instrument in political struggles—the unconditional inclusiveness of its abstract formulation has been used to pursue the exclusionary interests of a particular social group. In a sense, cosmopolitanism has been the privilege of those that can afford it. The way I revisit this concept entails the identification of groups whose aspirations are denied or made invisible by the hegemonic use of the concept but may be served by an alternative use of it. Paraphrasing Stuart Hall, who raised a similar question in relation to the concept of identity (1996), I ask: who needs cosmopolitanism? The answer is simple: whoever is a victim of intolerance and discrimination needs tolerance; whoever is denied basic human dignity needs a community of human beings; whoever is a non-citizen needs world citizenship in any given community or nation. In sum, those socially excluded, victims of the hegemonic conception of cosmopolitanism, need a different type of cosmopolitanism. Subaltern cosmopolitanism is therefore an oppositional variety. Just as neoliberal globalization does not recognize any alternative form of globalization, so also cosmopolitanism without adjectives denies its own particularity. Subaltern, oppositional cosmopolitanism is the cultural and political form of counter-hegemonic globalization. It is the name of the emancipatory projects whose claims and criteria of social inclusion reach beyond the horizons of global capitalism. Others, with similar concerns, have also adjectivized cosmopolitanism: rooted cosmopolitanism (Cohen, 1992), cosmopolitan patriotism (Appiah, 1998), vernacular cosmopolitanism (Bhabha, 1996; Diouf, 2000), cosmopolitan ethnicity (Werbner, 2002), or working-class cosmopolitanism (Wrebner, 1999). On different conceptions of cosmopolitanism see Breckeridge *et al* (eds.) 2002.

(Santos, 2004). The latter consists in the symbolic amplification of signs, clues, and latent tendencies that, however inchoate and fragmented, do point to new constellations of meaning as regards both the understanding and the transformation of the world. Subaltern cosmopolitanism manifests itself through the initiatives and movements that constitute the counter-hegemonic globalization. It consists of the vast set of networks, initiatives, organizations and movements that fight against the economic, social, political and cultural exclusion generated by the most recent incarnation of global capitalism, known as neoliberal globalization (Santos, 2006b, 2006c). Since social exclusion is always the product of unequal power relations, theses initiatives, movements and struggles are animated by a redistributive ethos in its broadest sense, involving redistribution of material, social, political, cultural and symbolic resources and thus based both on the principle of equality and on the principle of recognition of difference. Since the beginning of the new century, the World Social Forum has been the most accomplished expression of counter-hegemonic globalization and subaltern cosmopolitanism.[46] And among the movements that have been participating in the World Social Forum, the indigenous movements are, in my view, those whose conceptions and practices represent the most convincing emergence of post-abyssal thinking. This fact is most auspicious for the possibility of post-abyssal thinking, as the indigenous people were the paradigmatic inhabitants of the other side of the line, that ideal-typical playground for appropriation and violence.

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[46] On the cosmopolitan dimension of the World Social Forum see Nisula and Sehm-Patomäki, 2002; Fisher and Ponniah, 2003; Sen, Anand, Escobar and Waterman, 2004; Polet, 2004; Santos, 2006c; Teivainen, forthcoming.

The novelty of subaltern cosmopolitanism lies, above all, in its deep sense of incompleteness without, however, aiming at completeness. On the one hand, it defends that the understanding of the world by far exceeds the Western understanding of the world and therefore our knowledge of globalization is much less global than globalization itself. On the other hand, it defends that the more nonwestern understandings of the world are identified the more evident it becomes that there are still many others to be identified and that hybrid understandings, mixing Western and nonwestern components, are virtually infinite. Post-abyssal thinking stems thus from the idea that the diversity of the world is inexhaustible and that such diversity still lacks an adequate epistemology. In other words, the epistemological diversity of the world does not yet have a form.

