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# Transmodernity: the Emergence of a New Social Order through Dussel's Critique of Modernity and Postmodernity

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## Introduction

In recent decades, a conceptual framework named "*transmodernism*" has emerged in the field of political philosophy, offering a critical alternative to the dominant Western paradigms known as "modernism" and "postmodernism". At the forefront of this theoretical movement is Mexican-Argentinian philosopher, Enrique Dussel. *Transmodernism* questions the Eurocentric assumptions deeply embedded in modern and postmodern theories, proposing an innovating perspective on the relationship between global North and South. To construct his theory, Dussel draws upon a wide array of traditions and disciplines, including hermeneutics and decolonial thought.

In this thesis, we shall examine Dussel's ideas in depth, by first depicting the philosophical and historical landscape in which they are placed, in order to then explore the essence of *transmodernism* and how it navigates beyond modernity's contradictions. Subsequently, we shall examine how Dussel positions his theory in relation to postmodernism. We shall thus introduce Italian philosopher Sebastiano Maffettone's work, in which concise conceptions of post-colonialism and postmodernism are offered, and a theoretical danger in their association is identified. The goal here will be to prove that *transmodernism* is a valuable post-colonial theory that effectively avoids the *liaison dangereuse* between post-colonialism and postmodernism. Furthermore, a concrete instance of how Dussel clashes with postmodernism will be provided, as Italian postmodernist Vattimo's theory shall be compared to Dussel's *transmodernism*. The last part of this thesis will attempt to further the understanding of Dussel's philosophical objectives by applying Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian forces to Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation.

We shall thus answer the following questions: *What is transmodernism and how does it challenge the dominant paradigm of modernity and of postmodernity? Does Dussel avoid the dangerous liaison between postcolonialism and postmodernism, which Maffettone warns the academic world about? How can transmodernity be reached?*

## Chapter 1: Historical and Philosophical Context

To depict Dussel's philosophical landscape, we must introduce Frantz Fanon, the pillar upon which postcolonial thought was built. We shall examine the beginning of his philosophical journey and his battle for justice, driven by his subjective experience in the world. This is relevant to our thesis because of the striking and numerous similarities found between Fanon and Dussel. Furthermore, introducing Fanon, and the cause for which he fought for during his time, namely the 1950s', will help us ease our understanding of Dussel's complex *transmodernism*.

In his first book "Black Skin, White Masks" (1952), Fanon describes how in his home country Martinique, he was socialised to identify with the coloniser and adopt a "white" way of being. This occurred because, Fanon explains, "every colonised people - in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality - finds itself face to face with the language of the civilising nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country."<sup>1</sup> In a subsequent interesting reasoning, the Martinican intellectual starts by affirming that every society releases and consumes aggression in various ways. He defines "accumulated energies" as being forms of aggression that must be released through what he names "outlets."<sup>2</sup> Comic books and films are instances provided by Fanon of such outlets, which he notes as being produced mostly in America and Europe. Fanon identifies a collective catharsis, characterised by the separation of good and evil, occurring amongst children in the Antilles, and likely in other colonies, provoked by American films and comic books. In these cultural productions, the Black character was consistently portrayed as the villain, while the White character embodied goodness.

Fanon mentions the subjective experience of children living in colonies and how they relate themselves to the colonising nation, and since he grew up in Martinique, we can implicitly assume that he was also socialised to adopt the culture of the colonisers. Furthermore, for Fanon, making use of a nation's language means assuming its culture<sup>3</sup>. In learning, speaking and writing in French, Fanon assumed France's culture. However, when he entered the Free French forces in 1943, and later moved to Lyon to study psychiatry in 1946,

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<sup>1</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Pluto Press, 1986, p. 18

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38

he discovered that he was perceived as inferior by the same culture he had adopted and was racially abused for the colour of his skin and the way he spoke French.<sup>4</sup> These traumatic events drove his endeavours for a more just and equal reality, and the ardour with which he wrote “Black Skin, White Masks” is proof of this subjective drive. He writes: “This book should have been written three years ago. But these truths were a fire in me then. Now I can tell them without being burned.”<sup>5</sup> The discrimination he experienced led him to question his previous identification with the coloniser and to develop a critical consciousness of his own condition in the Western world. For Fanon, most colonised individuals went through a similar experience.

Interestingly, Fanon’s words paint a subjective landscape which Enrique Dussel is no stranger to. In “Transmodernity and Interculturality” (2012), Dussel sheds light upon the inherently Western character of philosophy, through a personal anecdote. As a student of the discipline in Buenos Aires, he slowly realised that the curriculum solely revolved around Western philosophers and their concepts. If any Latin American authors would emerge in lectures, they would merely serve as a supplement to better grasp a concept produced in the West, and particularly in Germany or France, two countries which Dussel notes as having hegemony over the discipline. For Dussel and his colleagues, there was no doubt: they were a product of “Western culture”. However, this illusion faded out when in 1957 a young Dussel travelled to Lisbon, where he discovered himself to be “Latin American, or at least no longer European<sup>6</sup>,” since “(...) the differences were obvious and could not be concealed<sup>7</sup>.” The question surrounding Dussel’s historical and cultural identity began to torment the Mexican-Argentinian philosopher. His subjective experience suggests that the legacy of colonialism is still particularly present in the realm of culture, even in countries which have found independence earlier on.

In his first published work, dated 1966, Dussel attempted to reconstruct the historical and cultural identity of Latin America, by attempting to “situate” the continent historically through a great academic effort in the field of *counter-history*<sup>8</sup>. Dussel sought to re-construct Latin America’s historical and cultural identity by studying its *noyveau éthico-mythique*, a concept invented by French philosopher Paul Ricœur, defined as the ethical and mythical

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<sup>4</sup> Cherki, Alice. Preface. *Les Damnés de la Terre* by Frantz Fanon, Editions La Découverte, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* Pluto Press, 1986, p. 11

<sup>6</sup> Dussel, Enrique *Transmodernity and Interculturality*, TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1, 2012, p. 29

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30

<sup>8</sup> The academic effort can be found in Dussel, Enrique, *Hypothesis para el estudio de Latino America en la historia universal*, Editorial Las Cuarenta, 2018 Edition.

elements which shape an area's identity. The *noyau éthico-mythique* can be composed of cultural symbols, stories and rituals, which are passed on from generation to generation and which help explain a society's norms, practices and even values and ideals<sup>9</sup>.

Fanon and Dussel's philosophical journeys seem to have both started from a *prise de conscience* of Western modernity and their exclusion of it. The American comic books that Fanon might have read as a child, or the philosophical classes engaging solely in European authors, can be considered *social facts*, which philosopher and sociologist Emil Durkheim, defines as ways of feeling, thinking and acting which are external to the individual and yet impose themselves upon him.<sup>10</sup> American comic books and European philosophical classes are cultural productions presupposing a Western vision of the world. Such social facts and the Eurocentric system they imply failed to coincide with Fanon and Dussel's subjective experiences, or with any non-Westerner for that matter. In other words, the philosophers' own identities compromised the logic of the principles of social reality which are themselves presupposing Western domination. We can thus identify an asymmetry between the subjective experiences of the colonised, which Fanon calls the *wretched of the earth* and Dussel the *Other*, and the objective reality in which they reside.

In this respect, Dussel's use of language is an evident effort to combat a part of the social facts implying Western superiority. Dussel discreetly engages in a war on language, using terms such as '*invasion*' whilst rejecting terms such as '*discovery*'. If he were to use a language system presupposing the superiority of the West, he would be denying his own identity, which he perceives as going beyond Western modernity, towards *transmodernity*.

Moreover, Dussel often addresses his carefully chosen words to the Latin American youth<sup>11</sup>, to whom he wishes to transmit his Philosophy of Ethics and of Liberation for the creation of a new and more just social order. Throughout his academic career, the Mexican-Argentinian philosopher has engaged in philosophical dialogues with renowned Euro-North American philosophers, such as the cited Paul Ricœur, but also German philosopher Karl-Otto Apel, or even American postmodernist Richard Rorty. It is evident that Dussel's work on *transmodernism* is not solely addressed to *the Other*, but also to the Eurocentrist and neutral

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<sup>9</sup> Ricœur, Paul, *Lectures 1. Autour du Politique*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1991, p. 246

<sup>10</sup> Durkheim, Emile, *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method, Chapter 1: What is a Social Fact?*, Second Edition, Edited by Steven Lukes, 2013, p.4.

<sup>11</sup> Dussel, Enrique. Preface de 2006. *Vingt Thèses de Politiques* (Twenty Thesis on Politics), L'Harmattan, 2018, p. 23.

reader. Philosopher Berthony Saint-Georges writes: "His objective does not consist in provoking a rupture between Latin American thought and Western thought. Rather, it aims to establish exchanges on problems that we all face today, demanding at the very least concerted responses—such as the degradation of our planet, poverty, destitution, exclusion, suffering, etc.—while taking into account the blind spots that distort any idealistic approach to the meaning of social or political consensus<sup>12</sup>."

Furthermore, Dussel's perception of history aligns with the optimist, and therefore perhaps slightly ingenuous, conclusion that Fanon draws in "Black Skin, White Masks" (1952), as the latter wrote: "I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. (...) I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it. (...) And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom. (...) The disaster of the man of colour lies in the fact that he was enslaved. The disaster and the inhumanity of the white man lie in the fact that somewhere he has killed man. (...) Both must turn their backs on the inhuman voices which were those of their respective ancestors in order that authentic communication be possible."<sup>13</sup> What is striking in the words used by Fanon is the resemblance to the ones deployed by Dussel in his writings. The Mexican-Argentinian philosopher strives to go *beyond* history, to create sincere *communication* and dialogues between *the Other* and his counterpart, and in this way to offer a philosophical framework for *the Other* to grasp *freedom*. We can thus conclude that both postcolonial theorists attempt to construct philosophies that aim to transcend historical and cultural conflicts in order to create understanding and a brighter present.

To further set out the philosophical context in which Dussel is operating, it is also useful to mention the German philosopher Heidegger, who dwelled at length on the historical condition of human existence. He defined humans as historical beings in need of interpreting history to understand their existence. Fanon is a perfect depiction of Heidegger's historical creature, as he wrote: "In no fashion should I undertake to prepare the world that will come later. I belong irreducibly to my time."<sup>14</sup> Heidegger further affirms that human beings need to understand the *facticity* of life which itself is grasped through a *hermeneutical* approach, which centres upon interpretation rather than objective analysis.

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<sup>12</sup> Berthony Saint-Georges, *L'Éthique de la libération d'Enrique Dussel*, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2016, p.27

<sup>13</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* Pluto Press, 1986, p. 231

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

Dussel can also be considered as an instance of Heidegger's depiction of the historical condition of man. When contemplating Dussel through a heideggerian scope, we understand that the former began his philosophical path by engaging in hermeneutics to grasp Latin America's philosophical, historical, and cultural identity within the world. Furthermore, Dussel indirectly implies in "Transmodernity and Interculturality" (2012) that this study originated from a need to understand his self-conscious human individuality, what Heidegger would call Dussel's *Dasein*.

