

Pragmatism and Decolonial Thinking: an Analysis of Dewey's Ethnocentrism

Pragmatismo e Pensamento Decolonial: Uma Análise do Etnocentrismo Deweyano

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Abstract: On the basis of Walter Mignolo's and Nishitani Osamu's ideas, the present text intends to verify to what extent John Dewey's thought is affected by what Mignolo calls the *colonial matrix of power* and the *rhetoric of modernity*, as well as by Osamu's distinction between *anthropos* and *humanitas*. A comparison with Kant's anthropological ideas is made, leading to the conclusion that both Authors allowed their respective philosophies to be contaminated by racist biases.

Keywords: Decolonial thinking. *Anthropos*. *Humanitas*. Kant. Dewey. Racism. Ethnocentrism.

Resumo: Com base nas ideias de Walter Mignolo e de Nishitani Osamu, o presente texto pretende verificar em que medida o pensamento de John Dewey é afetado por aquilo que Mignolo chama de matriz colonial de poder e retórica da modernidade, assim como pela distinção feita por Osamu entre *anthropos* e *humanitas*. É feita uma comparação com as ideias antropológicas de Kant, levando à conclusão de que ambos os autores permitiram que suas respectivas filosofias fossem contaminadas por preconceitos racistas.

Palavras-chave: Pensamento decolonial. *Anthropos*. *Humanitas*. Kant. Dewey. Racismo. Etnocentrismo.

There exists an unpalatable question which comes and goes in Modern Philosophy, and which remains unsolved in virtue of people's resistance to face it: the characterization of the nature of human beings in a way such that their diversity is adequately respected and explained. We all know that Western civilization experienced an astonishing growth from the Renaissance to our days and that, as a result, we live presently in a globalized world which is deeply marked by Western science, technology, economy and culture. But we also know very well that Western growth goes in tandem with Western colonialism, of which the inheritance involves a great amount of suffering, humiliation, inequality, and exploitation, as far as non-Western peoples are concerned. This conflicting picture requires an explanation and philosophy plays an important role in the task of giving an adequate account of the differences among human beings. But the problem is that philosophy is a Western creation which provides Western thinkers with Western tools in order to understand non-Western cultures. This

circumstance leads to hierarchical accounts of the differences among human beings to the effect that Western culture is always above non-Western cultures. Now whenever such hierarchical accounts are involved, some form of racism is involved as well. Only very recently some independent philosophers became aware of this difficulty, and now they are attempting to confront it by means of a radical reformulation of philosophical concepts, mainly modern Western concepts. Decolonial thinking is one of the options offered by these philosophers.

In this perspective, the present text is intended as a reminder to the above question, bringing it back once more to the philosophical arena, discussing some aspects of Dewey's thought in the light of decolonial thinking. In order to accomplish this goal, we shall initially expose some of Walter Mignolo's ideas related to the subject. We shall then complement his ideas with Nishitani Osamu's anthropological categories. Next, we shall present and discuss some aspects of Kant's racist anthropology, paving the way to the exposition of Dewey's ideas on the subject. Some of the expositions will probably seem otiose to a well informed philosopher, but we think they are necessary, given that they belong to a field which usually is not accounted for. Of course, the question on the nature of man will be inevitably connected to the question on racism, which somehow will offer the thread to the discussion. Given that our colleague Cassiano Terra Rodrigues acted as a debater to the current text during its presentation at the 14th International Meeting on Pragmatism, we shall incorporate his comments into the discussion, with the purpose of clarifying our positions to the reader¹.

In order to begin with the argument, we shall make reference to the decolonial thinking of Walter Mignolo, an Argentinean researcher who currently works at Duke University. This Author, in his book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, accomplishes a post-western reading of the European colonization of Latin America. In some aspects, his approach is very close to Charles Mills' in *The Racial Contract*.² The main difference lies in the fact that Mills is predominantly concerned with race and racism, whereas Mignolo is predominantly concerned with the contradictory pair modernity/coloniality. In his analysis, Mignolo offers very enlightening elements to the understanding of some ideological mechanism used in the colonization process. Such a process is linked to that which Mignolo names *the colonial matrix of power*. The latter is characterized by the combination of a *rhetoric of modernity* with a *logic of coloniality*. The rhetoric of modernity is made explicit by means of ideas such as *progress*, *development*, and *growth*, whereas the logic of coloniality is silenced or named as a set of problems to be solved under the headings of *poverty*, *inequality*, *injustice*, *corruption*, *mercantilization* and *dispensability of human life*.³ Influenced by Aníbal Quijano, Mignolo affirms that coloniality's agenda is hidden behind modernity. In his perspective, coloniality is constitutive of modernity, but under the form of a secret shame of the family, kept in the attic. Hence his appeal to the double term *modernity/coloniality*, in which the

1 See RODRIGUES, Terra C. Comments on Prof. Paulo Margutti's "Pragmatism and Decolonial Thinking: an Analysis of Dewey's Ethnocentrism". Printed manuscript, December, 2012. Our text was presented on the 8th November 2012 at PUC/SP, Brazil.

2 MILLS, Ch. W. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca and London: Cornell Un. Press, 1997.

3 MIGNOLO, W. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity. Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham & London: Duke Un. Press, 2011, p. xviii.

dash simultaneously uniting and separating the two dimensions refers to an invisible place.⁴ According to Mignolo, historically Christianity and Western Europe have been successfully constructed as the places where European and Christian human beings were in charge of elaborating knowledge, whereas the rest of the world should be civilized by them.⁵ Thus, *coloniality* is the name for the logic underlying the foundation and development of Western Civilization from the Renaissance to the present day. The historical colonialisms corresponded to a constitutive although downplayed dimension of Western Civilization.⁶ Mignolo's fundamental thesis is that "modernity" constitutes a complex narrative originated in Europe. This narrative constructs the so-called Western Civilization, at the same time celebrating its achievements and hiding its darker side, the "coloniality".⁷ As a result, hidden behind the rhetoric of modernity, economic practices dispensed with human lives and knowledge justified racism as well as the inferiority of human lives considered naturally dispensable.⁸ The *colonial matrix of power*, as initially described by Quijano, involved the control of four interrelated domains: economy, authority, sexuality and knowledge.⁹ In this perspective, the colonial matrix of power constitutes the very foundational structure of Western Civilization.¹⁰ Mignolo offers a list of twelve historico-cultural nodes which are articulated by the colonial and imperial difference. Among them, we selected the following, in order to give an idea of the complexity of the colonial matrix of power: i) an international division of labor between core and periphery, in which capital organized labor at the periphery on the basis of authoritarian forms; ii) a racial/ethnic hierarchy that privileged European people over non-European people; iii) an institutionalization of a spiritual/religious hierarchy that privileged, through the globalization of Christian Church, the Christian spiritualities over non-Christian/non-Western spiritualities; iv) an epistemic hierarchy that privileged Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western knowledges and cosmologies; v) a linguistic hierarchy between European and non-European languages that privileged the communication and knowledge in the former and subalternized the latter as sole producers of folklore or culture; vi) a conception of the "modern subject", an idea of Man which was introduced in the Renaissance and became the model for the Human and Humanity, functioning as a point of reference for racial classification and global racism.¹¹