In the following I will present a general outline of post-abyssal thinking. I concentrate on its epistemological dimensions, leaving aside its legal dimensions.[47]

Post-abyssal thinking as ecological thinking

Post-abyssal thinking starts from the recognition that social exclusion in its broadest sense takes very different forms according to whether it is determined by an abyssal or by a non-abyssal line, and that as long as abyssally-defined exclusion persists no really progressive post-capitalist alternative is possible. During a probably long transitional period, confronting abyssal exclusion will be a precondition to address in an effective way the many forms of non-abyssal exclusion that have divided the modern world on this

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[47] For my previous critical engagement with modern epistemology see Santos, 1992; 1995:7-55; 2001a; 2003; 2004. See also Santos, Nunes and Meneses, 2007.

side of the line. A post-abyssal conception of Marxism (in itself, a good exemplar of abyssal thinking) will claim that the emancipation of workers must be fought for in conjunction with the emancipation of all the discardable populations of the Global South, which are oppressed but not directly exploited by global capitalism. It will also claim that the rights of citizens are not secured as long as non-citizens go on being treated as sub-humans.[48]

The recognition of the persistence of abyssal thinking is thus the *conditio-sine-qua-non* to start thinking and acting beyond it. Without such recognition, critical thinking will remain a derivative thinking that will go on reproducing the abyssal lines, no matter how anti-abyssal it will proclaim itself. Post-abyssal thinking, on the contrary, is a non derivative thinking; it involves a radical break with modern Western ways of thinking and acting. In our time, to think in non-derivative terms means to think from the perspective of the other side of the line, precisely because the other side of the line has been the realm of the unthinkable in Western modernity. The rise of the appropriation/violence ordering inside the regulation/emancipation ordering can only be tackled if we situate our epistemological perspective on the social experience of the other side of the line, that is, the non-imperial Global South, conceived of as the metaphor of the systemic and unjust human suffering caused by global capitalism and colonialism (Santos, 1995: 506-519). Post-abyssal thinking can thus be summarized as learning from

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[48] Gandhi is arguably the thinker-activist of modern times who thought and acted more consistently in nonabyssal terms. Having lived and experienced with extreme intensity the radical exclusions typical of abyssal thinking, Gandhi does not swerve from his goal of building a new form of universality capable of liberating both the oppressor and the victim. As Ashis Nandy correctly insists: "The Gandhian vision defies the temptation to equal the oppressor in violence and to regain one's self-esteem as a competitor within the same system. The vision builds on an identification with the oppressed which excludes the fantasy of the superiority of the oppressor's lifestyle, so deeply embedded in the consciousness of those who claim to speak on behalf of the victims of history" (1987:35).

the South through an epistemology of the South. It confronts the monoculture of modern science with the ecology of knowledges. It is an ecology, because it is based on the recognition of the plurality of heterogeneous knowledges (one of them being modern science) and on the sustained and dynamic interconnections between them without compromising their autonomy. The ecology of knowledges is founded on the idea that knowledge is inter-knowledge.

1. POST-ABYSSAL THINKING AND CO-PRESENCE

The first condition for a post-abyssal thinking is radical co-presence. Radical co-presence means that practices and agents on both sides of the line are contemporary in equal terms. Radical co-presence implies to equate simultaneity with contemporaneity, which can only be accomplished if the linear conception of time is abandoned.[49] Only in this way will it be possible to go beyond Hegel (1970), for whom to be a member of the historical humankind — that is, to be on this side of the line — meant to be a Greek and not a barbarian in the fifth century BC, a Roman citizen and not a Greek in the first centuries of our era, a Christian and not a Jew in the Middle Ages, a European and not a savage of the New World in the sixteenth century, and, in the nineteenth century, a European (including the displaced European of North America) and not an Asian, frozen in history, or an African, not even part of history. Moreover, radical co-presence also presupposes

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[49] If, hypothetically, an African peasant and an officer of the World Bank doing a rapid rural appraisal meet in the African countryside, according to abyssal thinking, they meet simultaneously (pleonasm intended) but they are noncontemporaneous; on the contrary, according to post-abyssal thinking, the meeting is both simultaneous and takes place between two contemporaneous individuals.

the abolition of war, which, next to intolerance, is the most radical negation of co-presence.

2. ECOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGES AND THE INEXHAUSTIBLE DIVERSITY OF WORLD EXPERIENCE

As an ecology of knowledges, post-abyssal thinking is premised upon the idea of the epistemological diversity of the world, the recognition of the existence of a plurality of knowledges beyond scientific knowledge.[50] This implies renouncing any general epistemology. Throughout the world, not only are there very diverse forms of knowledge of matter, society, life and spirit, but also many and very diverse concepts of what counts as knowledge and the criteria that may be used to validate it. In the transitional period we are entering, in which abyssal versions of totality and unity of knowledge still resist, we probably need a residual general epistemological requirement to move along: a general epistemology of the impossibility of a general epistemology.

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[50] This recognition of diversity and differentiation is one of the main components of the *Weltauschaung* through which we imagine the twenty first century. This *Weltauschaung* is radically different from the one adopted by the core countries at the start of the previous century. The epistemological imagination at the beginning of the twentieth century was dominated by the idea of unity. This was the cultural context that influenced the theoretical options of A. Einstein (Holton, 1998). The premise of world unity and the explanation provided for it presided over all the assumptions on which his research was based — simplicity, symmetry, Newtonian causality, completeness, continuum – and partly explains his refusal to accept quantum mechanics. According to Holton, the idea of unity prevailed within the cultural context of the time, particularly in Germany. It was an idea that achieved its most brilliant expression in Goethe's concept of the organic unity of humanity and nature and the articulated, interconnected wholeness of all the elements of nature. It was this same idea that in 1912 led scientists and philosophers to produce a manifesto for the creation of a new society which aimed to develop a set of unifying ideas and united concepts to be applied to all branches of knowledge (Holton, 1998: 26).

3. KNOWLEDGES AND IGNORANCES

The cultural context within which the ecology of knowledges is emerging is ambiguous. On the one hand, the idea of the socio-cultural diversity of the world has been gaining acceptance in the last three decades, and that should favor the recognition of epistemological diversity and plurality as one of its dimensions. On the other hand, if all epistemologies share the cultural premises of their times, perhaps one of the best established premises of abyssal thinking still today is the belief in science as the only valid and exact form of knowledge. Ortega y Gasset (1942) proposes a radical distinction between beliefs and ideas, taking the latter to mean science or philosophy. The distinction lies in the fact that beliefs are an integral part of our identity and subjectivity, whereas ideas are exterior to us. Whilst our ideas originate from uncertainties and remain associated with them, beliefs originate in the absence of doubt. Essentially, it is a distinction between being and having: we are what we believe, but we have ideas. A characteristic feature of our time is the fact that modern science belongs both to the realm of ideas and the realm of beliefs. Belief in science greatly exceeds anything scientific ideas enable us to realize. Therefore, the relative loss of epistemological confidence in science that pervaded the entire second half of the twentieth century was paralleled by a rising popular belief in science. The relationship between beliefs and ideas as related to science is no longer a relationship between two distinct entities but rather a relationship between two ways of socially experiencing science. This duality means that recognition of cultural diversity in the world does not necessarily signify recognition of the epistemological diversity in the world.

In this context, the ecology of knowledges is basically a counter-epistemology. The basic impetus behind its emergence is the result of two factors. The first of these is the new political emergence of peoples and worldviews on the other side of the line as partners of the global resistance to capitalism: i. e. counter-hegemonic globalization. In geopolitical terms these are societies in the periphery of the modern world system where the belief in modern science is more tenuous, where the links between modern science and the designs of colonial and imperial domination are more visible and where other nonscientific and nonwestern forms of knowledge prevail in everyday practices. The second factor is the unprecedented proliferation of alternatives which, however, cannot be brought together under the umbrella of a single global Alternative. Counter-hegemonic globalization excels in the absence of such an alternative. The ecology of knowledges aims to provide epistemological consistency for pluralistic, propositive thinking.