In the "Underside of Modernity" (1996), Dussel sketches some historical events that have shaped Philosophy of Liberation. Amongst them, the Cuban Revolution of 1959 is perceived as a source of inspiration for Latin Americans. Dussel describes it as exposing the extent to which, as well as the limits towards which a revolutionary movement can push for change. From this historical event, Dussel retrieves a meaning: "the possibility of a unique Latin American path toward political emancipation that navigated between the populisms of some of the most reactionary dictatorships the history of Latin America has seen and the violence of the 'national security' states that became the rule after the fifties, partly as a reaction to the threat of communism, but based mostly in an ideology of top-down political modernisation<sup>15</sup>." Nonetheless, for Dussel, the *dependency theory* has a central role in the development of Liberation Philosophy. This is because the former provided a conceptual landscape explaining Latin American under-development and dependency, which in a way, broadened the scope of Latin American intellectuals.

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<sup>15</sup> Dussel, Enrique, Foreword., *The Underside of Modernity*, Humanities Press International, 1996, p. xix



## Chapter 2: Critique of Western Modernity and Emergence of Transmodernity

Towards the end of the 60s, a rupture of historical and subsequently cultural nature occurred in the field of Latin American philosophy. Dussel identifies the forces driving this rupture in the emergence of *critical* Latin America social science and the *dependency theory*, as well as in the lecture of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas known as *Totality and Infinity*, and most importantly in the revolutionary student movements of 1968<sup>16</sup>. The latter was vivid proof that by deploying ideas, stable structures and institutions could be dismantled. Furthermore, in 1974, when renowned American sociologist and historian Immanuel Wallerstein introduced his world-system theory, what post-colonialists like Fanon had until then referred to as the “metropolitan” and “colonial” words suddenly became the “core” and the “periphery”, symbolising a shift in Latin American thinkers’ understanding of international relations, that had come about with the end of colonisation and increased globalisation.

For Dussel, previous instances of cultural studies lacked the tools “to understand changing situations of hegemony, within well-defined blocs, and in respect to the ideological formations of diverse classes and factions<sup>17</sup>”. Furthermore, Latin American philosophy was articulated from the perspective and interests of determinate classes, groups, genders, races, and other social categories. Conscious of Latin America’s cultural conditioning, Dussel shaped his Philosophy of Liberation with the intention of challenging dominant paradigms and promoting transformative action. He thus emphasised the importance of location and intercultural dialogue. In practice, Dussel initiated an intercontinental 'South-South dialogue' in 1974, bringing together thinkers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This dialogue aimed to transcend boundaries, foster mutual understanding among marginalised and oppressed communities, ultimately working towards the liberation of *the Other*.

As mentioned earlier, Dussel’s philosophical journey began with an attempt to reconstruct Latin America history within the world and from the perspective of the peripheral culture, in order to subsequently confront it with modern culture. Nonetheless, this approach grew to become unfulfilling when Dussel realised that he was rather to question the

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<sup>16</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Transmodernity and Interculturality*, TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1, 2012, p. 31-32

<sup>17</sup>Dussel, Enrique, *Historia general de la iglesia en America Latina*, Ediciones Sigueme, 1983, p. 35- 36

conventional universal history that excluded non-European cultures, including Latin America. The endeavour to retrieve a new critical vision of both peripheral and European culture was undertaken simultaneously in multiple regions of peripheral culture, particularly by African and Latin American postcolonial theorists, albeit and unfortunately, as noted by Dussel, to a lesser extent in the European and North American academic stage.

In this chapter we shall depict what precisely *transmodernism* is and how it manages to transcend modernity's contradictions.

### 2.1) Critique of Modernity and Emergence of Transmodernity

To fully grasp the essence of *transmodernism*, we must comprehend Dussel's analysis and critique of modernity. In Roman mythology, Janus is a two-faced god representing beginnings and time, which Dussel presents in order to construct a metaphor of Western modernity.<sup>18</sup> The first face of Janus, he writes, represents the *rational emancipatory nucleus*, which is described as being the principle of equality of persons and a feature of modernity. Janus' second face is depicted as being the negation of this same principle, through a phenomenon that Dussel calls the *negation of the Other*. Modernity hence entails that some individuals are superior to others. Through this metaphor, Dussel depicts modernity as an irrational and self-contradictory discourse. Dussel provides a historical foundation to sustain his metaphor in citing two historical events which expose modernity's irrationality. The first is the *genocide* of millions of Indians and Africans, during the colonialist *invasions* of America and Africa. The second is the Holocaust, with the extermination by Nazis of 6 million Jewish individuals, along with Roma, Sinti and Slavic people. In the eyes of Dussel, both events represent instances in which *the Other* was neglected in the name of modernity.

Dussel attempts to situate the origin of the "the myth of modernity"<sup>19</sup>, used to justify the neglect of *the Other*, by analysing the *emancipatory rational nucleus*. The latter is one of the two faces Dussel identifies in modernity, and which Karl-Otto Apel defines as "the ethical position that respects every person as person, as equal, and as possible participant of an ideal communication community<sup>20</sup>". This *emancipatory rational nucleus* allowed modernity to

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<sup>18</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *The Underside of Modernity*, Humanities Press International, 1996, p. 50

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 50

exit reason through “self-incurred immaturity,”<sup>21</sup> to achieve the ethical positions mentioned by Apel.

Dussel identifies Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, a Spanish philosopher of the Renaissance, as the founder of the irrational discourse on modernity, and more precisely of the *irrational sacrificial myth* argument, which came into being during the Valladolid debates of 1550 against Bartolomé de las Casas.

These debates occurred when King Charles V of Spain instructed a junta of jurists and theologians to convene in Valladolid, with the purpose of hearing arguments both in favour of and against the use of force to incorporate the indigenous peoples into Spanish America. The prominent humanist and Greek scholar, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, argued for conquest and evangelization through war, while his opponent, Bartolomé de Las Casas, strongly advocated for peaceful and persuasive conversion. Surprisingly, Charles V suspended all wars of conquest until the moral implications of Spain's presence and enterprises in America were deliberated upon by this group of intellectuals.

Dussel hereby deconstructs de Sepúlveda's line of thought<sup>22</sup>: (1) it is assumed that European culture is the most developed and superior culture; (2) other societies can only progress by abandoning their own presupposed barbarity through the modern civilising process; (3) this presupposed barbarity justifies violence when opposition to progress is met; (4) the modern violent soldier, responsible for the extermination of Amerindians and the enslavement of Africans, is thus virtuous and moral in his actions; (5) victims of modernity in the periphery are responsible for their own victimisation. The *irrational sacrificial myth* argument was at the basis of colonial ideology. Furthermore, de Sepúlveda further declared that a war is just if it is deployed in order to destroy the ones obstructing progress and civilisation. The *irrational sacrificial myth* argument was at the basis of colonial ideology for centuries. For Dussel, it was utilised to justify a number of atrocities such as the *genocide* of the Amerindian during the *conquest* of America and the enslavement and *genocide* of Africans.

De Sepúlveda's opposer in the Valladolid dispute of 1550, Bartolomé de las Casas, is an important figure in the history of the Americas. De las Casas was a Spanish historian and social reformer who witnessed the inhuman treatment of indigenous peoples by the Spanish conquistadors. De las Casas rapidly released his own slaves and became an outspoken critic of

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<sup>21</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *The Underside of Modernity*, Humanities Press International, 1996, p. 50

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52

the Spanish colonial system. In the Valladolid debates, he is further recorded as stating that violence and moreover war is never a rational path. Importantly, Dussel considers de Las Casas a “central” thinker, similarly to Descartes or Kant, part of a culture that had established itself as the “centre” of history. Here, history is taken in the sense of the empirical relationship, developed subsequently to 1492, between Europe and all “other” cultures of Latin America, Africa and Asia. The concept of “centrality”, affirms Dussel, is an essential part of modernity, as it originated out of an exchange between “centre” and “periphery”. Nonetheless, Eurocentric theorists often neglect the concept of “centrality” as they rather circumscribe modernity solely to intra-European development.<sup>23</sup>

Dussel’s Philosophy of Liberation finds its origins and inspiration in the de las Casas’ 1550 arguments and considerations. The outcome is a philosophical position willing to transcend modernity, attempting to overcome its underside, namely the *negation of the Other*, which Dussel names *transmodernity*, which when considered as a concept takes the name of *transmodernism*.

Nonetheless, before fully grasping the meaning behind the term *transmodernism*, it is important to decipher the philosophical conception of modernity, as the former emerges as a critique of the latter.

In “The Underside of Modernity” (1996), the Mexican-Argentinian philosopher delves deeper into the Euro-North American philosophical tradition, shedding light on its hegemonic dominance on a global scale. Through a rigorous academic effort, Dussel analyses the Western conception of modernity in order to identify the subtle and hidden components of Eurocentrism and its concomitant developmentalist deception. Dussel distinguishes two different conceptions of modernity: Eurocentric and planetary (not universal).<sup>24</sup> The Eurocentric definition stamps modernity based entirely on European determinations, whereas the planetary definition includes culminating moments in the constitution of modernity interpreted as the centre of a *global process*.

Dussel initially analyses the Eurocentric conception of modernity. He departs from Immanuel Kant's notorious description of Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-

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<sup>23</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Postmodernità e Transmodernità, Sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo*, Castelvechi, 2022, p. 43

<sup>24</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *The Underside of Modernity*, Humanities Press International, 1996, p. 131

incurred immaturity<sup>25</sup>". Dussel suggests that this conception of modernity had priorly been applied by Hegel in a global historical vision to Africa, Latin America, and Asia, in a Eurocentric conclusion that "world history travels from East to West; for Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning." He notes that Hegel perceived modernity as culminating in Germany, France, or England, the "missionaries of civilisation" of the whole world. Dussel argues that Hegel's ideas about the Germanic world and its historical development are based on an imperialistic Eurocentrism, which justifies the domination of the North and Europe over the South and the colonies. Moreover, Dussel defines Hegel's conception of history by its purposive exclusion of Latin America and Africa from the world's historical narrative, regarding them as immature and uncivilised.

Dussel then introduces the *planetary* conception of modernity, which emphasises the intertwined relationship between European and non-European peoples, regions, and cultures in the development of modernity. Dussel and *transmodernism* inscribe themselves in the planetary tradition, by challenging the Eurocentric paradigm of modernity and henceforth offering a new way of conceptualising the world, by contemplating it from an "exterior" perspective, or a *planetary* one. Dussel argues that modernity is a global phenomenon shaped by multiple factors and contributions from various regions around the world. Modernity cannot be confined to one specific place or culture. In fact, Dussel affirms that modernity has been exclusively attributed to the "development" of European subjectivity, yet it should include determinations (and contra-determinations) of the *centre* with respect to the *periphery*. Here, the periphery refers to the first colonial, then neo-colonial Third World in the epoch of the cold war, up to the understanding of the structural underdevelopment or the simple "exclusion" from the market or global capitalist system after the so-called revolution of 1989. Thus, within the *transmodernist* framework, the inclusion of periphery determinations in the study of world history emerges as a crucial demand.