In the present work we are interested mainly in the last item. In order to reach a more adequate idea of the problem at stake, we shall present in what follows the categories proposed by Nishitani Osamu in his paper *Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of "Human Being"*.¹² In a way analogous to Mignolo's, Osamu

4 *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

5 *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 17-19.

12 OSAMU, N. "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of 'Human Being'". In: SAKAI, N. and SOLOMON, J. (Eds.). *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Un. Press, 2006, p. 259-73. The paragraphs which follow, presenting

reformulates with originality Charles Mills' distinction between *full persons* and *subpersons*.¹³ Osamu is quoted by Mignolo and may be seen as one source of the critics made by the Argentinean thinker to the darker side of European Modernity. According to Osamu, the terms *anthropos* and *humanitas* are not distinguished in academic and in general usage solely for practical reasons. The "European humans" know how to employ the distinction without being taught. For instance, humans who possess "civilization" belong to the category of *humanitas*, but never to the category of *anthropos*. There is an inextricable and fundamentally asymmetric relationship between the two terms. The asymmetry plays a systemic role which is related to the regime of modern "knowledge" itself. This function constitutes a "double standard" of modern humanistic knowledge. Thus, whoever is subsumed by the category of *anthropos* cannot escape the status of being the object of anthropological knowledge, whereas whoever is subsumed by the category of *humanitas* cannot be defined from outside and is considered the subject of all knowledge.¹⁴ The varieties of non-Western "human species" which got in touch with Western Europeans during modernity became an object of study denominated *anthropos*. For this reason, "anthropology" is not concerned with Western human beings in most cases. Westerners, in particular contemporary Europeans, have not become an object for "anthropology". As a result, "anthropology" is always concerned with human beings which were the "Other" to European Modernity.¹⁵

What we call "modernity" and began with the "discovery" of difference is not only a historical period, but also a form of consciousness. As such, it positions itself as "new" and simultaneously historicizing the "Other". It has the ability to translate a spatial difference into a temporal difference.¹⁶ This means that the persons who fit the category of *humanitas* find themselves in the position of the subject of knowledge, whereas those who fit the category of *anthropos* find themselves in the position of the object of knowledge. *Humanitas* produces knowledge and is enriched by the fact of possessing that knowledge. *Anthropos*, in turn, occupies the position of the object which is absorbed by the knowledge produced by *humanitas*.¹⁷

The above exposition of Mignolo's ideas, complemented by Osamu's distinction, immediately raises the following important question: to what extent the social practices belonging to the logic of coloniality have affected philosophy? Has it been contaminated by the corresponding rhetoric of modernity and by the hierarchic distinction between *humanitas* and *anthropos*? Would it possible for an intellectual enterprise marked by universality, such as philosophy, to be corrupted by a very much prejudiced particularism? Charles Mills lists Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant

Osamu's ideas, have been extracted from our text *História da Filosofia do Brasil. Período Colonial (1500-1822)*, to be published in 2013 by Loyola Editions, and adapted to the needs of the current text.

- 13 MILLS, Ch. W. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca and London: Cornell Un. Press, 1997, p. 11; 17.
 14 OSAMU, N. "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of 'Human Being'". In: SAKAI, N. and SOLOMON, J. (Eds.). *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Un. Press, 2006, p. 260.
 15 *Ibid.*, p. 261.
 16 *Ibid.*, p. 262.
 17 *Ibid.*, p. 266.

as examples of thinkers who have allowed the contamination of their respective philosophies by racist biases.¹⁸ In order to illustrate the presence of such ethnocentric conception of the subject of knowledge among thinkers of the noblest lineage, nothing better than to invoke Kant's ideas. After all, the German philosopher attempted to explain human diversity on the basis of geography and anthropology.

In Kant's thought, anthropology occupies a central position, since it studies the nature of man and such an inquiry subsumes the three remaining questions which mark the field of philosophy: what can I know? what ought I do? what may I hope for? The connections between the anthropology and the Kantian critical project are not very clear and have been the subject of controversy. For some interpreters, like Heidegger and Foucault, the Kantian anthropology includes the key for understanding the critical project. Other interpreters are more concerned with Kantian theory of race. In this case, some of them focus on Kant's very much shocking ideas about non-Europeans, whereas others attempt to attenuate such ideas, claiming they possess a merely classificatory character, with the purpose to understand the place of Man in this world. There are also interpreters who attempt to attenuate Kantian racism claiming that the German thinker would have abandoned this perspective with the critical turn in the 1780s or with the cosmopolitan turn in the 1790s.

Now Kant is notoriously the creator both of the concept of *race* in order to explain the diversity of human beings and their respective cultures, and of the concept of *whiteness*, which he defines as a quality belonging to white men, who are in charge of overcoming the limitations of race in the future. For this reason, we are here very much interested in Kant's ideas about race and their implications to philosophy.

For those who do not know or simply forgot this aspect of Kantian thought it is worth to remember some of his shocking theses on the subject. According to Kant, "humanity is at its greatest in the race of the whites. The yellow Indians already have a lesser talent. The Negroes are much lower, and lowest of all is a part of the American peoples".¹⁹ The Hindus can be cultivated satisfactorily only in the arts, but not in the sciences, because they never achieve the level of abstract concepts. The Negroes are full of affect and passion, and for this reason they can be cultivated only as servants. In order to discipline them, the use of a split bamboo cane instead of a whip is recommended, so that they may suffer a great deal without dying. As to the American natives, they are unable to embrace culture. They have no motivating force, because they lack affect and passion. In contrast, the race of white men contains all motivating forces and talents within itself. This is the reason why all revolutions in human history were always brought about by whites, and not by Hindus, Negroes, and Americans.²⁰ As compared to the whites, some other peoples are in no better

18 MILLS, Ch. W. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca and London: Cornell Un. Press, 1997, pp. 64-71.

19 KANT, I. "Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht". In: KANT, I. *Werke in 6 Bänden*. Ed. by Wilhelm Weischedel. 5 rev. ed. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1983, vol. 6, p. 649.