In the ecology of knowledges, knowledges intersect and so do ignorances. As there is no unity of knowledge, there is no unity of ignorance either. Forms of ignorance are as heterogeneous and interdependent as forms of knowledge. Given this interdependence, learning certain forms of knowledge may involve forgetting others and, in the last instance, becoming ignorant of them. In other words, in the ecology of knowledges, ignorance is not necessarily the original state or starting point. It may be a point of arrival. It may be the result of the forgetting or unlearning implicit in the reciprocal learning process. Thus, in a learning process governed by the ecology of knowledges, it is crucial to compare the knowledge that is being learned with the knowledge that is thereby being forgotten or unlearned. Ignorance is only a disqualifying condition when what is being learned is more valuable than what is being forgotten. The utopia of inter-

knowledge is learning other knowledges without forgetting one's own. This is the idea of prudence that underlies the ecology of knowledges.

This invites a deeper reflection on the difference between science as a monopolistic knowledge and science as part of an ecology of knowledges.

Modern science as part of an ecology of knowledges

As a product of abyssal thinking, scientific knowledge is not socially distributed in an equitable manner, nor could it be, as it was originally designed to convert this side of the line into the subject of knowledge and the other side into an object of knowledge. The real-world interventions it favors tend to be those which cater to the social groups that have greater access to scientific knowledge. As long as abyssal lines go on being drawn, the struggle for cognitive justice will not be successful if it is solely based on the idea of a more equal distribution of scientific knowledge. Apart from the fact that an equitable distribution is impossible under conditions of capitalism and colonialism, scientific knowledge has intrinsic limits in relation to the types of real-world intervention it makes possible.

As a post-abyssal epistemology, the ecology of knowledges, while forging credibility for nonscientific knowledge, does not imply discrediting scientific knowledge. It simply implies its counter-hegemonic use. Such use consists, on the one hand, in exploring the internal plurality of science, that is, alternative scientific practices that have been made

visible by feminist[51] and postcolonial epistemologies[52] and, on the other hand, in promoting the interaction and interdependence between scientific and nonscientific knowledges.

One of the basic premises of the ecology of knowledges is that all knowledges have internal and external limits. The internal limits are related to the restrictions on the real-world interventions imposed by each form of knowledge, while the external limits result from the recognition of alternative interventions made possible by other forms of knowledge. By definition, hegemonic forms of knowledge only recognize internal limits; therefore, the exploration of both internal and external limits of modern science can only be achieved as part of a counter-hegemonic conception of science. This is why the counter-hegemonic use of science cannot be restricted to science alone. It only makes sense within an ecology of knowledges.

For an ecology of knowledges, knowledge-as-intervention-in-reality is the measure of realism, not knowledge-as-a-representation-of-reality. The credibility of cognitive construction is measured by the type of intervention in the world that it affords or prevents. Since any assessment of this intervention always combines the cognitive with the ethical-political, the ecology of knowledges makes a distinction between analytical objectivity and ethical-political neutrality. Nowadays, no one questions the overall value

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[51] Feminist epistemologies have been central to the critique of the "classical" dualisms of modernity, such as nature/culture, subject/object, human/nonhuman and the naturalization of hierarchies of class, sex/gender, and race. For some relevant contributions to feminist critiques of science, see Keller, 1985; Harding, 1986, 1998, 2003; Schiebinger, 1989, 1999; Haraway, 1992, 1997; Soper, 1995; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Gardey and Lowy, 2000. Creager, Lunbeck, and Schiebinger, 2001 offer a useful overview, even if focused on the Global North.

[52] Among many others see Alvares, 1992; Dussel, 1995; Santos, 1995, 2003 and 2007; Guha and Martinez-Alier, 1997; Visvanathan, 1997; Ela, 1998; Prakash, 1999; Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2000; Mbembe, 2001 and Masolo, 2003.

of the real-world interventions made possible by the technological productivity of modern science. But this should not prevent us from recognizing the value of other real-world interventions made possible by other forms of knowledge. In many areas of social life, modern science has demonstrated an unquestionable superiority in relation to other forms of knowledge. There are, however, other interventions in the real world that are valuable to us today in which modern science has played no part. There is, for example, the preservation of biodiversity made possible by rural and indigenous forms of knowledge which, paradoxically, are under threat from the increasing science-ridden interventions (Santos, Nunes and Meneses, 2007). And should we not be amazed by the wealth of knowledges that have been preserved, the ways of life, symbolic universes and wisdoms for survival in hostile conditions that are based entirely on oral tradition? Doesn't the fact that none of this would have been possible through science tell us something about science?