In the introduction of the French version of "1492: *El encubrimiento del Otro*" (1992), which directly translates to "1492: the Occultation of the Other", Dussel dwells at length on the periodisation of history and particularly on his interpretation of the start of modernity. Dussel sustains that the roots of modernity can be traced back to the Egyptian, Babylonian, Semitic, and Greek worlds. Nonetheless, modernity's planetary implementation only

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<sup>25</sup>Kant, Immanuel, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" . Political Writings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 54

commenced in the 15th century, with the European free cities of the 10th century serving as the genesis. It was only when Europe established itself as the centre of the world system that modernity truly emerged, which occurred in 1492 with the alleged “discovery” of the New World, a year in which Europe came face-to-face with and managed to control, conquer and violate what Dussel names *the Other*, an event Dussel refers to by using the word *invasion*.

Dussel also argues that the colonisation of the periphery by the centre was a way to overcome the contradictions of civil society, allowing the poor in the centre to become capitalists in the periphery. In this respect, we find it particularly relevant to cite 19<sup>th</sup> century author Guy de Maupassant, who in 1881 was sent by French newspaper *Le Gaulois* to report on colonial Algeria. Maupassant came face to face with *the Other*, an experience which Dussel would say evoked Maupassant’s native sensibility to those who are victims of the prevailing system, an experience which in fact did deeply influence the French author’s perception on colonialism. By native sensibility, Dussel refers to a biological predisposition towards empathy. In a fictionalised travelogue named “Au Soleil” (1881), Maupassant condemned the brutality, rudeness, and lack of adaptation of colonial administrators to the local culture, climate, and customs. Relevant to our endeavour is his criticism of the French dismantling of the Algerian land ownership system. French settlers were French citizens who left their country to settle in colonies, benefiting of the unjust laws in place which granted them a land originally owned by *the Other*.

We hereby stumble upon an essential and authentic feature of Dussel’s philosophy: the concept of *pre-originary ethical rationality*. Maupassant’s face-to-face encounter with Algerian citizens, which made him recognise the suffering of *the Other*, can be defined in dusselian terms as an *interpelacion* resulting in an *epiphany* or *revelation*. For Dussel, the suffering of *the Other* has the potential to elicit our indignation towards all forms of dehumanization, even when we do not share a common language or culture. This recognition entails an appeal for solidarity, which demands an active response. Maupassant responded by publishing writings criticising the colonial administrative implementation in Algeria and the inhumane treatment reserved for Algerians. Maupassant can be considered an avant-gardist in this respect, as such discourse was unusual at the time, with the legitimacy of colonialism being far from a matter of debate. However, socialisation, emphasises a realist Dussel, can lead some individuals to disregard this intuitive empathy and instead treat *the Other* with disdain.

## 2.2) *The Essence of Transmodernism and its Revolutionary Traits*

For Dussel, it is clear: Eurocentrism has led to the confusion of universal human generalities with instances of European particularity, resulting in the belief that modern European culture, civilisation, philosophy, and subjectivity abstractly embody human-universal qualities. In reality, Dussel affirms, many of modernity's accomplishments were not solely European but were rather produced through a constant dialectic of influence and counterinfluence between modern Europe and its "periphery". The world history that commenced in 1492 placed all civilisations in an empirical relationship with modern European culture functioning as the core of a world system that confronts all other cultures of the globe.

Dussel argues that modernity, which encompasses capitalism, colonialism, and the world-system, did not coincide directly with European hegemony, but rather emerged subsequently. Europe became the centre of the world market and modernity after it was already considered "modern." Prior to the 18th century, China had a significant economic presence in the world market, reaching levels of production that Europe was far from matching. In fact, the West's position as the world market centre only began with the industrial revolution. For Dussel, European hegemony has merely lasted two centuries and has had a limited impact on the deeply ingrained cultural values of other ancient civilisations, such as Chinese, Japanese, Islamic, and Latin American cultures. He adds that although these cultures experienced partial colonisation, their core values persisted despite repression by dominant Westernised elites. Dussel identifies in these civilisations an occulted cultural richness, which has been evolving parallelly and in response to the imposed European modernity. A richness which is gradually being rediscovered, thanks to the efforts in counter-history of postcolonial and cultural scholars<sup>26</sup>.

Therefore, *transmodernism* highlights the profound uniqueness of cultures that emerge from their distinctive historical experiences and respond to the challenges posed by modernity through their own perspectives. Dussel imagines a future *transmodern* culture as being the product of a genuine intercultural dialogue, which ideally would embrace the positive aspects of modernity while maintaining its own rich diversity. In this sense, *transmodernism* acknowledges existing contradictions and asymmetries found within modernity and strives to transcend them, whilst simultaneously retaining certain of its virtuous aspects. Faced with

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<sup>26</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Transmodernity and Interculturality*, TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1, 2012, p. 42

cultural asymmetries caused by colonisation and globalisation, peripheral cultures like India, Africa, and Latin America possess the drive for cultural renewal and to find innovative answers to the pressing challenges of the twenty-first century.

The value of Dussel's philosophy for *the Other* can be depicted by utilising French philosopher Raymond Aron's. The latter emphasised the importance of "arming wisdom" when confronting moral wrongdoing, advocating for the use of reasoned arguments to ensure the triumph of ethical principles. Merely asserting the exclusion and subjugation of *the Other* as unjust, or the destructive exploitation of nature as wrong, is insufficient in countering the exclusionary forces, as Aron warns that opposing parties, even when perpetuating unjust ideas, may possess intellectual capacities on par with our own. In fact, for Aron, it is crucial to acknowledge that partisans of the morally wrong may employ different systems of rationality while still wielding significant influence. Aron feared that philosophy would retreat into an ivory tower, detached from contemporary events. In his view, philosophy must intimately engage with reality in order to then determine where to precisely "arm wisdom." For us, Dussel and his *transmodernism* effectively arm *the Other* with the wisdom to, first, gain consciousness on his historical and material condition, and second, actively challenge the exclusionary forces through collective action. Furthermore, Dussel is far from retreating in an ivory tower, as his philosophy is highly conscious of current events and past injustices. For instance, Dussel initiates his dialogue with Vattimo by affirming his consciousness on the fact that "(...) the top 20% of the world's wealthiest population consumes-destroys 82.7% of the planet's resources, while the poorest 20% only consumes 1.4% (...)"<sup>27</sup>. An unprecedented level of inequality, which Dussel emphasises must activate a sense of co-responsibility amongst human beings.

Dussel thus defines *transmodernism* as a project that requires the drive of postcolonial societies to be fulfilled, yet the endeavour cannot solely be carried out through cultural self-valorisation and engagement in intercultural dialogues. For Dussel, the process must involve intellectuals, who must navigate the boundaries between their own culture and modernity. In this respect, Dussel is a driving force of the *transmodern* project, as over the years he has amassed several philosophical dialogues with authors from both the periphery and the centre. Dussel defines these intellectuals as "critics" existing in the bi-cultural context of "borderlands," enabling the creation of critical thought. This strategy requires a prolonged

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<sup>27</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Postmodernità e Transmodernità, Sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo*, Castelvecchi, 2022, p. 40



period of resistance, maturation, and the accumulation of strength, it also involves cultivating and developing one's cultural tradition.

This approach fosters the growth and creativity of a renewed culture that is not simply decolonised, but also entirely new. The dialogue between cultural innovators and critics is not strictly modern nor postmodern but, in essence, *transmodern*. This is because the creative force originates not from within Modernity itself but from its external "borderlands," or from the "exteriority" of Modernity, as Dussel puts it. This "exteriority" is not purely negative but rather rooted in a tradition distinct from the modern paradigm. To sustain his words, Dussel offers the instance of indigenous cultures in Latin America, that embrace a unique affirmation of Nature, one that is ecologically balanced and thus crucial in the face of capitalist Modernity that views Nature as exploitable and disposable. Dussel concludes his instance by defining the destruction of Nature as humanity's collective suicide, one carried out by the globalising modern culture, who still fails to learn from other cultures considered more "primitive" by developmentalist standards.

*Transmodernism* thus attempts to incorporate this ecological principle which modernity fails to comprehend, allowing for scientific and technological advancements derived from the experiences of modernity itself. Nevertheless, the affirmation and growth of cultural alterity within postcolonial communities still implies integrating some positive elements of modernity, yet without succumbing to an undifferentiated or empty universal cultural identity. Instead, Dussel calls for a *transmodern* "pluriversity", characterized by a multitude of shared elements from various cultures (European, Islamic, Vedic, Taoist, Buddhist, Latin American, Bantu, etc.). This pluricultural approach engages in critical intercultural dialogue, fostering a dynamic and diverse cultural landscape.<sup>28</sup>

In the last part of the chapter, we wish to identify the revolutionary and radical traits found in *transmodernism* by using French sociologist Albert Keucheyan's ideas in his first book "The Left Hemisphere" (2013). According to Keucheyan, the expression *critical theory* has been around for centuries referring originally to the concepts developed by the philosophers of the School of Frankfurt. *New critical theories*, on the other hand, are theories that have entered the intellectual stage's spotlight after the fall of the Berlin Wall yet they have been developed priorly. For Keucheyan, a *new critical theory* is a theory and not merely an analysis

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<sup>28</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Transmodernity and Interculturality*, TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1, 2012, p. 50

or an explanation. It reflects on what is desirable, giving it a political dimension. In fact, critical theories put into question the existing social order in a global way, there is thus a generality of this questioning. New critical theories often arise where new problems are encountered, and the historical context in which these ideas are formed defines their essential characteristics. Examples of *new critical theories* include Judith Butler's *queer theory*, Bhabha's *postcolonialism*, or even Fredric Jameson's *postmodernism*.

Even though Keucheyan does not mention Dussel, it is evident that *transmodernism* is a *new critical theory*. Born in the 1970s', *transmodernism* puts into question the existing social order in a global way, by engaging in counter-history, thus offering a new vision of history which puts emphasis on the plurality of cultures, the importance of intercultural dialogue, and the need for an ethical and political reorientation towards *the Other* and the preservation of Nature. It is here important to mention that Dussel often refers to his philosophical project as a *transmodern utopia*.<sup>29</sup> The philosophical project outlined by Dussel for the "excluded", referred to as a "project of the future order", seeks to dismantle the dominant system, and thus clashes with the "project of the dominant group", which in turn seeks to maintain the *status quo*<sup>30</sup>. Dussel perceives his project as driven by *the authentic utopia*, which is defined as the transformative action led on by the victims in an attempt to create a new community<sup>31</sup>. This utopia is *authentic* since it promotes a new feasible social order, in a struggle against the deluding utopias, who contradict the will-to-live of human beings. In this respect, Dussel's *transmodernism* can be considered a *new critical theory*, and particularly since to be fulfilled it must dismantle the previous social order.

