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Precedence, Earth and the Anthropocene: Decolonizing design

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ABSTRACT

Design came to name modernity's way of worlding the world. What is at stake in decolonizing design is our relation to earth, and the dignifying of relational worlds. The task of decolonizing design brings us to a three-folded path: to understand modernity's way of worlding the world as artifice, as earthlessness, to understand coloniality's way of un-worlding the world, of annihilating relational worlds and, to think the decolonial as a form of radical hope for an ethical life with earth.

At a more fundamental level, the mode of precedence is introduced to challenge modernity's metaphysics of presence and its reduction of experience to empty time. The question of precedence delinks from western's philosophy grounding dichotomy between immanence and transcendence. The mode of precedence brings to the fore a temporal relationality that is always already ahead of any formation in the field of immanence, in the surface of the present.

Can we think of relational design as a decolonial form of being with earth and of worlding the world? Can we think of design as a mode of listening?

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The task of decolonizing design is enmeshed with questions of the first order. Design came to name modernity's way of relating to and producing the real, modernity's way of relating to earth, to others, and its mode of worlding the world as modernity. Here, modernity designates both a particular movement towards the real and the historical reality that it produces.

Modernity, the Western model of civilization, could only affirm itself as the world historical reality, as the now of time and the here of space, the present of history and the center of geography (Mignolo 2000), through conquest and colonialism.

According to my central thesis, 1,492 is the date of the 'birth' of modernity ... [M]odernity as such was 'born' when Europe was in a position to pose itself against an other, when, in other words, Europe could constitute itself as a unified ego exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity that gave back its image of itself. This other, in other words, was not 'dis-covered'..., as such, but concealed. (Dussel 1993, 66)

The affirmation of modernity required a double negation, at one and the same time the forceful negation of alterity and the concealment of this negation. Coloniality names the historical form of this movement of negation that has been concealed. Coloniality as a question forces a disclosure of the double negation that sustains the whole edifice of modernity.

From a decolonial perspective, modernity appears as a world historical reality with universal pretensions, one that in its negation of earth and other worlds affirms itself as anthropocentric and Eurocentric in kind. On the one hand, modernity's anthropocentrism, built on the separation between the 'human' and 'nature,' requires the negation of earth. Modernity's notion of humanity and civilization is produced as earthlessness. This negation is implemented through forms of classification, appropriation, extraction, consumption and pollution. On the other hand, modernity's Eurocentrism required the negation of other worlds and was built on the separation between civilization and barbarism, between the human and the savage, the developed and the underdeveloped, the consumer and the subaltern. This negation was implemented through forms of racial classification, through temporal discrimination relegating other worlds to the pastness of modernity or to oblivion, through the colonial gender system (Lugones 2010) and the unrestrained access to bodies, through enslavement and exploitation, through the extermination of peoples and their worlds. Modernity as global design is produced as worldlessness.

The question of alterity is central to decolonial thought, it enables us to overcome the solipsism of the narrative of modernity and its own critical tradition, it helps us to see that the 'universal' validity claim of modernity as *the* world historical reality was built on the negation of its outside. This negation is not the sign of a chronological superceding of a new epoch over another, of the modern over the nonmodern; it has been an active historical movement of erasure, obliteration and oblivion, it actively characterizes the modern/colonial order. Modernity was built through coloniality, through concrete cognitive and material processes of production and suppression of alterity. Modernity has relegated nature, bodies and other worlds of meaning to a negated alterity, to forms of nonexistence,¹ to worldlessness. To look at the production of alterity, of the outside of modernity's world historical reality, is to see the movement of coloniality.

Tony Fry's project to set up the field of design for/by 'the global South' requires us to address the question of the colonial difference that marks the 'South' as distinct from the 'North.' The colonial difference allows us to see the articulation between modernity and coloniality, between the forceful affirmation of modernity's world as artifice and coloniality's continuous destruction of relational worlds. The struggle to decolonize is the struggle to undo the colonial difference; it is the struggle for the possibility of an ethical life on and with earth. Decolonizing design, then, brings us to a three-folded path: to understand modernity's way of worlding the world as artifice, as earthlessness; to understand coloniality's way of unworlding the world, of annihilating relational worlds; and to think of the decolonial as a form of radical hope for an ethical life with earth.

We will follow an idiosyncratic path, dwelling on historical events, in which the relation between modernity/coloniality and earth crystalizes: historical moments of revelation

that bring into the light of thought modernity's earthlessness and its production of the real as artifice, as well as the coloniality of modernity and its entwining with genocidal violence and technological devastation. With 'Sputnik' (the first artificial satellite) and 'Bleu Marble' (the first photo of earth), we address the question of anthropocentrism and earthlessness; and with 'the Orbis Spike' (the geological marker of colonial genocide) and Hiroshima and Nagasaki (as technological devastation) that of worldlessness and defuturing.²

We will pay particular attention to modernity as an anthropocentric mode of steering the Anthropocene towards earthlessness and worldlessness; that is, not only as a period of human influence over earth, but as a time of earth devastation and 'defuturing,' and as the loss of nonanthropocentric worlds. In modernity's Anthropocene, the loss of earth is coupled with the loss of the diversity of relational worlds. The distinction between 'earth' and 'worlds' is crucial. While 'worlds' are anthropological social and historical realities, 'earth' names our living planet, the grounding precedence of every world.