Herein lies the impulse for egalitarian and simultaneous co-presence and for incompleteness. Since no single type of knowledge can account for all possible interventions in the world, all of them are incomplete in different ways. Incompleteness cannot be eradicated because any complete description of varieties of knowledge would necessarily not include the type of knowledge responsible for the description. There is no knowledge that is not known by someone for some purpose. All forms of knowledge uphold practices and constitute subjects. All knowledges are testimonies since what they know of reality (their active dimension) is always reflected back in what they reveal about the subject of this knowledge (their subjective dimension). In questioning the subject/object distinction, the sciences of complexity take this phenomenon into account,

but only in relation to scientific practices. The ecology of knowledges expands the testimonial character of knowledges to embrace also the relations between scientific and nonscientific knowledge, thereby expanding the range of inter-subjectivity as inter-knowledge is the correlate of inter-subjectivity and vice-versa.

In a regime of ecology of knowledges, the quest for inter-subjectivity is as important as it is complex. Since different knowledge practices take place at different spacial scales and according to different durations and rhythms, inter-subjectivity entails also the disposition to know and act in different scales (inter-scalarity) and articulating different durations (inter-temporality). Most of subaltern experiences of resistance are local or have been made local and therefore irrelevant or nonexistent by abyssal modern knowledge, the sole generator of global experiences. However, since the resistance against abyssal lines must take place on a global scale, it is imperative to develop some kind of articulation among subaltern experiences through local-global linkages. In order to succeed, the ecology of knowledges must be transcalar (Santos, 2001a).

Moreover, the coexistence of different temporalities or durations in different knowledge practices demands an expansion of the temporal frame. While modern technologies have tended to favor the time frame and duration of state action, both as public administration and as political entity (the electoral cycle, for instance), the subaltern experiences of the Global South have been forced to respond both to the shortest duration of immediate needs of survival and to the long duration of capitalism and colonialism. But even in subaltern struggles very different durations may be present. As an example, the same struggle for land in Latin America by impoverished peasants may include either the

duration of the modern state, when, for example, in Brazil, the Movement of the Landless (MST) struggles for the agrarian reform, or the duration of the slave trade, when the afro-descendant peoples struggle to recover the *Quilombos*, the land of the runaway slaves, their ancestors, or still a longer duration, the duration of colonialism, when the indigenous people struggle to recover their historical territories taken away from them by the *conquistadores*.

Ecology of knowledges, hierarchy and pragmatics

The ecology of knowledges does not conceive of knowledges in abstraction; it conceives of them as knowledge practices and the interventions they enable or impede in the real-world. An epistemological pragmatics is above all justified because the life experiences of the oppressed are primarily made intelligible to them through as an epistemology of consequences. In their life world, consequences are first, causes are second.

The ecology of knowledges is based on the pragmatic idea that it is necessary to reassess the concrete interventions in society and in nature which the different knowledges can offer. It focuses on relationships between knowledges and on the hierarchies that are generated between them, since no concrete practice would be possible without such hierarchies. However, rather than subscribing to a single, universal and abstract hierarchy among knowledges, the ecology of knowledges favors context-dependent hierarchies, in light of the concrete outcomes intended or achieved by different knowledge practices. Concrete hierarchies emerge from the relative value of alternative real-world

interventions. Complementarity or contradictions may exist between the different types of intervention.[53] Whenever there are real-world interventions that may, in theory, be implemented by different knowledge systems, the concrete choice of the form of knowledge must be informed by the principle of precaution which, in the context of the ecology of knowledges, must be formulated as follows: preference must be given to the form of knowledge that guarantees the greatest level of participation to the social groups involved in its design, execution and control and in the benefits of the intervention.