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<sup>29</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Transmodernity and Interculturality*, TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1, 2012, p. 50

<sup>30</sup> Berthony Saint-Georges, *L'Éthique de la libération d'Enrique Dussel*, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2016, p. 278

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279

## Chapter 3. How Dussel avoid Maffettone's *liaison dangereuse*

In his article "How to avoid the *liaison dangereuse* between postcolonialism and postmodernism" (2011), Italian philosopher Sebastiano Maffettone sheds light on the philosophical void that emerges when postcolonial authors adopt postmodernist assumptions. Our goal in this chapter is to demonstrate how Dussel's *transmodernism* effectively circumvents the philosophical pitfall that Maffettone denounces, and thus offers a compelling and valuable philosophical theory within the realm of postcolonialism. In order to reach our objective, the first section of this chapter resumes Maffettone's conception of postcolonialism whilst simultaneously collocating Dussel's position in respect to it. The second section of this chapter elucidates Maffettone's rationale behind the *liaison dangereuse* between postcolonialism and postmodernism and illustrates how Dussel avoids Maffettone's trap. The concluding section shall investigate how Dussel's *transmodernism* reacts when directly confronted with a postmodernist theory, namely Gianni Vattimo's postmodernism, furnishing further proof that Dussel avoids the *liaison dangereuse*.

In "Filosofia Politica: Una Piccola Introduzione" (2014), Maffettone offers a concise summary of postcolonialism as a cultural study. Postcolonialism is here conceived as an extension of the anti-colonial and nationalist movements that emerged in third-world countries after 1945. For Maffettone, postcolonial theories consider primitive injustice under its epistemological character, that is under the scope of power relations, and assumes that it is led on by the coloniser against the colonised. Postcolonialism defines the colonised as being systematically deprived of cultural autonomy and later faced with the question of rebellion. Moreover, various postcolonial thinkers have grasped inspiration from what Americans have named French Thought, a poststructuralist philosophical attitude originating in the 60s, revolving around French authors like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Maffettone introduces these intellectuals as constructors of radical critiques to the universalist assumptions found in Western theories. Maffettone emphasises that many postcolonial theorists have built their radical theories through a postmodern attitude.

### 3.1) Maffettone's Conception of Postcolonialism

First and foremost, Maffettone notes that postcolonialism's primary aim is to uncover the cultural repercussions of colonialism. Postcolonial theories are tied together by a common

neglect of Western colonialism and condemnation of European expansionism and its legacy, which started with 1492. The discipline's initial objective revolved around the demystification of colonial ideologies, with Fanon and Sartre, in "The Wretched of the Earth," (1961) laying down a foundation for postcolonial theories to build upon. Furthermore, postcolonial studies focus on the political culture of colonising states which promoted Western modernity as the ultimate goal of global civilisation and as the normative prism from which individuals were to interpret history. Postcolonial thinkers condemn this imposed exportation of modernity, denouncing the costs for the colonised in terms of exploitation, humiliation, and suffering.

Secondly, Maffettone depicts the rejection of universalism and Eurocentrism, as well as the emphasis on cultural specificity, as important features of postcolonialism. In fact, the Western presumption that certain values and beliefs are applicable to all human beings, brought postcolonial theorists to denounce Western political theories for their attempt to occult non-European cultures. Furthermore, Maffettone sheds light on the bias in favour of localism that postcolonial theories imply when they reject universalism. Here, the common ground in postcolonial thought is the denunciation of instances of cultural hegemony and the subsequent re-discovery of occulted populations in order to emphasise a local culture and their rich cultural contribution. An important feature of postcolonial writing is the study of dynamics occurring between local elites and marginalised populations.

In this respect, we can posit that *transmodernism* aligns with the first ambition of postcolonialism, as it seeks to uncover and find solutions to the cultural consequences of colonialism. However, as we've seen earlier, Dussel goes beyond a mere critique of modernity and the legacy of colonialism by actively emphasising the significance of intercultural dialogue and the empowerment of marginalized communities. Furthermore, in his book "1492: the Occultation of *the Other*" (1992), Dussel builds upon Sartre and Fanon's initial efforts in demystifying the colonial ideology, by unveiling what he calls "the myth of modernity", namely the contradictions and false assumptions found in the ideas justifying modernity. Dussel goes further than most postcolonial authors by denouncing the disposable view of nature perpetuated by capitalist modernity, which he argues represents humanity's collective suicide. He emphasises that other cultures, often deemed "primitive" according to developmentalist standards, possess valuable knowledge and practices that can serve as lessons for a more sustainable and inclusive approach to modernity. By expanding the critique beyond colonial ideology and its legacy, Dussel therefore distinguishes himself from other postcolonial authors by including an ecological dimension to his philosophy.

### 3.2) *How Dussel avoids Maffettone's Liaison Dangereuse*

In “How to avoid the *liaison dangereuse* between postmodernism and postcolonialism” (2011), Maffettone offers a condensed overview of postmodernism. Also referred to as poststructuralism, postmodernism is typically associated with a philosophical climate that rejects Western modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant, as well as analytical philosophy. Maffettone traces the origin of this philosophical line of thought to ‘young’ Hegel and Nietzsche, and describes it as characterised by a sceptical attitude towards modern epistemology and metaphysics and their claim to knowledge. Postmodernism is also associated with the rejection of grand meta-narratives from Marx to Rawls, and of the rationalist rigidity that distinguishes the philosophical methodology of the Descartes-Kant tradition. Postmodernism contrasts modernist universalism in the name of the absolute specificity of particular life-worlds and forms of knowledge, which ultimately leads to the rejection of philosophical foundationalism. Postmodern authors privilege heterogeneity, fragmentation, particularity, contingency, and localism.

Maffettone’s article seeks to shed light on the postmodernist philosophical trap that postcolonialism must avoid. The Italian philosopher analyses the role taken by postmodernism in postcolonialism, specifically in the context of French Theory.

Maffettone introduces Jacques Derrida and his philosophy which falls under the umbrella of post-structuralism. The French philosopher perceived himself as a subaltern subject, referring to his status as an outsider in the philosophical world, being of Algerian descent, yet in the French philosophical tradition. He viewed structuralism as a form of Western ethnocentrism and developed deconstructionism as a means of challenging the basis of Western thought. Derrida's contributions to postcolonialism include the concept of *margins*, which redefines subaltern positions and offers an alternative discourse, and of *otherness* which emphasises the importance of understanding those who are different than oneself, and which presupposes that individuals are linguistically diverse<sup>32</sup>. It is interesting to note that Dussel was heavily inspired by Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who himself was influenced by

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<sup>32</sup> Maffettone, Sebastiano, *How to avoid the liaison dangereuse between postmodernism and post-colonialism*, Philosophy and Social Criticism, 2011

Jacques Derrida. In all three authors, the concept of *otherness* is found, yet in Dussel it takes a postcolonial shape, referring to the historically oppressed and exploited.

In “Filosofia Politica: Una Piccola Introduzione” (2014), Maffettone cites Derrida’s “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority” (1992) as a classic postmodern critique of justice. In this *œuvre*, Derrida deconstructs the concept of justice by unveiling its mystical features. For him, the idea of justice cannot be separated from law, as force without justice would result in tyranny, and justice without force would not be sustainable. Therefore, for the French philosopher, every institution must originate with a *coup de force*. Moreover, Derrida perceives theories of justice as creating a particular metalanguage seeking to justify and hide the culmination of violence which is intrinsically attached to the creation of the paradigm’s language. Accordingly, the discourse on justice is circumscribed by its own “mystical” limits. Law and justice find their legitimacy in their own language; hence every foundational discourse is invalid. This does not entail that law and justice are illegal, but rather that their morality cannot be proved theoretically, and this rationale is precisely what many postcolonial theories borrow from Derrida.

Maffettone also analyses Foucault’s influence on postcolonialism. The French philosopher never specifically addressed colonialism and his work is often deemed to be Eurocentric and far from political reality, nonetheless his concepts are often used as intellectual instruments by numerous postcolonialist theorists. In fact, Foucault has a fluctuating intellectual identity, with some perceiving him as a philosopher engaging in history and others as a historian engaging with philosophy. This is because Foucault based his theories on historical archives, yet the questions he would then raise were uncommon to traditional historians<sup>33</sup>. Maffettone mentions the concept of biopolitical power which is invoked by postcolonialists against the West’s rationalistic and scientific dominance. The concept refers to the state’s disciplinary power over bodies and reveals the centrality of the body and the complexity of the self in relation to social practices. Furthermore, Foucault’s analysis of the relationship between knowledge and power has also been a source of inspiration for radical theorists. The idea is that any discourse with truth-claims implies a dominance. These truth-claims partly compose the legitimacy apparatus power which is required for stability purposes. Thus, power operates through a series of micro-practices, from police measures to clinical instructions, the latter being a subject Foucault wrote vastly about. For Maffettone, when

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<sup>33</sup> Simon-Nahum, Perrine. ”L’histoire de la Philosophie au XXème Siècle”, 16 Nov. 2022, Sciences Po Paris, Paris. Lecture 10.

looking at international politics through a foucauldien prism, states and transnational institutions are the main holders of power in the international arena.

Maffettone presents and divides in three main points his hypothesis, namely that collocating postcolonialism to postmodernism is a trap the former must avoid.

Firstly, postmodernism is often criticised for its lack of objectivity. In fact, Maffettone perceives the movement as inherently self-contradictory, insofar as its critique of objectivity and normativity relies itself on a normative discourse. This is because postmodernism initially draws on Foucault and Derrida to point out that major institutions use their power to impose their own norms on society through practices that are disguised as neutral. However, postmodernism also rejects objective truths and rather sustains that knowledge is generated through subjective experiences and social constructions. This line of thought is however based on a discourse which implies an objective standard of truth, which postmodernism itself rejects. Maffettone interestingly posits that the postmodernist prism presupposes an Archimedean point of view, which requires a privileged perspective to assess truth objectively, which itself claims does not exist.

Secondly, Maffettone affirms that the lack of objectivism within postmodernism is intricately linked with anti-scientism and anti-rationalism. This is because the nature of postmodernism inherently implies a form of epistemic populism. Maffettone further evidences the fact that postcolonial thinkers have often found themselves on the side of “superstition”. For instance, postmodernist assumptions can result in the consideration of antique Indian astrology and classic religious texts as being on par with modern science. Maffettone perceives this view as a basis for false-progressism as well as substantial traditionism, which if synthesised with anti-scientism could dangerously result in the justification of unjust systems such as the Indian caste system.

Thirdly, the rejection of objectivism and scientific thought implies the impossibility of universalism, which is deemed a form of false consciousness by postmodernism. According to postcolonialism, universalism is closely connected to the Eurocentric narrative. For Maffettone, the consequences of the rejection of universalism are twofold: firstly, anti-universalism relies on a “perverse” trust in spontaneity and naivety, which believes that the voice of the subaltern is assumed to be able to rescue itself from the history of domination. However, it is highly debatable whether the localism of community can support a radical revolutionary claim such as the postcolonial one. Secondly, and for the same reasons, the

postmodernist attitude of postcolonialists localises the conflict, which depoliticises it, depriving the political stances of the subalterns of vision. As a result, for Maffettone, the subalterns are either confined within the aesthetic realm or are confronted in a series of particularistic negotiations, which precludes the appeal to dignity and human rights.