20 KANT, I. "Die Vorlesung des Wintersemesters 1781/82 [?] aufgrund der Nachschriften". In: KANT, I. *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*. Ed. by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaft, Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Berlin Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: Reimer u. de Gruyter, 1900, vol. 25.2, p. 1187 f.

condition. The Gypsies have racial characteristics such that they are led to wander restlessly, without the ability to evolve in any of the different environments they may occupy. The Jews are white, but not quite. They constitute a nation of cheaters, who have no honor and no morals. The inhabitants of Tahiti remain children throughout their lives. They are humans without a history, because they fail to follow their duty as human beings and do not advance in time. Indeed, they serve as an example of the consequences of giving in to their latent laziness. These and other alleged “facts” about human races led Kant to conclude that many peoples are not able to advance by themselves. They must be driven by the superior white race, which should not mix with them, because half-breeds like the mules are not much good. In brief, the real source of progress of the human species towards perfection is in the Occident, from where progress will be spread all over the globe.²¹ As a result, “all races will become exterminated [...], except for the whites”.²²

The above racist views do not seem to chime very well with the so very noble theses presented by Kant in his three famous *Critiques*. But they are indeed Kant’s views on race and they should not be overlooked. Most of them were the subject of Kant’s numerous geographical and anthropological courses at the university, and apparently they have not been abandoned by him throughout his professional life. According to Wulf Hund, who examines Kant’s ideas on the subject of geography and anthropology not only from the point of view of Kant’s race theory, but also from the point of view of Kant’s race-related, anti-Semitic, anti-Ziganist thoughts and types of discrimination, the resulting overall view reveals that Kant adheres to a form of cultural racism. This racism molds his race theory and leads to his conclusion about white supremacy. All in all, it affects very negatively Kant’s image of humanity, for he assumes that only Europeans can develop adequately human abilities, leaving to the other races the dilemma of either being guided by them or perishing.²³ According to Hachee, Kant subscribed to dominant opinions in his century regarding the “natural” inferiority of non-European races. This led him to claim that Negroes and native Americans are non-moral beings, who merely mimic the rational and autonomous behavior of authentic moral agents, namely the Europeans.²⁴ Unfortunately, we have to agree with Hund’s and Hachee’s assessments of Kant.

At this point, instead of trying to save the “noble” part of Kant’s philosophy by separating it from his political and anthropological views, we think it would be much more important to ask, in the light of Mignolo’s and Osamu’s ideas, what led Kant

21 KANT, I. “Entwürfe zu dem Colleg über Anthropologie”. In: KANT, I. *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*. Ed. by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaft, Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Berlin Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: Reimer u. de Gruyter, 1900, vol. 15, p. 789.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 878.

23 HUND, W. D. “‘It must come from Europe’: The Racisms of Immanuel Kant”. Available at <http://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/sozialoekonomie/hund/text_files/Hund_Kant-1.pdf>. Accessed October, 2012.

24 HACHEE, M. “Kant, Race, and Reason”. Available at <<https://www.msu.edu/~hacheema/kant2.htm%3Fiframe%3Dtrue%26width%3D100%25%26height%3D100%2>>. Accessed October, 2012.

to defend the above racist claims in the context of his philosophy. It is not difficult to see that the answer lies in Kant's commitment to the colonial matrix of power as defined by Mignolo. The logic of coloniality involves the creation of a world in which Europeans imposed a hierarchical and exploitative worldview to the colonized peoples. This worldview was justified by means of the rhetoric of modernity, which would have to include racist claims in order to grant the European's privileges with respect to the dominated peoples. Given the hierarchy the Europeans established among human beings, the modern conception of *man* would have to include implicitly Osamu's distinction. Kant and other modern thinkers, such as Hume, implicitly but somehow not entirely unconsciously, saw themselves as instances of *humanitas*, and the other human beings around the world as instances of *anthropos*.

Against this, Terra Rodrigues in his *Comments* on our text argues that Kant's anthropology adopts a *pragmatic* point of view. As a result, his anthropology is not a knowledge of the normative *a priori* order of what human beings must be, but a knowledge of what human beings are. In this context Kant says that it is the play of nature that originates the different races. Hence, the knowledge of the races is not yet pragmatic, but theoretical knowledge of the world. And there are two distinct senses for the human situation in the world: either we *know* the world as mere spectators, or we *have* the world as we *enter into play* with other worldly beings. And human freedom for playing the game is such that we may exert power over nature as well as reveal a tendency to overwin the freedom of other human beings. Human freedom is thus defined in Kant's *Anthropology* as the capacity to pass from the state of nature to the state of freedom, and critical philosophy seeks to explain the passage. Kant's notion of *Aufklärung* is linked with this, since the only resources we have to overcome our minority are our natural capacities, and among them stands out the capacity of reasoning by ourselves. In this sense, we are what we do of ourselves. There seems to be a clear cut division between claiming that the different races are in different stages, that certain human beings dominate nature and other human beings as a mark of our freedom, and claiming that the different races should be in different stages, that certain human beings should dominate nature and other human beings. Finally, as a counterexample to our analysis, Terra Rodrigues mentions the Revolution of Haiti, which revealed the influence of the *Lumières* and actualized in a radical way the ideals that were flourishing in Europe. This movement led by afro-American slaves concretely effected the universality of the ideals of freedom, republicanism and democracy of the French Revolution. Was not the *Révolte des Esclaves* also informed by the "logic of coloniality" and the "rhetoric of modernity"?²⁵

In response to Terra Rodrigues, we admit that Kant's *Anthropology* adopts a clearly pragmatic point of view. This fact suggests that we may distinguish between *Kant the man of his time* and *Kant the author of a universal philosophy*, thus separating his dated anthropological theses from his still valid transcendental philosophy. But this would be a mistake. Our questioning goes beyond this, because we are challenging the distinction between *knowing the world* and *having the world*, between *claiming*