An example will illustrate the dangers in replacing one type of knowledge by another based on abstract hierarchies. In the 1960s, thousand-year old irrigation systems in the rice fields of Bali were replaced by scientific irrigation systems promoted by the partisans of the Green Revolution. These traditional irrigation systems were based on ancestral, religious knowledge and were managed by the priests of a Hindu-Buddhist temple dedicated to Dewi-Danu, the goddess of the lake. They were replaced precisely because they were considered to be based on magic or superstition, the 'rice cult', as they were derogatorily called. It so happened that their replacement had disastrous results in rice yields, with crops declining more than 50%. The results were so disastrous indeed that the scientific systems of irrigation had to be abandoned and the traditional system restored (Lansing, 1987; Lansing, 1991; Lansing and Kremer, 1993).

This case also illustrates the importance of the precaution principle in dealing with the issue of possible complementarity or contradiction among different types of knowledges.

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[53] The prevalence of cognitive judgements in carrying out any given knowledge practice does not clash with the prevalence of ethical-political judgements in deciding in favour of the type of real intervention that that specific knowledge makes possible to the detriment of alternative interventions made possible by alternative knowledges.

In the case of the Bali irrigation systems, the presumed incompatibility between the two knowledge systems (the religious and the scientific), both concerned with the same intervention (irrigating the rice fields), resulted from an incorrect assessment (bad science) based on the abstract superiority of scientific knowledge. Thirty years after the disastrous techno-scientific intervention, computer modeling – an area of the new sciences – showed that the water management sequences used by the priests of the Dewi-Danu goddess were more efficient than any other conceivable system, scientific or otherwise (Lansing and Kremer, 1993).

Ecology of knowledges, incommensurability and translation

From the perspective of Northern abyssal epistemologies, policing the boundaries of relevant knowledge is by far more decisive than arguing over internal differences. As a consequence, a massive epistemicide has been under way for the past five centuries, whereby an immense wealth of cognitive experiences has been wasted. To recuperate some of these experiences, the ecology of knowledges resorts to intercultural translation, its most characteristic post-abyssal feature. Embedded in different Western and nonwestern cultures, such experiences use not only different languages but also different categories, symbolic universes, and aspirations of a better life.

The profound differences among knowledges bring up the issue of incommensurability, an issue used by abyssal epistemology to discredit the very possibility of the ecology of knowledges. An illustration will help. Is it possible to establish a dialogue between western philosophy and African philosophy? Thus posed, the answer cannot but be a

positive one; they have in common the fact that they are both philosophies.[54] Yet for many Western and African philosophers, it is not possible to refer to an African philosophy because there is only one philosophy, whose universality is not tarnished by the fact that until now it has been mainly developed in the West. In Africa, this is the position taken by the modernist philosophers, as they are called. For other African philosophers, the traditionalist philosophers, there is an African philosophy which, since it is embedded in African culture, is incompatible with Western philosophy, and should therefore follow its own autonomous line of development.[55]

Between these two positions there are those who defend that there are not one but many philosophies and believe that mutual dialogue and enrichment is possible. They are the ones who often have to confront the problems of incommensurability, incompatibility or reciprocal unintelligibility. They think, however, that incommensurability does not necessarily impede communication and may even lead to unsuspected forms of complementarity. It all depends on the use of adequate procedures of intercultural translation. Through translation, it becomes possible to identify common concerns, complementary approaches and, of course, also intractable contradictions.[56]

An example will illustrate what is at stake. The Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu claims that in the culture and language of the Akan, the ethnic group to which he belongs, it is not possible to translate the Cartesian precept *cogito ergo sum* (1990, 1996). This is

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[54] And the same argument may be used in relation to a dialogue between religions.

[55] On this subject, see Eze, 1997; Karp and Masolo, 2000; Hountondji, 2002; Coetzee and Roux, 2002; Brown, 2004.