Dussel's *transmodernism* avoids the *liaison dangereuse* between postcolonialism and postmodernism, and in doing so distinguishes himself from traditional postcolonial authors as described by Maffettone. The Mexican-Argentinian philosopher does so by critiquing the Eurocentric bias present in Western theories, nonetheless he also acknowledges the existence of certain universal ethical principles. In doing so, Dussel manages to withhold beneficial elements of both modernism and postmodernism and avoids a dangerous fall into moral relativism. In fact, he attempts to find a balance between the valorisation of cultural diversity and the advocacy of shared ethical values. For instance, Dussel believes the "will-to-live" to be universal, as he writes: "Since human communities have always been threatened by their vulnerability to death and to extinction, such communities maintain an instinctive desire to remain alive. (...) The *will-to-live* is the originary tendency of all human beings (...)"<sup>34</sup> Dussel makes use of the will-to-live argument to expose modernity's exploitation of Nature, which contradicts humanity's will-to-live. *Transmodernism's* ecological aspect further proves that Dussel does not position himself in the anti-scientism stance of postmodernism.

Dussel also builds an ethical theory that relies on critical thought and practical implications to expose the injustice perpetuated by the capitalist system and eventually liberate *the Other*. Dussel believes in an innate sensibility for the suffering of others, present in all human beings, that can be revitalised through what Levinas calls a face-to-face encounter, which Dussel calls an "*interpelación*". Dussel thus believes in the universality of "pre-originary ethical rationality", a concept he borrows from French philosopher Levinas, which affirms the presence of an intuitive drive towards solidarity, even between individuals of diverse cultures, that arises prior to reasoning.

To conclude, if postmodernism casts doubt on the possibility of universal ethics, Dussel's *transmodernism* affirms the universal power of indignation and solidarity that emerge in response to dehumanisation. Nevertheless, Dussel acknowledges that modernity may socialise individuals to turn a blind eye to the injustice suffered by *the Other*, a phenomenon proved by the way in which colonisers were educated to exploit the colonised in the name of

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<sup>34</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, Duke University Press, 2008, p. 14



progress. Therefore, *transmodernism* puts emphasis on the co-responsibility that all individuals must acknowledge for negating the causes of suffering, whilst actively calling for ethical, political, and economic transformation.

### 3.3) *Vattimo's Postmodernism encounters Dussel's Transmodernism*

We have thus discovered how *transmodernism* manages to navigate past modernity's contradictions, whilst also avoiding the *liaison dangereuse* between postcolonialism and postmodernism. We shall now conclude this Chapter by relating Vattimo's postmodernism to Dussel's *transmodernism*. In the next part of the chapter, we shall paint a concrete understanding of how *transmodernism* relates to postmodernism, by making use of an attempt at a philosophical dialogue initiated by Dussel with an important component of postmodernism, namely Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. The effort is found in a book written by Dussel called "Postmodernità e Transmodernità: sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo" (2022). Thus, we have discovered how *transmodernism* manages to navigate past modernity's contradictions, whilst also avoiding the *liaison dangereuse* between postcolonialism and postmodernism. We shall now conclude this Chapter by relating Vattimo's postmodernism to Dussel's *transmodernism*.

In the summer of 1990, Dussel travelled to Turin with the intent of visiting where Nietzsche had once defined himself the Antichrist. During his stay, he had the opportunity to meet Italian postmodern philosopher Gianni Vattimo. "Postmodernità e Transmodernità: sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo" (2022) illustrates Dussel's unsuccessful attempt to initiate a dialogue with Vattimo, since the latter never responded to the former's philosophical advances. Vattimo, who was born in Turin, in 1936, is defined by Dussel as having a philosophical thought in constant evolution, much influenced by Heidegger, from whom he borrows a hermeneutical approach. In an interview given in 1992, Vattimo emphasises that hermeneutics is the *ensemble* of rules that outline an adequate interpretation of ancient texts. Vattimo declares that hermeneutics, which takes its name from Hermes, the herald of the Greek gods, become a philosophical orientation. This is because philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger rejected the idea that the world could be registered objectively, since the activity of man in the world is purely interpretative. For Vattimo human beings are affected by a problem related to

the continuity of experience, which philosophy must solve by avoiding an excess of fragmentation of our experience in the world<sup>35</sup>.

Dussel emphasises that Vattimo has a diverging philosophical point of departure than his own. The Italian philosopher departs from modernity as starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with for instance Descartes's "Discourse on Method" (1636), whilst the Mexican-Argentinian philosopher finds the origin of his discourse in 1492 since for him the *invasion* of Latin America transforms medieval "regional" Europe into the "centre" of the "world-system"<sup>36</sup>. Vattimo thus fails to consider the notion of "centrality" as an essential element linked to modernity, an attitude that Dussel defines Eurocentric, since it automatically assumes that all events happening in Europe prior to 1492 are the sole creditors of modernity. For Dussel, this Eurocentric line of thought truly occults the "periphery", which in reality has contributed equally to the origins of modernity. Moreover, for Dussel, "there is no modernity without 'modernised', no civilisation without 'uncivilised'"<sup>37</sup>. This idea comes close to Foucault's concept of *double opération*, which emphasises that when one excludes, he automatically defines. Furthermore, Dussel affirms that the Eurocentric perspective is an integral part of the "myth of modernity", that justifies irrational violence against the "periphery" in the name of civilisation.

Postmodernism takes a peculiar shape in Vattimo. The initial assumption is that modernity is unified by the belief that there is a value in being modern. Thus, modernity has a valorising dimension in the sense that to be modern implies a superiority in relation to the non-modern. For Vattimo, this belief is a direct product of the idea that history moves towards an emancipatory goal. If being modern implies being more advanced in history, the "modern being" is closer to liberation. The essence of Vattimo's modernism is that society has moved on from this vision of modernity, since the idea of a unified history and of progress has been deconstructed over the years and has become a "myth of progressive history". The authenticity of Vattimo's thought is found in his renowned concept named "weak thought". Often simplified by critics as merely meaning that there is no objective truth, nor foundation, Vattimo describes as the weakening and consumption of ideas which were once considered absolute truths. However, Vattimo perceives the idea of "weak thought" itself as the last possible sense

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<sup>35</sup> Vattimo, Gianni, Intervista, *Il Pensiero Debole*, Archivi RSI, 1992

<sup>36</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Postmodernità e Transmodernità, Sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo*, Castelvechi, 2022, p.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43

of history. In other words, the idea of a unified history and of absolute truths has been lost, yet the loss and consumption of these ideas is the meaning that Vattimo attributes to our current history<sup>38</sup>.

In his writings on Vattimo, Dussel delivers an authentic instance of counter-history. He identifies in Vattimo, but also Nietzsche and the whole current philosophical generation (including Latin America), a “hellenocentric syndrome”, that is an excessive and distorted idealisation of Ancient Greek culture. For Dussel, this idealisation of Ancient Greece is part of a grand-meta narrative originating in Germany in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which he rejects. “Hellenocentrism” creates a paradigm in which Ancient Greece is at the origin of everything, occulting Ancient Egyptian culture, which Dussel highly valorises throughout his writings. In this regard, another practical objective of *transmodernism* is to put an end to the “hellenocentrism” omnipresent in universities across all continents, or else “there won’t be a future global philosophy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>39</sup>”.

Moreover, Vattimo perceives the “uncivilised” individuals, excluded from history, as benefiting from the “weakening” of absolute truths. Vattimo credits the multiplication of “cultural voices” that today have more intellectual space to deconstruct and create ideas, and thus perceives contemporary reality as a construction of diverse interpretations. Furthermore, in contrast to many postmodern authors, Vattimo believes in the universality of an ethical value, namely “*pietas*”. Traditionally understood as the devotion towards familial traditions, Vattimo perceives it as a form of compassion towards the mortality and fragility of humanity. Revolving around the remembrance of humanity’s vestige, instances of “*pietas*” can be found in the literary *œuvre*, which is of ethical value as it is a source of what would otherwise be forgotten with the passing of time.

For Dussel, however, “for a world of the poor, the exploited and/or excluded, women dominated by machismo, youth, and popular culture alienated by a domineering pedagogy, both in the countries of the ‘centre’ and especially in the ‘periphery,’ this (“*pietas*”) is not enough<sup>40</sup>.” Vattimo’s solution doesn’t take into account the future, which for Dussel represents the hope for *the Other*. Dussel concludes that after modernity has ended, *transmodernity* must

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<sup>38</sup> Vattimo, Gianni, Intervista, *Il Pensiero Debole*, Archivi RSI, 1992

<sup>39</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Postmodernità e Transmodernità, Sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo*, Castelvechi, 2022, p. 41

<sup>40</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Postmodernità e Transmodernità, Sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo*, Castelvechi, 2022, p. 65

follow. He imagines a “new civilisation that realises the values of those who are marginalised and excluded, including a redefinition of the relationship between individuals and nature as ecological recovery, and the relationship between individuals as cultural, political, and economic justice<sup>41</sup>”.

Thus, for Dussel, there is a necessity to go further than Vattimo. Dussel proposes an Ethics of Liberation that seeks to actively recognise the dignity of the negated alterity. In this way, Vattimo’s “*pietas*” can be seen as taking a different shape in Dussel, as it revolves particularly around the experience of *the Other*. Dussel creates a “liberatory-constructive praxis”, that goes beyond both modernity and postmodernity, and in this way reaches *transmodernity*. To conclude, in the face of postmodernity taken as the decline of European modernity, Dussel stands with Vattimo, yet when valorising *the Other* as the neglected and occulted face of modernity, and hence going towards a *transmodern* society, Dussel goes beyond Vattimo. We have thus analysed how *transmodernism* reacts when directly confronted with postmodernism, providing further confirmation that Dussel offers a valuable postcolonial theory which successfully circumvents Maffettone’s *liaison dangereuse*.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65

## Chapter 4. The Apollonian and Dionysian Forces in Dussel's Philosophy

In this last chapter of this thesis, we shall introduce Nietzsche and the philosophical context behind his theory on the Apollonian and the Dionysian. We shall then contemplate *transmodernism* through these two forces, which will not only allow us to illustrate Dussel's practical philosophical objectives, but also further broaden our understanding of *transmodernism* itself. Parallely, we will discover that through their revolutionary philosophical theories, both Nietzsche and Dussel attempt to create a new social order, which importantly takes into account the forces identified by Nietzsche.

### *4.1) The Clash of Forces: Dussel's Quest for Balance and Liberation*

Nietzsche was educated in institutions presupposing conceptions of the world and history which did not coincide with his own vision. He founded his philosophy by parting ways with the German intellectual and academic philologist tradition of the 1870s. Philology was the prevailing and most prestigious discipline in Germany at that time and consisted in the study of the structure and historical evolution of languages. Since Germany had academically established itself as the heiress of ancient Greece, it became a specialist in the interpretation of ancient Greek texts. Nietzsche, who was interested in grasping the genius of civilisations and their cultural evolution through their lingual manifestations, thought that the German tradition was too focused on analysing the texts from a grammar perspective, failing to render the Greek spirit and identity. In other words, the German philologist tradition was lacking an interest in its actual object of study: ancient Greece.