25 RODRIGUES, Terra, C. Comments on Prof. Paulo Margutti's "Pragmatism and Decolonial Thinking: an Analysis of Dewey's Ethnocentrism". Printed manuscript, December, 2012, p. 1-3.

that races are in different stages and claiming that they should be in different stages. As a matter of fact, the world we know is the world we have, and conversely. Otherwise, how could Kant claim in his *Anthropology* that the knowledge of the races is theoretical and not pragmatic? The world described by the European Kant is one that the Europeans *have* through the logic of coloniality and *know* through the rhetoric of modernity. The “races”, as well as their corresponding different “stages”, are European categories which were superimposed on the silenced and ignored categories created by the dominated human beings in order to explain their existential situation. This line of reasoning suggests that the “universal” categories belonging to Kant’s transcendental philosophy are as dated as the categories belonging to his anthropology. And they are articulated in a way such that the former cannot be easily separated from the latter. Take for example Kant’s concepts of *space* and *time* in his *Transcendental Aesthetics*: they are fit to explain the propositions made within the context of Western Newtonian physics, but reveal themselves to be quite unfit to explain the dominated peoples’ conceptions linked to spatiality and temporality within the context of their own cultures.²⁶ In fact, the colonial matrix of power led to what Mignolo calls *the colonization of space* and *of time*, in a way such that the geographical place occupied by a community determines whether it is subsumed by the category of *humanitas* or *anthropos*, and the historical stage of the community is conceived by comparison with the paradigmatic historical evolution of Western Europe. Take another example: Kant’s *a priori* categories in his *Transcendental Analytics*. They are obtained from a classification of judgments in twelve types, which reflects—very artificially, as we might say—some of the logical peculiarities of German language. Although the classification may fit the logical peculiarities of other culturally related European languages, it does not necessarily reflect the logical peculiarities of all known languages, specially those spoken by the colonized human beings. All in all, Kant’s transcendental philosophy aims at a a-historical universality, but the fact is that it has its roots in a specific European context which has been superimposed on other non-fitting non-European contexts. The transcendental philosophy may be seen as a construction of *humanitas* through the domination of *anthropos*. We admit that our above claims might easily be seen as too bold and in need of a more detailed justification, in order to avoid the infamous and disqualifying charge of relativism. But there is not enough room to do this here. Anyway, the problem has been adequately studied by Humberto Maturana, whose works on the subject should be read by anyone who is interested in this matter.²⁷ For the moment, we would recommend the following

26 It is worth remembering that such concepts are also insufficient to explain the propositions made within the context of the Theory of Relativity or of Quantum Physics.

27 As an indication of an epistemological way out against the charge of relativism, we suggest Humberto Maturana’s more flexible concept of *objectivity within parentheses*, as opposed to the traditional European concept of *objectivity without parentheses*. See MATURANA, H. “Realidade: A busca da objetividade, ou a procura de um argumento coercitivo”. In: MAGRO, C.; GRACIANO, M. & VAZ, N. (orgs.). *Humberto Maturana. Ontologia da Realidade*. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 1997, pp. 243-326. For a more detailed vision of Maturana’s biological-philosophical approach, see MATURANA, H. & VARELA, F. *The Tree of Knowledge. The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*. Rev. Ed. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1998.

to Terra Rodrigues and any eventual reader of the present paper: before stamping our challenge against the “universality” of European philosophy with the label of *relativistic*, please kindly give some serious attention and thought to our analysis. After all, the European universality claims are commonly used to justify a world of too much exploitation and too much suffering among non-Europeans classified as “non-universalists”. In this spirit, instead of entering into a long debate, we would rather opt for what Mignolo calls *epistemological disobedience* and suggest that Terra Rodrigues should rethink some of his European philosophical assumptions, by asking himself not what would Kant have to say about the significance of his *Critique of Pure Reason* to a Pataxó savage from the Amazon, but what would have the Pataxó savage himself to say about the significance of Kant's *Critique* to the Pataxonean Amazonian tribal existence. And he should make a real effort in order to *listen* to the savage, instead of merely *judging* him by means of European categories, as we all who are influenced by the rhetoric of modernity tend to do. With respect to Terra Rodrigues' mentioning the Revolution of Haiti as a counterexample to our analysis, we admit that the victory of the slaves who were singing the very *Marsellaise* while fighting the French soldiers is quite an instance of the rhetoric of modernity backward firing the logic of coloniality. Even so, we would like to remind that the latter finally prevailed and eliminated the alleged revolutionary effects of the former. The afro-American slaves hardly succeeded in “concretely effecting” the universality of the ideals of the French Revolution. In the end, the *Révolte des Esclaves* was informed by the logic of coloniality and the rhetoric of modernity, but in a quite negative sense. No doubt the slaves were suffering the painful consequences of the logic of coloniality and justifiably revolted against it. But they ended up captured by the same logic of coloniality when adhered to the ideals of the French Revolution. These ideals might well be fit for a reduced number of European countries, but not for a French colony like Santo Domingo. The “universality” of these ideals was in need of quite a few adjustments in order to be applied to the colony. Perhaps the adjustments to be made were so many that these ideals would come up entirely transformed into another ideology. Unfortunately, no adequate adjustments were made and the consequence is that the “Republic” of Haiti had to pay an extremely high political, economic, social and cultural price in its posterior development as an “independent” country. As a result, although the logic of coloniality and the rhetoric of modernity prevailed in Haiti, this fact happened in a sense that would eliminate the validity of Terra Rodrigues' counterexample.

We expect that above discussion has shown that Kant explicitly defended racist views and that they are somehow connected with his transcendental philosophy, which seems to be as biased as his anthropological and geographical views. Charles Mills calls attention to the paradoxical fact that modern moral theory and modern racial theory have the same father, namely Kant.²⁸ And it is worth observing that his ideas on the subject have influenced the racial theories in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Now we are ready for our next question: is there any connection between Kant's ethnocentric views on race and Dewey's pragmatism? We all know that Dewey's thought is always linked with liberalism and democracy. Thus, it would be opportune

28 MILLS, Ch. W. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca and London: Cornell Un. Press, 1997, p. 72.

to check whether there is any racist contamination in his ideas. This seems to be a difficult task, since he was committed to antiracist politics. For example, Dewey delivered a two-page speech to the National Negro Conference in 1909.²⁹ In his short text, Dewey rejected the idea of inheritance of acquired characteristics when used as a justification for racism. He argued that each generation biologically commences over again on the very level of past generations. Thus, there is no “inferior race” and all the members of a so-called race should have the same opportunities as those of the more favored race. Despite Dewey’s defense of such commendable theses, we may find in other of his texts quite a few problems with respect to his ideas on race.