[56] In this area, the problems are often associated with language, and language is, in fact, a key instrument in bringing about an ecology of knowledges. As a result, translation must operate on two levels, the linguistic and the cultural level. Cultural translation will be one of the most challenging tasks facing philosophers, social scientists and social activists in the twenty first century. I deal with this issue in more detail in Santos, 2004 and 2006b.

because there are no words to express this idea. "Thinking", in Akan, means "measuring something", which does not make sense coupled with the idea of being. Moreover, the "being" of "*sum*" is also very difficult to explain because the closest equivalent is something like "I am there". According to Wiredu, the locative "there" "would be suicidal from the point of view of both the epistemology and the metaphysics of the *cogito*". In other words, language enables certain ideas to be explained and not others. This does not mean, however, that the relationship between African and Western philosophy has to end there. As Wiredu has tried to show, it is possible to develop autonomous arguments on the basis of African philosophy, not only concerning the reason why it cannot express *cogito ergo sum*, but also concerning the many alternative ideas it can express which Western philosophy cannot.[57]

Ecology of knowledges, mythos, and *clinamen*

The ecology of knowledges does not only occur on the level of the *logos,* but also on the level of *mythos*. The idea of emergence or Bloch's "Not Yet" is essential here (Bloch, 1995: 241).[58] The intensification of commitment results from an enabling reading of objective tendencies, to boost an auspicious but fragile potential, from a deeper understanding of human possibilities based on knowledges that, unlike scientific knowledge, favor interior rather than exterior force, or the *natura naturans* rather than the *natura naturata*.[59] Through these knowledges it is possible to nurture an enhanced value

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[57] See Wiredu, 1997 and a discussion of his work in Osha, 1999.
[58] On the sociology of emergences, see Santos 2004.
[59] From a different perspective, the ecology of knowledges seeks the same complementarity that in the Renaissance Paracelsus (1493-1541) identified between "Archeus", the elemental will in the seed and the

or concept of commitment that is incomprehensible to the positivistic and functionalist mechanisms of modern science. From such nurturing will develop a new capacity for wonder and indignation, capable of grounding a new, non-conformist, destabilizing, and indeed rebellious theory and practice.

What is at stake is the creation of an active forecast based on the richness of the noncanonic diversity of the world and of a degree of spontaneity based on the refusal to deduce the potential from the actual. In this way, constituted powers cease to be a destiny and can be realistically confronted with constituting powers. The issue is, then, to defamiliarize the canonic tradition of monocultures of knowledge, politics and law, without stopping there, as if such defamiliarization were the only possible familiarity. The ecology of knowledges is a destabilizing epistemology to the extent that it engages in a radical critique of the politics of the possible without yielding to an impossible politics. Central to the ecology of knowledges is not the distinction between structure and agency, as is the case with the social sciences, but rather the distinction between conformist action and what I propose to call action-with-clinamen.[60] Conformist action is the routinized, reproductive, repetitive practice which reduces realism to what exists and just because it exists. For my notion of action-with-*clinamen* I borrow from Epicurus and Lucretius the concept of *clinamen*, understood as the inexplicable 'quiddam' that upsets the relations of cause and effect, that is to say, the swerving capacity attributed by Epicurus to Democritus's atoms. The *clinamen* is what makes the atoms cease to appear inert and rather be seen as invested with a power of inclination, a creative power, that is,

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body, and "Vulcanus", the natural strength of matter. See Paracelsus, 1989: 33 and the whole text on the "microcosmos and macrocosmos"(1989: 17-67). See also Parcelsus,1967.
[60] I develop this concept in Santos, 1998.

a power of spontaneous movement (Epicurus, 1926; Lucretius, 1950).[61] Unlike what happens in revolutionary action, the creativity of action-with-*clinamen* is not based on a dramatic break but rather on a slight swerve or deviation whose cumulative effects render possible the complex and creative combinations among atoms, hence also among living beings and social groups.[62]

The *clinamen* does not refuse the past; on the contrary, it assumes and redeems the past by the way it swerves from it. Its potential for post-abyssal thinking lies in its capacity to cross the abyssal lines. The occurrence of action-with-*clinamen* is in itself inexplicable. The role of an ecology of knowledges in this regard will be merely to identify the conditions that maximize the probability of such an occurrence and, at the same time, define the horizon of possibilities within which the swerving will "operate."