Nietzsche thus sought to interpret and analyse ancient Greek tragedies, which he thought of as the highest expression of art, under a new prism involving the clash of two forces: the Apollonian and the Dionysian. On the one side the Apollonian, inspired by the god of vision and appearance Apollon, which Nietzsche identifies as a force seeking to show us a world in which suffering does not exist. The Apollonian represents rationality, harmony, interpretation, or even order. On the other side the Dionysian, retrieved from the Greek god of winemaking, festivity, and insanity, Dionysus, which for Nietzsche represents the primitive instincts, the intoxication with which natural forces are expressed, and moreover excess. Nietzsche subsequently detached these forces from the sole field of art, in order to build his philosophy.

He sought to construct a history that takes into account the flux of life, to develop a philosophy which does not petrify life.

Thus, history, for Nietzsche, is a vital flux produced by the clash between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. He introduces the idea that we are caught by a current of force that surpasses us, and the only way to understand history is through art, which is itself created by the clash of the Apollonian and Dionysian forces. The latter is a destructive force, and can cause great damage when alone, yet when associated with the Apollonian, they together become a source of culture and civilisation. In fact, for Nietzsche, these forces combined are at the origin of great works of art, literature, and philosophy, as well as social and political institutions that promote human flourishing. However, when one force dominates the other, it can lead to imbalance and a loss of vitality.

The curriculum of the National University of Cuyo, in Argentina, where Dussel graduated in 1957, was almost solely composed of Western philosophers and concepts. The institution Dussel attended had a Eurocentric view of world history that did not align with his personal experiences. Moreover, Dussel realised that this was the case for all philosophy programmes throughout the continent. In a similar way to which Nietzsche constructed his philosophy as a critique of philology, Dussel developed his Philosophy of Liberation on a critique of the Western paradigm of philosophy and history. Whilst both philosophers sought to revolutionise a certain academic field, Dussel's philosophy is more personal than Nietzsche's, as the former's drive for writing originated in a search for a historical and cultural Latin American identity. Both Nietzsche and Dussel were driven by the will to challenge dominant concepts and expose the complex and repressed aspects of reality. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's philosophy is characterised by a complex need for balance, which if lost leads to chaos. Nietzsche proposes a solution to keep an equilibrium between the Apollonian and the Dionysian forces. To comprehend it, we must go back to his analysis of Greek tragedies.

Nietzsche's solution to keep a balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian during a tragedy, is the chorus. In Greek tragedies, the chorus serves as a group of performers who comments on the action of the play and offers moral and philosophical reflections on the themes and events presented. Nietzsche saw the chorus as a powerful symbol of the interplay between individual and collective perspectives, a figure which ultimately mediates between the Apollonian and Dionysian forces, allowing the audience to experience the liberating power of the Dionysian while containing its destructive potential. Importantly, the chorus allows one to

not forget the reality of our world, a danger towards which the Apollonian drags us, as it flourishes the illusion of a harmonious world. The chorus also entangles the Dionysian forces, impeding the spectator to experience catharsis, intended as the identification to the character on stage<sup>42</sup>.

It is of interest here to make a connection between a phenomenon described by Fanon which we discussed earlier, namely the catharsis occurring in Martinique, and in other colonies, due to cultural outlets such as comic books. Children living in colonies, or *victims* as Dussel would call them, were identifying with the White heroic figures regularly present in such cultural productions. This catharsis created an asymmetry between the *victim's* identity within a Western world system and the *victim's* perceived identity. Nietzsche's solution to such phenomenon would have been to introduce a *chorus* impeding catharsis, which would have obstructed the Dionysian force, in this case the Western-centred paradigm behind cultural productions. But the *chorus*, in this instance, could have been education, in order to achieve awareness of the Western-centred paradigm. Interestingly, Dussel proposes a form of *chorus* to put an end to the catharsis taking place in Latin America. The Mexican-Argentinian philosopher is an active advocate for a reform of the Latin American Eurocentric curriculum, towards a more global and inclusive teaching *transmodern* programme.

Thus, Dussel's philosophy seeks to achieve a balance between the liberating and the excluding forces, with the ultimate aim of creating a new order that is not only more just but also more aware of its historical and material condition. In this sense, Nietzsche's philosophy of history and Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation can be seen as complementary approaches to the same fundamental problem, namely, how to create a world that is more in tune with the Dionysian reality of life whilst avoiding the dangerous consequences of imbalance.

#### 4.2) *Interpreting Transmodernism through Chronos and Clio*

To further illustrate the tension between Dionysian and Apollonian forces in both Nietzsche and Dussel, we wish to reference the cover of Paul Ricœur's *chef d'œuvre* "La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli." (2000) On this cover, a photograph of a baroque sculpture is depicted, representing Chronos, the god of time in Greek mythology, juxtaposed with Clio, the

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<sup>42</sup> Simon-Nahum, Perrine. "L'histoire de la Philosophie au XXème Siècle", 16 Nov. 2022, Sciences Po Paris, Paris. Lecture 1.

muse of history. Written by the monastery of Wiblingen, where the statue is currently exposed, a description hereby follows:

“It is the double figure of history. At the front, Chronos the winged god. He is an elderly man with a crowned forehead; his left hand grips a large book from which his right hand tries to *tear* out a sheet; Behind and above, History itself. The gaze is serious and scrutinizing; one foot overturns a cornucopia from which a shower of gold and silver escapes, a sign of instability; the left hand stops the gesture of the god, while the right hand exhibits the instruments of *history*: the book, the inkwell, the *stylus*.”

Under the image of the sculpture, Paul Ricœur wrote by hand: “Between the tearing by the winged time and the writing of history and its stylus.”

We wish to interpret the statue of “Chronos et Clio” by setting it under the prism of Dionysian and Apollonian forces. The *tearing* of the past by Chronos, may represent the Dionysian force, as the winged god desires to destroy the coherence of history. Meanwhile, Clio’s act of *writing history* with the *stylus* could represent the Apollonian force’s attempt to impose order on the past. However, this intuitive interpretation fails to account for the complexities of history. In fact, for Nietzsche, the Apollonian and Dionysian forces are not necessarily good and bad, but rather complementary and necessary for creativity and life. The initial interpretation of Chronos as a destructive Dionysian force and Clio as an ordered Apollonian force is overly simplistic. We can thus benefit by interpreting the statue in a way which is more in harmony with both Nietzsche’s and Dussel’s vision of history.

Through their lenses, Chronos’ attempt to destroy past events can be perceived as an Apollonian urge to impose order and erase the chaotic elements of history. Meanwhile, Clio’s attempt to safeguard historical records and make sense of them could represent a Dionysian urge to embrace and creatively interpret history in its entirety. In point of fact, this interpretation aligns with Dussel’s vision of history, which emphasises the importance of giving voice to the marginalised and oppressed. In this sense, *transmodernism* can be compared to Clio, the muse of history, as it seeks to offer a more inclusive history which no longer revolves around Europe as the centre. In other words, *transmodernism* offers a prism out of which one might perceive Chronos, god of time attempting to tear past events, as modernity’s Apollonian drive that seeks to impose a singular, ordered version of history, which may ignore or silence the perspectives of marginalised groups. Meanwhile, the *transmodern* Dionysian force, represented by Clio, seeks to creatively interpret the diverse and sometimes chaotic elements



of history, including the experiences and perspectives of those who have been excluded from history itself, such as Dussel's *other*.

In this sense we can argue that Latin American educational institutions, since 1492, have flourished with statues of Chronos in the form of Eurocentric curriculums, whilst Clio was occulted. However, by incorporating the Dionysian force into the interpretation of history, or in other words, by sculpting the figure of Clio, Dussel seeks to give voice to those who have been silenced by traditional historical narratives. By urging the reforming of the educational system in Latin American, Dussel hopes to see the continent's institutions blossom with many more metaphorical statues of Clio.

Moreover, Chronos' aged appearance and his attempt to destroy history could be seen as a reflection on the limitations of the Apollonian force in its attempt to impose order and measure on history. In dusselian terms, modernity's attempt to occult the history of its other face, of *the Other*, has come to an end. Modernity's Apollonian force seeks to establish a fixed and stable understanding of history, yet this is impossible in the face of diverse cultural and historical identities, and the chaotic nature of human experience. Chronos' attempt to destroy the records of the past is therefore an act of frustration and desperation, an attempt to hold cultural hegemony, in the face of the unyielding flux of history. In contrast, Clio's serious and scrutinising gaze, her use of the book, inkwell, and stylus, and her ability to stop Chronos from destroying history could be seen as representing the Dionysian drive found in *transmodernism* as it seeks to creatively interpret and make sense of the chaotic elements of history.

When put under the prism of Dussel's vision of history, Chronos and Clio represent different angles of historical consciousness. For Dussel, history is a process of becoming, a constant struggle for freedom, and a need to recognise *the Other*. All in all, Chronos' attempt to destroy history could be seen as depicting the Western occultation of Latin American, and other colonies', historical identities. In other words, the West's will to impose order and control over history, to reduce the complexity of human experience to fixed and stable categories, and to deny the ongoing process of becoming. This Apollonian force seeks to establish a singular and unified understanding of modernity, which can lead to a denial of the diversity of human experience and a neglect of *the Other*.

Overall, the tension between Chronos and Clio in the statue can be seen as a reflection of the ongoing struggle between the Western struggle for cultural hegemony and the non-Western countries' will to reclaim their cultural and historical identity. This struggle is at the

heart of the politics of liberation, as *the Other* seeks to challenge and transform the dominant narrative of modernity from the “borderlands” of modernity itself, embracing the ongoing process of becoming and the recognition of the diversity of human experience.

Moreover, interpreting a historical object such as the statue of ‘Chronos et Clio’ through the lens of Nietzsche's philosophy of history can be seen as an embodiment of Nietzsche's call for a creative and interpretive approach to the past. Rather than simply taking the statue as an object of historical fact, we have analysed it in terms of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, whilst simultaneously adding to it a dusselian dimension. Such an approach is in line with Nietzsche's rejection of objective history and his advocacy for a more subjective, interpretive mode of historical understanding. Thus, we are not only applying Nietzsche's philosophy, but also enacting the kind of creative historical interpretation he advocates. Furthermore, this process has helped us grasp a more nuanced and pictural understanding of Dussel's vision of history and the complex quintessence of *transmodernism*. By acknowledging the tension between order and chaos, memory and forgetting, and objective fact and creative interpretation, we have come to realise the complexity and richness of historical narratives.

## Conclusion

In this thesis we have initially set out part of the philosophical and historical context in which Dussel operates. In chapter 1, Fanon's ideas on the subjective experience of what he calls *the wretched of the Earth* have helped us understand the profound motivations driving Dussel towards the exploration of the cultural and historical identity of his continent, Latin America. Notably, we discovered that Fanon and Dussel's philosophical journeys share similar outcomes: if Fanon engaged in a philosophical battle seeking to end the then persisting European colonialist expansion, Dussel attempts to halt the cultural repercussions of colonialism, a philosophical process which would eventually lead to the creation of *transmodernism*. In a second place, we have identified in Fanon and Dussel two instances of Heidegger's historical creature, in constant need of historical interpretation.