Before considering these problems, it is worth recalling the fact that not too many scholars focused their attention on Dewey’s views on race. What is worse, the scholars are not in agreement as far as their respective interpretations are concerned. Some scholars, like Feinberg and Taylor, merely reproach Dewey’s views on race for being ambiguous.³⁰ Other scholars, like Burkes, Goodenow, and Stack consider Dewey’s views on race as enlightened, whereas some others, like Margonis and Sullivan, consider such views inadequate for the present day and reproach Dewey’s silence on matters of racial discrimination.³¹ Another group of scholars, like Eldridge, Fallace and Glaude, attempt to take a *via media*: on the one hand, they admit Dewey’s limitations on the issue of race; on the other, they argue that Dewey’s thought offers good elements for a renewed conception of race.³² More about this later.

One might think that the *via media* option constitutes a more adequate interpretation of Dewey’s position. After all, in spite of his shortcomings with respect to race, which may be explained in terms of an unconsciously prejudiced view, Dewey was effectively struggling for a better world in terms of human interactions.

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- 29 DEWEY, J. “Address to National Negro Conference”. In: Boydston, J. A. (ed.). *The Middle Works, 1899-1924. John Dewey. Volume 4: 1907-1909*. With an Introduction by L. E. Hahn. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Un. Press, 1976, pp. 156-157.
- 30 See FEINBERG, W. *Reason and rhetoric: Intellectual foundations of twentieth century liberal educational policy*. New York: John Wiley, 1975; TAYLOR, P. “Silence and sympathy: Dewey’s whiteness”. In YANCY, G. (ed.). *What White looks like: African-American philosophers on the Whiteness question*. New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. 227–241.
- 31 See BURKES, B. “Unity and diversity through education: A comparison of the thought of W. E. B. Du Bois and John Dewey”. *Journal of Thought*, Spring 1997, pp. 99–110; GOODENOW, R. K. “Racial and Ethnic Tolerance in John Dewey’s Educational and Social Thought: The depression years”. *Educational Theory*, 27(1), 1977, pp. 48–76; STACK, S. F. “John Dewey and the Question of Race: The fight for Odell Walker”. *Education and Culture*, 25, 2009, pp.17–35; MARGONIS, F. *The Path to Social Amnesia and Dewey’s Democratic Commitments*. Available at <ojs.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/pes/article/download/1749/466>. Accessed October 2012; SULLIVAN, S. “(Re)construction zone”. In GAVIN, W. (ed.). *In Dewey’s Wake: The unfinished work of pragmatic reconstruction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, pp. 109–127.
- 32 See ELDRIDGE, M. “Dewey on Race and Social Change”. In: LAWSON, B. & KOCH, D. (eds.). *Pragmatism and the Problem of Race*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, pp. 11–21; FALLACE, Th. D. “Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher’s Early Views on Culture and Race”. *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, pp. 471–477; GLAUDE, E. (2007). *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the politics of black America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

And this fact suggests that perhaps his philosophy might still offer something useful to think about race. But there is always the danger that occult racial prejudices in Dewey's philosophy might harm irrecoverably his main concepts. Anyway, we shall not consider this matter, because we are not interested in discussing whether some of Dewey's ideas may be saved or not. We shall rather evaluate some of his ideas within the conceptual framework of the logic of coloniality and the rhetoric of modernity, as complemented by the categories of *humanitas* and *anthropos*. In this perspective, the significant questions to be asked are the following: i) is Dewey's thinking affected by the logic of coloniality? ii) does Dewey adhere to the rhetoric of modernity?

The answer to the first question seems to be affirmative. Dewey was raised and lived in the United States, a former British colony. This means that Dewey's country was inaugurated and developed under the colonial matrix of power, with all its historical-cultural nodules. It is true that the United States fought victoriously for their freedom from Britain and served as a cultural model for many other formerly colonized countries which are now politically free. But it is also true that many problems related to the colonial matrix of power still survived in the country and certainly these problems may have affected the thinking of most American philosophers, and Dewey may very likely be located among them. The best way to confirm this would be to show to what extent the libertarian Dewey adhered to the rhetoric of modernity, and this will constitute the answer to our second question. In order to get such answer, we shall follow Fallace's and Sullivan's leads.

Let's begin by considering Dewey's terminology on the subject of race. According to Fallace, the exam of the secondary literature on how Dewey used the words *savage*, *barbarian*, and *primitive* during the years at the Un. of Chicago reveals the beliefs through which most 19th century social scientists viewed the world.³³ For example, Dewey's use of the word *savage* involved a set of ethnocentric ideas which were below his level of reflection, revealing the habitudes that he and his peers took for granted in their social and intellectual interactions. This means that Dewey framed a significant part of his thought in linear historicist and genetic psychological terms, and this allows the uncovering of his racial and cultural views.³⁴ Linear historicism is the belief that the historical evolution of all cultures in the world go through the common stages of savagery, barbarianism, and civilization. Genetic psychology is the belief that the human mind reaches maturity through sequential and hierarchical stages of psychological development. The articulation of both frameworks leads to the idea that the stages of cultural growth are analogous to the stages of psychological development. One confirmation that Dewey adhered to both frameworks may be found in the book *Ethics*, which he wrote in collaboration with Tufts. Here, the Authors affirm that to understand the origin and growth of morals depends essentially on understanding primitive society. The types of group life or their survivals as

33 The Authors researched by Fallace are Bowler, Gould, Menand, McKee, O'Donnell, Richards, Ross, Schafer, Stocking, and Watkins. See FALLACE, Th. D. "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race". *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, p. 472.