The ecology of knowledges is as much constituted by a destabilizing collective or individual subjectivity as it is constitutive of it. That is, a subjectivity endowed with a special capacity, energy, and will to act with *clinamen*. The social construction of such a subjectivity must entail experimenting with eccentric or marginal forms of sociability or subjectivity inside and outside Western modernity, those forms that have refused to be defined according to abyssal criteria.

CONCLUSION

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[61] The concept of *clinamen* was made current in literary theory by Harold Bloom. It is one the revisionary ratios Bloom proposes in *The Anxiety of Influence* to account for poetic creativity as what he calls 'poetic misprision' or 'poetic misreading': "A poet swerves away from his precursor, by so reading his precursor's poem as to execute a *clinamen* in relation to it" (Bloom, 1973: 14).
[62] As Lucretius says, the swerve is *per paucum nec plus quam minimum* (Epicurus, 1926: intro. by Frederic Manning, XXXIV).

The epistemological construction of an ecology of knowledges is no easy task. As a conclusion I propose a research program. Three main clusters of questions may be identified. They relate to the identification of knowledges, to the procedures for relating them to each other, and to the nature and assessment of real-world interventions made possible by them. The first inquiry gives rise to a series of questions that have been ignored by modern Northern epistemologies. From what perspective can the different knowledges be identified? How can scientific knowledge be distinguished from nonscientific knowledge? How can we distinguish between the various nonscientific knowledges? How to distinguish nonwestern knowledge from Western knowledge? If there are various Western knowledges and various nonwestern knowledges, how do we distinguish between them? What do hybrid knowledges, mixing Western and nonwestern components, look like?

The second area of inquiry gives rise to the following questions. What types of relationships are possible between the different knowledges? How to distinguish incommensurability, incompatibility contradiction, and complementarity? Where does the will to translate come from? Who are the translators? How to choose translation partners and issues? How to form shared decisions and distinguish them from imposed ones? How to make sure that intercultural translation does not become the newest version of abyssal thinking, a soft version of imperialism and colonialism?

The third inquiry is related to the nature and assessment of real-world interventions. How can we identify the perspective of the oppressed in real-world interventions or in any resistance to them? How can we translate this perspective into knowledge practices? In the search for alternatives to domination and oppression, how can we distinguish between

alternatives to the system of oppression and domination and alternatives within the system or, more specifically, how do we distinguish between alternatives to capitalism and alternatives within capitalism? In sum, how to fight against the abyssal lines using conceptual and political instruments that don't reproduce them? And finally, a question of special interest to educators: what would be the impact of a post-abyssal conception of knowledge (as an ecology of knowledges) upon our educational institutions and research centers?

None of these questions have definitive answers. But the effort to try to answer them — definitely a collective, civilizational effort — is probably the only way to confront the new and most insidious version of abyssal thinking identified in this paper: the constant rise of the paradigm of appropriation/violence inside the paradigm of regulation/emancipation.

It is in the nature of the ecology of knowledges to establish itself through constant questioning and incomplete answers. This is what makes it a prudent knowledge. The ecology of knowledges enables us to have a much broader vision of what we do not know, as well as of what we do know, and also to be aware that what we do not know is our own ignorance, not a general ignorance.

The epistemological vigilance required by the ecology of knowledges transforms post-abyssal thinking into a deeply self-reflective undertaking. It requires that post-abyssal thinkers and actors see themselves in a context similar to the one in which St. Augustine found himself in writing his *Confessions* and expressed eloquently in this way: *quaestio mihi factus sum,* "I have converted myself into a question for myself". The difference

now is that personal confession of past mistakes is not the issue, but rather solidary participation in the construction of a personal and collective future, without ever being sure that past mistakes will not be repeated.

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