In chapter 2, we presented Dussel's deconstruction of the complex aspects tying together modernity, such as the *negation of the Other*, described as the underside of modernity, and closely linked to "myth of modernity", which has justified the subjugation and exploitation of *the Other*. We have then investigated Dussel's critique of modernity and its biased assumptions and contradictions, which have gradually integrated into the world-wide study of history a Eurocentric perspective and therefore an occultation of non-Western cultures. Moreover, we have defined *transmodernism* as a revolutionary yet utopian project, requiring the drive of postcolonial societies to be fulfilled, that must act from the "borderlands" of modernity, with a strong reliance on self-valorisation and intercultural dialogue.

In chapter 3, we initiated our discussion by presenting Maffettone's conception of postcolonialism and postmodernism. In parallel, we positioned Dussel with regard to postcolonialism, recognising his alignment with certain typical traits of the field, as identified by Maffettone. We subsequently outlined Maffettone's line of thought behind a conceptual peril he identifies in the postcolonialism habit of integrating postmodernist assumptions. Importantly, we have found that *transmodernism* avoids Maffettone's *liaison dangereuse*, by navigating beyond postmodernism's limits, and in this way constructing a distinct path for *the Other* to follow, which, in contrast to postmodernism in postcolonialism, assumes certain universal ethical values. Moreover, through an analysis of Dussel's book "Postmodernità e Transmodernità: sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo" (2022), we have constructed a concrete example of how *transmodernism* reacts when confronted with an instance of postmodernism.

By juxtaposing the two lines of thought, we have explored their differing perspectives on centrality, history, ethical values, and the recognition of *the Other*.

The last chapter of this thesis was dedicated to further understand Dussel by setting his philosophy under a Nietzschean lens. We have found that *transmodernism* can be perceived as the Dionysian force, seeking to re-write a more inclusive and transparent history, against modernity, which driven by Apollonian forces attempts to impose a unified and European-centred vision of history. This last section has allowed us to further illustrate one of Dussel's philosophical objectives, namely of reforming the educational system in Latin America, which as we saw failed to coincide with Dussel's own subjective experience, and in this sense push for a more *transmodern* curriculum.

In front of modernity's consequences, namely unprecedented levels of inequality and the destruction of Nature, which Dussel does not miss a chance to mention, *transmodernism* emerges as a philosophy of hope. Whilst Dussel effectively arms *the Other* with the wisdom needed to gain awareness on and subsequently counter the legacy of colonialism, his inclusion of ecological values may resound thoroughly with the global youth. Dussel reminds us that 20% of the world's wealthiest population consumes 82,7% of the world's resources, and considering the immense carbon footprint gap between the rich and poor, the Mexican-Argentinian philosopher seems to have a clear target in mind for his *Other*. Arguably, what Dussel needs now is the same ardour with which ideas were deployed during the popular and student movements of 1968, through the mobilising power of awareness and indignation, in order to put an end to modernity, and effectively enter *transmodernity*.

## Sommario

Il *transmodernismo* è un concetto sviluppatosi negli anni '70 e che trova origine nella Filosofia della Liberazione del filosofo messicano-argentino, Enrique Dussel. Il concetto nasce come una critica del paradigma dominante legato al “modernismo”, composto da un insieme di idee Eurocentriche e contraddittorie e da una varietà di miti, che, per Dussel, hanno giustificato le atrocità del colonialismo e che sono ancora oggi parzialmente responsabili di un livello di disuguaglianza senza precedenti nel Sud del mondo. Il *transmodernismo* nasce inoltre come critica del postmodernismo, che a sua volta rappresentava una critica della modernità. Il filosofo italiano Sebastiano Maffettone identifica nel postmodernismo, un pericolo concettuale capace di creare un vuoto filosofico, se associata al postcolonialismo.

Questa tesi si pone l'obiettivo di rispondere alle seguenti domande: *Cos'è il transmodernismo e in che modo mette in discussione il paradigma dominante della modernità e della postmodernità? Dussel evita il pericoloso collegamento tra postcolonialismo e postmodernismo, su cui Maffettone mette in guardia il mondo accademico? Quali sono alcune delle implicazioni pratiche del transmodernismo?*

Per tratteggiare il panorama storico e filosofico in cui si situa Dussel, abbiamo cominciato l'introdurre il filosofo Frantz Fanon, il pilastro su cui si è successivamente costruito il postcolonialismo. Nel suo primo libro “Pelle nera, maschere bianche” (1952), Fanon spiega come nel suo paese natale, la Martinica, egli si sia stato indotto a identificarsi socialmente in modo inconscio con il colonizzatore e ad assorbirne profondamente la cultura<sup>43</sup>. Tuttavia, arrivato in Francia, si rese conto di essere percepito come inferiore dalla stessa cultura che aveva adottato e divenne vittima di discriminazioni razziali per il colore della sua pelle e per il suo accento<sup>44</sup>. Un insieme di esperienze traumatiche che lo portarono a costruire un percorso filosofico che lo fece emergere come il precursore del postcolonialismo.

È interessante notare come il paesaggio soggettivo dipinto dalle parole di Fanon si avvicini all'esperienza di Dussel. In “Transmodernity and Interculturality” (2012), il filosofo usa un aneddoto personale per mettere in evidenza il carattere profondamente Eurocentrico della filosofia. Da studente della disciplina a Buenos Aires, Dussel aveva notato che il curriculum di studi ruotava esclusivamente attorno ai filosofi occidentali e l'aveva inizialmente

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<sup>43</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* Pluto Press, 1986, p. 38

<sup>44</sup> Cherki, Alice, Preface. *Les Damnés de la Terre* by Frantz Fanon, 1986, p.11

accettato, convinto com'era, insieme ai suoi colleghi, di appartenere alla cultura filosofica occidentale. Quest'illusione svanì nel 1957, quando il giovane Dussel intraprese un viaggio a Lisbona, dove scoprì di "essere Latinoamericano, o almeno non più Europeo", poiché "(...) le differenze erano evidenti e non potevano essere nascoste<sup>45</sup>." Questa realizzazione, simile seppur non altrettanto traumatica di quella di Fanon, cominciò a tormentare Dussel, che intraprese quindi un altro viaggio, questa volta filosofico, alla scoperta dell'identità culturale e storica del suo continente, l'America del Sud.

Ma Dussel va poi oltre, arrivando a criticare la realtà sociale, motrice di disuguaglianze e di atrocità, con cui tutti ci confrontiamo: la modernità. Dussel fonda la sua critica alla modernità contestandone il carattere intrinsecamente Eurocentrico. Quest'Eurocentrismo, spiega Dussel, ha portato alla confusione di alcune generalità umane e universali con particolarità europee, dando vita alla falsa convinzione che la cultura, la civiltà e la filosofia europee moderne incarnino qualità umane universali.

Per Dussel, la realtà è diversa. Innanzitutto, nonostante molte culture abbiano subito una colonizzazione parziale, i loro valori fondamentali sono rimasti, malgrado la repressione da parte delle élites dominanti occidentalizzate. Dussel identifica in queste civiltà una ricchezza culturale occultata, che si è evoluta in parallelo e in risposta alla modernità europea imposta con la forza. Inoltre, la maggior parte dei successi della modernità non sono fenomeni esclusivamente europei, ma piuttosto il risultato di una costante dialettica di influenza e contro-influenza tra l'Europa moderna e la sua "periferia". Per Dussel, la storia "mondiale" ebbe inizio nel 1492, quando l'insieme delle civiltà entrarono in una relazione empirica con la cultura europea moderna, che funge da nucleo di un sistema mondiale che si confronta con tutte le altre culture del globo. In effetti, Dussel afferma che la modernità dovrebbe includere determinazioni (e contro-determinazioni) del centro rispetto alla periferia. Pertanto, all'interno del quadro *transmodernista*, l'inclusione delle determinazioni periferiche nello studio della storia mondiale emerge come una richiesta cruciale.

Di conseguenza, il *transmodernismo* mette in luce l'originalità profonda delle culture che emergono dalle loro esperienze storiche distintive e rispondono alle sfide poste dalla modernità attraverso le proprie prospettive. Dussel immagina una futura cultura *transmoderna* nata dal prodotto di un autentico dialogo interculturale, che idealmente dovrebbe abbracciare

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<sup>45</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Transmodernity and Interculturality*, TRANSMODERNITY, Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1, 2012, p. 30

gli aspetti positivi della modernità mantenendo al contempo la propria ricca diversità. Dussel definisce quindi il *transmodernismo* come un progetto che richiede l'impulso delle società postcoloniali per essere realizzato.

Tuttavia, l'impresa non può essere portata avanti esclusivamente attraverso l'autovalorizzazione culturale e l'impegno nel dialogo interculturale. Per Dussel, il processo deve coinvolgere gli intellettuali, che devono navigare tra i confini della propria cultura e della modernità. A tal proposito, Dussel è una forza motrice del progetto *transmoderno*, poiché nel corso degli anni ha accumulato numerosi dialoghi filosofici con autori sia della periferia che del centro. Dussel definisce questi intellettuali come "critici" che esistono nel contesto biculturale delle "frontiere", consentendo la creazione di un pensiero critico. Infine, questa strategia richiede un periodo prolungato di resistenza, maturazione e accumulo di forza, e implica anche la coltivazione e lo sviluppo della propria tradizione culturale.

Quest'approccio favorisce la crescita e la creatività di una cultura rinnovata che non è semplicemente decolonizzata, ma bensì completamente nuova. Il dialogo tra innovatori culturali e critici non è strettamente moderno né postmoderno, ma essenzialmente *transmoderno*. Questo perché la forza creativa non ha origine nella modernità stessa, ma dalla sua "frontiera" esterna o dall'"esteriorità" della modernità, come la definisce Dussel. Questa "esteriorità" non è negativa, ma semplicemente situata in una tradizione distinta dal paradigma moderno. Dussel offre quindi l'esempio delle culture indigene in America Latina, che abbracciano un'affermazione unica della Natura, equilibrata dal punto di vista ecologico e quindi cruciale di fronte alla modernità capitalista che considera la Natura come qualcosa di sfruttabile e basato sulla logica dell'"usa e getta". Dussel definisce la distruzione della Natura come il suicidio collettivo dell'umanità, perpetrato dalla cultura moderna globalizzante, che ancora non impara dalle altre culture considerate più "primitive" secondo gli standard dello sviluppo. Il *transmodernismo* cerca quindi di incorporare questo principio ecologico che la modernità stessa non riesce a incorporare.

Pertanto, il *transmodernismo* va oltre una semplice critica della modernità e si pone come una sfida filosofica anche nei confronti del postmodernismo.

Dussel avrebbe potuto correre il pericolo concettuale che, secondo il filosofo italiano Sebastiano Maffettone, emerge qualora gli autori postcoloniali facciano uso di presupposti postmoderni.