34 FALLACE, Th. D. "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race". *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, p. 472.

experienced by the ancestors of modern civilized races are found among the great mass of peoples today.³⁵ And as examples of the kinship group, which is the most primitive type, the Authors mention North American Indians, Africans and Australians.³⁶ Another confirmation may be found in Dewey's *School and Society*, where he asserts that there are certain identities between the child's interests and those of the primitive men, as well as certain analogies between the child's mind and the primitive mind.³⁷ Fallace claims that the "primitive peoples" to which Dewey referred belong to non-European, non-White societies.³⁸ And in *Some Stages of Logical Growth* Dewey defines the intellectual growth of the human species according to the pattern of Western societies' intellectual growth. The Stage 3, for instance, corresponds to the society's incorporation of judgments into the positivistic paradigm, and Stage 4 corresponds to the incorporation of positivistic science into a group of specialized disciplines.³⁹

There are more elements which reinforce a positive answer to our second question. In his interpretation of Dewey's ethnocentrism, Fallace affirms that Dewey adhered to the idea that, although in a contingent way, the linear development of Western civilization corresponded to the full development of a child, leaving other cultures behind in the process. This occurred not because Western society was superior to non-Western cultures, but rather because its social evolution contingently placed it at the pole position of historical evolution. This is linked with Dewey's conception of *culture* as something which contributes to social order and progress only in the way Western societies were able to accomplish: there are no diverse "cultures", but only one kind of "culture" which is molded according to the Western pattern. As a result, all non-Western cultures were seen by Dewey as deficient, because they had nothing to offer to the social order and progress of Western society.⁴⁰

Dewey's concepts of *race* and *culture* were considered in an important text to our discussion, entitled *Interpretation of Savage Mind*.⁴¹ Here, Dewey stands up against the usual negative interpretations which are given to the savage mind. But he uses linear historicism and genetic psychology as a base to his findings and the net result is still a racist perspective, albeit a moderate one. Fallace reads Dewey's subtext in the mentioned paper as follows. The savage mind had the same potentials as the civilized mind and should not be considered negatively in terms of lacking something, but rather positively in terms of a necessary step in the evolution towards the civilized

35 DEWEY, J. & TUFTS, J. H. *Ethics*. N. York: Henry Holt and Co; London: George Bell and Sons, 1909, p. 17.

36 DEWEY, J. & TUFTS, J. H. *Ethics*. N. York: Henry Holt and Co; London: George Bell and Sons, 1909, p. 21.

37 DEWEY, J. *The Child and the Curriculum and The School and Society*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 48.

38 FALLACE, Th. D. "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race". *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, p. 473.

39 See DEWEY, J. "Some Stages of Logical Growth". In BOYDSTON, J. A. (ed.). *The Collected Works of John Dewey: Vol. 1. The middle works*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976, pp. 151-174.

40 FALLACE, Th. D. "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race". *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, p. 474.

41 DEWEY, J. "Interpretation of Savage Mind". *Psychological Review*, 9, 1902, pp. 217-230.

mind. The fact that the savage mind did not reach the stage of the civilized one was due to a culturally disadvantaged context, and not to any type of racial inferiority. Thus, the savage has made his historical contribution to the transracial cultural fund as defined by the cultural pattern of Western society, but now he has nothing else to offer and may only be studied as a prior step. Savage cultures have to be civilized and developed. All in all, Dewey considered the differences among the world's societies "not as mere cultural differences, but rather as representing higher or lower stages in the linear progress toward civilization".⁴² Dewey relegated all non-Western societies to the status of prior stages in the direction of the developed status of the industrialized West. American non-White minorities, for example, were biologically and psychologically equal to American Whites, but socially deficient.⁴³ We think Fallace is right in his reading.

Now let's pass to Sullivan's assessment of Dewey's thought on matters of race. She also argues that, in spite of his good intentions, Dewey's position still involves racism. In fact, by privileging Western society, he implicitly assumes that Whites are more intelligent than non-Whites. The explanation of the difference between Western and non-Western cultures by means of differences in stages of development rather than by means of abilities genetically determined does not mitigate Dewey's racism. On the contrary, this view reinforces the idea that underdeveloped peoples need to free themselves from the limitations of their social groups. And this can only be made by immersing non-Whites in the superior environment of white culture. In spite of all his explicit claims to the contrary, the "civilization" to which Dewey's "savages" are to be introduced is not culturally diversified, but implicitly white.⁴⁴ As a result, we may say that Osamu's distinction between *humanitas* and *anthropos* applies to Dewey's thought as well.

In his rare discussions on the subject of race, as represented for example by his *Racial Prejudice and Friction*, Dewey tries to show that the basis of racism lies in our instinctive aversion to whatever is different and goes against our habits.⁴⁵ This instinctive aversion is reinforced when different physical traces as well as different languages and different religions are combined with political and economic tensions between nations. The result is racial friction.⁴⁶ Once the tensions are eliminated, the racial friction will disappear. But Dewey recommends that the contact between different racial groups, like the one resulting from immigration, should be diminished.⁴⁷ Now this involves an inconsistency. As a matter of fact, one important principle in Dewey's philosophy is related to the idea that friction must always increase in order to produce social change by disrupting sedimented habits. And this does not cohere

42 FALLACE, Th. D. "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race". *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, pp. 474-5.

43 FALLACE, Th. D. "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race". *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, p. 471.

44 SULLIVAN, S. "(Re)construction Zone. Beware of Falling Statues". In: GAVIN, W. J. (Ed.). *In Dewey's Wake: Unfinished Work of Pragmatic Reconstruction*. Albany: State Un. of N. York Press, 2003. p. 120.

45 DEWEY, J. "Racial Prejudice and Friction". In: BOYDSTON, J. A. (ed.). *John Dewey. The middle works, vol. 13*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983, p. 242.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 251; 253.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

with his recommendation that immigration should be restricted in order to avoid racial friction. For this reason, Sullivan accuses Dewey's attitude towards immigration as a form of racism or defamatory ethnocentrism.⁴⁸ Given the ambiguity of Dewey's position on the subject, we tend to agree with Sullivan's assessment.

The above discussion does not exhaust the answer to our second question. We still have to consider the problem of Dewey's silence in the light of the rhetoric of modernity. Sullivan argues that, by neglecting a full-fledged confrontation with the question of race, Dewey is not just leaving a blank space in his writings. In fact, he is creating an omission which has powerful effects. One of them is to perpetuate what Charles Mills calls the *theoretical and conceptual whiteness of philosophy*. By silencing the question on race and racism, Dewey fails to recognize that only white people have been counted as complete persons, ethical agents, creators of knowledge and legitimate citizens. This turns philosophy into an investigation which is relevant only to Whites, and, what is worse, discourages Negroes, Latinos, Asians and Natives to study philosophy.⁴⁹ The neglect on race in a racist world does not correspond to a neutral position, because its effects are not neutral. It perpetuates white solipsism, which views non-White existence and experience as insignificant.⁵⁰ Sullivan's criticism of Dewey's silence is in tune with Margonis', who accuses Dewey of helping to create the terms of a new social amnesia, featuring a philosophy which looks to the possibilities of the future and avoids the colonial past and present racist violence. The problem is that Dewey's description of a future democracy does not fit with an unpalatable colonial past which reasserts itself unchecked in the most irregular and inconsistent ways.⁵¹

As we can see, Dewey seems to have adhered to the rhetoric of modernity. His terminology used to refer to primitive men, his assumption that modern Western society is superior to non-Western cultures, his ambiguous position towards racial friction, his unjustifiable silence on racial issues, all these factors strongly suggest that Dewey was unconsciously caught by the predominant racist views of his time and practiced the rhetoric of modernity in order to justify it. True, and analogously to Kant's case, some scholars attempt to mitigate Dewey's ethnocentrism. Fallace, for example, affirms that until the First World War, Dewey held the ethnocentric view mentioned above. Although he did not see the inferiority of non-White cultures as the result of biological inheritance, he failed to appreciate their intrinsic value, considering their worth to be only as an object of study for a better understanding of the evolution of modern mind. For this reason, ethnocentrism contaminated the pedagogy of his early and middle years. In order to get rid of such ethnocentrism, Dewey would have to abandon linear historicism and genetic psychology. And he did that after the First World War, by adopting a pluralistic appreciation of

48 SULLIVAN, S. "(Re)construction Zone. Beware of Falling Statues". In: GAVIN, W. J. (ed.). *In Dewey's Wake: Unfinished Work of Pragmatic Reconstruction*. Albany: State Un. of N. York Press, 2003. p. 112.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

51 MARGONIS, F. *The Path to Social Amnesia and Dewey's Democratic Commitments*. Available at <ojs.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/pes/article/download/1749/466>. Accessed October 2012.

cultures as equally valid, albeit different, ways of looking at the world.⁵² But this is a controversial issue. Goudenow, for instance, argues that, in the Depression years, despite Dewey's and other progressive intellectuals' promise to create schools which would reflect and change the "real" world, they seldom urged that schools should deal with the experiences of the minorities or with the structures and institutions which reinforced inequality and racism. There is little evidence to suggest that Dewey and the progressive intellectuals saw local ethnic communities as capable of consciously shaping the future of American society. They seem to have merely adopted the safest possible route to cool the racial struggles of their time, namely, schooling and other forms of education which would stimulate tolerance.⁵³ And Fallace himself admits that the cultural pluralism found in Dewey's later works did not negate the ethnocentrism of his writings prior to 1916.⁵⁴

In his *Comments* on our text, Terra Rodrigues argues that we are ignoring the important point that Dewey analyses *prejudice* in general, searching for its causes and conditions. In his objection, Terra Rodrigues relies upon Gregory Pappas' paper concerning Dewey's thinking on racial prejudice, which analyzes the text *Racial Prejudice and Friction*.⁵⁵ According to Pappas, Dewey is mainly concerned with the conditions that may originate prejudice with respect to our habits of expectation. As a result, Dewey's analysis is primarily about racial prejudice as a psychological phenomenon and only indirectly about racism as an attitude which may devalue a particular social group. With respect to friction, Terra Rodrigues reminds us that Dewey distinguishes between the *idea* of democracy and *political democracy*. The latter is the consequence of historical experimentation and may not necessarily be the embodiment of the former. In fact, the motivation behind the institutions of political democracy is to satisfy concrete needs, not to promote the idea of democracy. Now Dewey seems to be most concerned with the idea of democracy.⁵⁶

In reply to Terra Rodrigues, we admit in the first place that Dewey's main concern is with the conditions which give birth to prejudice. The knowledge thus obtained would provide us with the means to avoid been influenced by these same conditions. Here we have the positive side of his thinking, which has to do with his attempt to help us in preventing prejudice and which we are not denying at all. But the difficulties we are raising are the following: i) Dewey's good and commendable

52 FALLACE, Th. D. "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race". *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, p. 476.

53 GOODENOW, R. K. "Racial and Ethnic Tolerance in John Dewey's Educational and Social Thought: The Depression Years". In: TILES, J. E. (ed.). *John Dewey. Critical Assessments. Vol II. Political Theory and Social Practice*. London and N. York: Routledge, 1992, p. 149.

54 FALLACE, Th. D. "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race". *Educational Researcher*, vol. 39, n. 6, p. 476.

55 PAPPAS, Gregory F. "Dewey's Philosophical Approach to Racial Prejudice". In: *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*. Eds. J. K. Ward and T. L. Lott, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002, pp. 47-65. Originally published in *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 22, n. 1, Spring 1996.

56 RODRIGUES, Terra C. Comments on Prof. Paulo Margutti's "Pragmatism and Decolonial Thinking: an Analysis of Dewey's Ethnocentrism". Printed manuscript, December, 2012, p. 3-6.

intentions were not able to immunize him against some of the biases underlying the powerful rhetoric of modernity; ii) Dewey's silence on matters of race must be accounted for. The first point will be the main conclusion of the discussion that follows. With respect to the second point, we have the fact, admitted by Pappas himself, that there are very few places where Dewey actually wrote about racial matters. And those places merely present a rough analysis on the generic issues concerning racial prejudice, in order to determine the direction in which the solution is to be sought.⁵⁷ Terra Rodrigues follows the same line or reasoning, when he states that Dewey is only *indirectly* concerned with racism as a devaluating attitude which may affect the life of a particular social group. This confirms our claims about Dewey's silence on significant and unpalatable questions of race. And his silence is aggravated by his view of non-Western cultures from the biased perspective of Western culture.