Per Maffettone, associare postmodernismo al postcolonialismo è una trappola che la seconda corrente filosofica deve assolutamente evitare. In primo luogo, il postmodernismo è spesso criticato per la sua mancanza di oggettività. Infatti, Maffettone considera il movimento intrinsecamente contraddittorio, poiché la sua critica della normatività si basa a sua volta su un discorso normativo. Il postmodernismo rifiuta le verità oggettive e sostiene piuttosto che la conoscenza sia generata attraverso esperienze soggettive e costruzioni sociali. Questa linea di pensiero si basa tuttavia su un discorso che implica uno standard oggettivo di verità, che il postmodernismo stesso rifiuta. In secondo luogo, Maffettone afferma che la mancanza di oggettivismo all'interno del postmodernismo è strettamente legata all'anti-scientismo e all'anti-razionalismo. Maffettone evidenzia infatti che i pensatori postcoloniali si sono spesso trovati dalla parte della "superstizione". Ad esempio, le supposizioni postmoderniste possono portare a considerare l'astrologia antica indiana e i testi religiosi classici allo stesso livello della scienza moderna. Maffettone percepisce questa visione come basata su un falso progressismo e un sostanziale tradizionalismo, che, se uniti all'anti-scientismo, possono pericolosamente giustificare sistemi ingiusti come il sistema delle caste indiano.

Il *transmodernismo* di Dussel si distingue dalle teorie degli autori tradizionali coloniali, evitando la *liaison dangereuse* tra postcolonialismo e postmodernismo identificata da Maffettone. In effetti, il filosofo Messico-Argentino critica l'Eurocentrismo delle teorie occidentali; tuttavia, riconosce anche l'esistenza di certi principi etici universali. Ad esempio, Dussel ritiene che la "volontà di vivere"<sup>46</sup> sia un aspetto universale, presente in tutti gli esseri umani. Questa "volontà di vivere" entra in conflitto con lo sfruttamento della Natura osservata nella modernità, che Dussel considera un "suicidio collettivo". L'aspetto ecologico del *transmodernismo* dimostra ulteriormente che Dussel non si ritrova nella posizione antiscientifica che emerge in alcune teorie postcoloniali e postmoderne. In tal modo, Dussel riesce ad evitare una pericolosa caduta nel relativismo morale. Infatti, il *transmodernismo* cerca di trovare un equilibrio tra la valorizzazione della diversità culturale e la difesa di valori etici universali.

Dussel costruisce anche una teoria etica che si basa sul pensiero critico per denunciare l'ingiustizia perpetuata dal sistema capitalista. Per liberare l'Altro, è essenziale far ricorso alla sensibilità innata per la sofferenza degli altri, presente in tutti gli esseri umani, che può essere ravvivata attraverso quello che il filosofo Francese Levinas chiama "un incontro faccia a

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<sup>46</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, Duke University Press, 2018, p. 14



faccia”, e che Dussel nomina "interpelacion". Dussel crede quindi nell'universalità di una "razionalità etica pre-originaria", un concetto che prende in prestito da Levinas: si tratta della presenza di un impulso intuitivo verso la solidarietà, anche tra individui di culture diverse, e che sorge prima del ragionamento.

In conclusione, se il postmodernismo mette in dubbio la possibilità di un'etica universale, il *transmodernismo* afferma il potere universale dell'indignazione e della solidarietà che emergono in risposta alla disumanizzazione. Il *transmodernismo* riesce quindi a navigare oltre le contraddizioni della modernità, evitando anche la *liaison dangereuse* tra postcolonialismo e postmodernismo.

Un'immagine concreta di come il *transmodernismo* si relazioni con il postmodernismo è data dal tentativo di dialogo filosofico avviato da Dussel con un importante rappresentante del postmodernismo, il filosofo italiano Gianni Vattimo. Il postmodernismo, in Vattimo, assume una forma peculiare. Come l'insieme dei postmodernisti, Vattimo parte da una critica della modernità, che percepisce come unificata dalla convinzione che ci sia un valore nell'essere moderni. Per Vattimo, questa credenza nasce dall'idea che la storia è orientata verso un fine emancipatorio. Talvolta, per Vattimo, la società si è allontanata da questa visione della modernità, poiché l'idea di una storia unificata è stata decostruita nel corso degli anni ed è ora percepita come un mito. L'autenticità del pensiero di Vattimo però si trova nella sua teoria sul "pensiero debole". Spesso semplificato dai critici come l'idea che non esiste una verità oggettiva né un fondamento, Vattimo lo descrive come il consumo di idee che un tempo erano considerate verità assolute. Vattimo coglie nell'idea del "pensiero debole" l'ultimo possibile senso della storia<sup>47</sup>.

Nel suo dialogo con Vattimo, Dussel segue un approccio basato sulla contro-storia, tipica dei pensatori postcoloniali. Egli identifica in Vattimo, ma anche in Nietzsche e nell'intera generazione filosofica attuale (compresa quella Latino-Americana), una "sindrome ellenocentrica", ossia un'idealizzazione sproporzionata e distorta della cultura dell'Antica Grecia. Per Dussel, l'ellenocentrismo fa parte di una meta-narrazione che ha origine nella Germania nel XVII secolo, e che occultò la cultura dell'Antico Egitto, appropriandosene. A tal proposito, un altro obiettivo pratico del *transmodernismo* è porre fine all'"ellenocentrismo" onnipresente nelle università di tutti i continenti, altrimenti "non ci sarà una filosofia globale

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<sup>47</sup> Vattimo, Gianni, Intervista, *Il Pensiero Debole*, Archivi RSI, 1992

futura nel XXI secolo<sup>48</sup>". Inoltre, discreditando una meta-narrazione, un'attitudine tipica dei postmodernisti, Dussel dimostra ancora una volta che il transmodernismo mantiene certi elementi benefici del postmodernismo, ma superando alcuni di tali elementi.

Inoltre, in contrasto con la maggior parte dei postmodernisti, Vattimo crede nell'universalità di un valore etico, ossia la "pietas". Tradizionalmente intesa come devozione verso le tradizioni familiari, Vattimo la percepisce come una forma di compassione verso la mortalità e la fragilità dell'umanità e ne trova esempi nell'opera letteraria, che ha un valore etico poiché è una fonte di ciò che altrimenti sarebbe dimenticato nel passare del tempo.

Tuttavia, per Dussel, "per un mondo di poveri, sfruttati e/o esclusi, donne dominate dal machismo, giovani e cultura popolare alienati da una pedagogia dominante, sia nei paesi del 'centro' che soprattutto nella 'periferia', ciò (la "pietas") non è sufficiente<sup>49</sup>". La soluzione di Vattimo non prende in considerazione il futuro, che per Dussel rappresenta una fonte di speranza per l'Altro. Dussel immagina quindi una realtà *transmoderna*, una "nuova civiltà che realizzi i valori di coloro che sono emarginati ed esclusi, compresa una ridefinizione del rapporto tra individui e natura come ripresa ecologica e il rapporto tra individui come giustizia culturale, politica ed economica". Dussel propone quindi un'etica che permette di riconoscere la dignità dell'alterità negata. In questo modo, possiamo considerare che la "pietas" di Vattimo assume una forma diversa in Dussel, poiché ruota particolarmente attorno all'esperienza dell'Altro. Dussel crea una "prassi liberatoria-costruttiva" che va oltre sia la modernità che la postmodernità e raggiunge così la *transmodernità*.

Queste considerazioni apportano un'ulteriore conferma del fatto che Dussel offre una preziosa teoria postcoloniale che elude effettivamente la *liaison dangereuse* di Maffettone.

La filosofia della storia di Nietzsche, e in particolare la dinamica tra l'apollineo e il dionisiaco aiuta ad approfondire la comprensione degli obiettivi filosofici di Dussel. L'apollineo rappresenta la razionalità, l'armonia e l'ordine, mentre il dionisiaco rappresenta gli istinti primitivi e l'eccesso. Nietzsche ha utilizzato queste forze provenienti dal campo dell'arte per costruire la sua filosofia, e in particolare l'idea che la storia sia un flusso vitale prodotto dal

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<sup>48</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Postmodernità e Transmodernità, Sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo*, Castelvechi, 2022, p. 41

<sup>49</sup> Dussel, Enrique, *Postmodernità e Transmodernità, Sulla Filosofia di Gianni Vattimo*, Castelvechi, 2022, p. 65

conflitto tra di esse. Secondo Nietzsche, il dominio di una delle due forze può portare a squilibri e quindi una perdita di vitalità.

Restando nel mondo dell'arte, abbiamo preso a prestito la copertina dell'opera di Paul Ricœur, "La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli," (2000) sulla quale è raffigurata una statua che prende il nome di "Chronos et Clio". Questa statua rappresenta il Dio del tempo, Crono, con in mano un grande libro dal quale la sua mano destra cerca di strappare un foglio, e la musa della storia, Clio, che rappresenta la Storia che cerca di preservare il libro. L'atto di Crono, desideroso di strappare gli eventi del passato esprime il desiderio apollineo di imporre un'unica visione della storia. Mentre l'atto di Clio, che tenta di preservare gli archivi storici per poi dare un senso al caos della storia, si può leggere come il desiderio dionisiaco di abbracciare e interpretare creativamente il passato. Quest'immagine può essere vista sotto un altro prisma, quello *transmoderno* di Dussel, interpretando Crono e il suo tentativo di distruggere gli archivi storici come l'occultazione occidentale delle identità storiche non-Europee. Nel complesso, la tensione tra Crono e Clio nella statua rappresenta il confronto in corso tra la lotta occidentale per l'egemonia culturale e la volontà dei paesi non occidentali di riaffermare la propria identità culturale e storica. Questa lotta è al centro della politica di liberazione, poiché l'Altro cerca di sfidare e trasformare la narrativa dominante della modernità dalle "zone di confine" della modernità stessa, abbracciando il processo in corso di divenire e il riconoscimento della diversità dell'esperienza umana. Inoltre, interpretare un oggetto storico come la statua di "Chronos et Clio" attraverso la filosofia della storia di Nietzsche può essere considerato come un'espressione dell'appello di Nietzsche a un approccio creativo e interpretativo al passato. Piuttosto che considerare la statua come un oggetto di fatto storico, l'abbiamo analizzata in termini di forze apollinee e dionisiache, aggiungendo contemporaneamente una dimensione dusseliana. Tale approccio è in linea con il rifiuto di Nietzsche della storia oggettiva e la sua difesa di una modalità di comprensione storica più soggettiva e interpretativa. Inoltre, questo processo ci ha aiutato a comprendere la visione di Dussel della storia e il *transmodernismo* da un altro punto di vista.

Di fronte alle conseguenze della modernità, vale a dire di fronte a livelli senza precedenti di disuguaglianza e di distruzione della natura, che Dussel non perde l'occasione di menzionare, il *transmodernismo* emerge come una filosofia della speranza. Mentre Dussel guida efficacemente l'Altro con la saggezza necessaria per acquisire consapevolezza e successivamente contrastare l'eredità del colonialismo, la sua inclusione dei valori ecologici interpella i giovani del mondo. Prima di iniziare il suo dialogo con Vattimo, Dussel ci ricorda

che il 20% della popolazione più ricca del mondo consumo il 82,7% delle risorse. Considerando l'enorme divario dell'impronta carbonio tra ricchi e poveri, il filosofo messicano-argentino sembra avere un obiettivo chiaro per il suo Altro. Probabilmente, l'ardore con cui le idee sono state utilizzate nel 1968, durante i movimenti studenteschi e popolari, è ciò di cui avrebbe oggi bisogno la Filosofia della Liberazione di Dussel, per porre fine alla modernità, e infine entrare nella *transmodernità*.

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