Now concerning the question on friction, Terra Rodrigues seems to suggest that the distinction between the *idea of democracy* and *political democracy* would lead Dewey to accept the fact that sometimes the historical circumstances are such that we have to compromise in terms of concrete needs and postpone the promotion of the idea of democracy. As realistic as this political compromise may be, we think that such an expedient does not cohere with Dewey's general proposal. In fact, his concern with an adequate implementation of the idea of democracy is so strong that he hardly could propose anything that might weaken it in any way. Dewey believed that the democratic ideal is a demand to be realized by the political democracy, that subjugating civic self-determination to the benefit of efficient government is not consistent with authentic democracy. What is more, Dewey argued that direct participation in democracy would stimulate the talent for thoughtful deliberation in ordinary citizens. For him, the truly participatory democracy is built around face-to-face interactions in neighborly communities. In his interpretation of Dewey's thought on the subject, Pappas goes along the same line, but he fails to perceive the contradiction we are indicating. This is so because Pappas seems to be so very much concerned with defending the positive side of the Deweyan analysis on racial prejudice that he reads the pragmatist's texts apparently out of context and forgets to consider the Authors who present important criticisms of Dewey's ethnocentrism. In the light of the above discussion, we think it is difficult to deny that Dewey's proposal to the effect that the contact between different racial groups should be diminished to avoid friction involves a sense of compromise that goes in the opposite direction of his philosophy's main tenets. We have to admit that there is an inconsistency here. Unfortunately, the philosopher who tried to find the deep roots of racism revealed to be influenced by these very roots in some aspects of his thinking. True, Dewey was not aware of his ethnocentrism. He would be very much disappointed in case he eventually were to realize this bias in some passages of his books. But the fact is that, despite Dewey's good intentions, his ethnocentrism is there to be seen by anyone who pays attention to its unequivocal signs.

At the end of his *Comments*, Terra Rodrigues asks the important question about how should we understand the pair of concepts *anthropos/humanitas*. Does

57 PAPPAS, Gregory F. "Dewey's Philosophical Approach to Racial Prejudice". In: *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*. Eds. J. K. Ward and T. L. Lott, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002, p. 47.

it correspond to the colonialist's bad conscience or to a certain "Latin American" resentment? And what could be its possible function in a globalized world? These questions involve not only Nishitani's view, but also Mignolo's and ours. The difficulty they pose is twofold. On the one side, whatever might be the origin of decolonial thinking, the latter would be not purely theoretical, but contaminated by emotions, as suggested by the expressions *bad conscience* and *resentment*. The underlying presupposition is that only purely theoretical philosophy in European terms would correspond to the adequate intellectual framework capable of dealing with those matters. On the other hand, the accelerated globalization of the world makes decolonial thinking look like a timid and fragile David fighting against a powerful and invincible Goliath. Globalization means the inevitable and desirable Westernization of the world, through European cosmopolitanism.

For reasons of space, our answer must be short and eminently programmatic. From our point of view, Terra Rodrigues' questions presuppose exactly what we are challenging here. Our contemporary world clearly developed from European expansion and is marked by accentuated differences, human exploitation and very much suffering. Nowadays prevail oppositions like *developed/underdeveloped*, *rich/poor*, *globalized/non-globalized*, etc., through which the economic and cultural domination of the former colonial powers and their heirs over the former colonies is justified. Such oppositions still reflect the rhetoric of modernity which is used to justify the ever-lasting logic of coloniality. In this perspective, the challenge we are making here might be expressed as follows: given that most pragmatists reject the distinction *theory/practice*, could we in fact conceive of European philosophy as a purely theoretical, disinterested intellectual framework? Could we find any sort of emotional contamination in European philosophy? In other terms, how can the rhetoric of modernity, mainly through the "universality" of European philosophy, persist in justifying a world which is so wrong in so many ways? Now we think that European philosophy is also emotionally contaminated, for it brings with itself a sentiment of European superiority with respect to non-European cultures. This may be inferred from our analyses of Kant's and Dewey's respective thoughts. As a result, European philosophy is not so theoretically pure as many people think. There is always the danger that it may be functioning up to now as one of the most powerful intellectual instruments of the rhetoric of modernity. In consequence, whatever the emotional motives we may choose for the emergence of decolonial thinking, be it the colonialist's bad conscience or "Latin American" resentment, it is one good enough to oppose the sentiment of racial superiority which underlies the rhetoric of modernity, in order to fight the logic of coloniality. We are urgently in need of less ethnocentric ways of thinking, as well as a new form of cosmopolitanism which would allow the equalitarian coexistence of different cultures, instead of sticking to the well-known European cosmopolitanism which usually ends up in cultural crimes by dominating and silencing the inconvenient Otherness. Mignolo suggests that there are in our current world three alternative roads towards the future: Rewesternization, Dewesternization, and Decoloniality.⁵⁸ In our opinion, Rewesternization would preserve

58 See MIGNOLO, W. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity. Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham & London: Duke Un. Press, 2011, Chapter One, pp. 27-76. For an excellent criticism of Kant's cosmopolitanism and the presentation of an alternative view through "Cosmopolitan localisms", see Chapter Seven, pp. 252-294.

the logic of coloniality and should be avoided at any costs. Dewesternization would be far too radical and probably unfeasible. This would place Decoloniality as the most viable alternative. So much for a programmatic presentation of the question.

The overall result of the above discussion may be summarized as follows. The application of Mignolo's and Osamu's decolonial ideas to the analysis of some great Western thinkers such as Kant and Dewey reveals that they are influenced by the logic of coloniality and adhere to the rhetoric of modernity. In Dewey's specific case, we may conclude that, although he adopts a more moderate stance on the subject, he still reveals an ethnocentric stance which finds some of its roots in Kant's thinking. As a matter of fact, Dewey and Kant have the following points in common in their ethnocentric biases. First, both see modern Western culture as the goal towards which all other cultures should direct their respective historical evolutions. Second, both see humanity as divided in at least two segments, the one represented by Western *humanitas* and the other represented by non-Western *anthropos*. Third, both present their ideas under the guise of universality, although such ideas are contaminated by the particularism of Western modern imperial view of the world. Fourth, both make implicit, by means of a convenient silence, the connections between their "universal" theories and their particular and biased views about Man and Mankind, thus creating a blank logical space to be filled also in silence by their fellow members of *humanitas*'s privileged club. What is more, the convenient silence allows the rhetorical separation of the "universal" theories and their corresponding particular and biased views, when it becomes necessary to "save" any of these Authors's ideas from the accusation of racism. It seems that both Kant and Dewey were more concerned with *judging* non-Western cultures according to Western standards than with *learning* anything from them.

We affirmed at the beginning of the present text that it is intended as a reminder to a question which haunts Modern philosophy, and which remains unsolved so far. Now we expect the reminder not only has done its job, but also may function as a warning against the type of thinking practiced by some Western philosophers, who, despite their honest and good intentions, hide behind an alleged universality the particularities of their modern/colonial views. And this may happen even when an authentic liberal and democratic thinker like Dewey is involved. Hence our claim that we are in need of a renewed and decolonial way of thinking the philosophical *universal*.

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