What is at stake in the question of decolonizing design, and more broadly modernity, is our relation to earth, and the dignifying of relational worlds. Can we recover hope as an alternative to modernity's notion of the future as chronological artifice, as utopia? Can we envisage the possibility of an ethical life, one that is not mediated by and dependent on the destruction of earth and relational worlds?

Sputnik and Bleu Marble: Modernity as earthlessness

Under modernity's reality principle, the earth has been reduced to an object of representation and appropriation. Earth has ceased to be a home, a vessel that precedes, grounds and sustains our worlds. Modernity's relation to earth came to a moment of historical revelation on October 4th 1957 when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first artificial satellite. Let us turn to Hannah Arendt's observation of the event.

In 1957, an earth-born object made by man was launched into the universe ... The immediate reaction expressed on the spur of the moment, was relief about the first 'step toward escape from men's imprisonment to the earth'... The banality of the statement should not make us overlook how extraordinary in fact it was ... nobody in the history of mankind has ever conceived of the earth as a prison for men's bodies ... Should the emancipation and secularization of the modern age, which began with a turning-away, not necessarily from God, but from a god who was the Father of men in heaven, end with an even more fateful repudiation of an Earth who was the Mother of all living creatures under the sky? (Arendt 1994, 1–2)

What Arendt refers to as the emancipation of the modern age from Earth as the Mother, is no other than the loss of our relationality to Earth, modernity's earthlessness. It signals the forgetting of earth as grounding precedence. Modernity's relation to earth is governed by separation, by the loss of the relationality between the 'human' and earth. The loss of earth is mirrored in the forgetfulness of our bodies as always already earth.

Earth is turned into an object of representation, and incorporated into the Cartesian subject-object divide. It becomes an object of anthropocentric appropriation and consumption. The vision of earth as prison is a bare expression of modernity's anthropocentric hubris and its drive towards earthlessness. The relationality between us and earth is

substituted by an instrumental mediation; earth is incorporated as a rational object of the human. Modernity is at one and the same time the affirmation of the world as artifice and the loss of earth as relation. Its mode of worlding the world is that of worlding the world as representation and artifice. In modernity, the mode of representation has turned itself into a reality principle. The mode of representation has become capable of producing the real as artifice, and by the same token, producing the modern world as earthlessness.



The Blue Marble—Earth as seen by Apollo 17 in 1972. http://www.nasa.gov/images/content/115334main_image_feature_329_ys_full.jpg

In December 7, 1972 the Apollo 17 crew took the first photograph of earth: 'Bleu Marble.' This photograph accomplishes the renaissance geographers' dream of reducing earth to an object of representation; it is a moment in which the anthropocentric gaze achieves, as it were, its historical completion, the absurdity of its totality.

The conception of earth as a prison, the will to emancipate the 'Human' from earth, and the reduction of earth to representation are all expressions of modernity's world as artifice, its anthropocentrism and its loss of earth as relation. 'Bleu Marble' comes to signify the transmogrification of Earth into an object of appropriation, representation, consumption and waste. It signifies the forgetfulness of earth as grounding precedence.

The decolonial task is to understand and face the loss of relational worlds and, with them, the loss of earth. It is about the restitution of hope in the possibility of enacting relational ways of inhabiting earth, of being with human and nonhuman others and of relating to ourselves.

Orbis Spike: Coloniality and the Anthropocene³

Conquest as the access to bodies through subjugation, enslavement and genocide and as the access to ancestral lands marks the relation of modernity to its human others and to earth.

The decolonial premise that places the birth of modernity in the colonial expansion coincides with what geologists are proposing as the defining date of the onset of the human-dominated geological epoch, the Anthropocene. Geologists have uncovered an important atmospheric CO₂ decline that corresponds to the colonial encounter. 'Two independent high-resolution Antarctic ice core records from the Law Dome and the Western Antarctic Ice Sheet show a reduction in atmospheric CO₂ of 7–10 p.p.m. between 1,570 and 1,620' (Lewis 2015, 176). Lewis and Maslin name this CO₂ drop the 'Orbis Spike,' and suggest that it can be regarded as the key marker of the onset of the Anthropocene. They link the reduction in atmospheric CO₂ with the mass death coinciding with the unfolding of the colonialism. The 'Orbis Spike' seems to indicate the geological proportions of coloniality, of the colonial violence that characterized the inception of the Western project of civilization.

The approximate magnitude and timing of carbon sequestration make the population decline in the Americas the most likely cause of the observed decline in atmospheric CO₂. The arrival of Europeans in the Americas led to a catastrophic decline in human numbers, with about 50 million deaths between 1,492 and 1,650 ... Regional population estimates sum to a total of 54 million people in the Americas in 1,492, with recent population modeling estimates of 61 million people. Numbers rapidly declined to a minimum of about 6 million people by 1,650 via exposure to diseases carried by Europeans, plus war, enslavement and famine. (Lewis 2015, 176)

Biello notes that in addition to the 50 million deaths among 'America's' first nations we also need to consider '[t]he enslavement (or death) of as many as 28 million Africans for labor in the new lands' (Biello 2016). No other time in history has seen such a dramatic loss of human population. The European colonial expansion unleashed the mass death and the destruction of worlds that had never been seen before. The CO₂ decline testifies to the mass death of up to 'three quarters of the entire population of two continents' (Biello 2016), America and Africa, due to colonialism, enslavement and decease.

The narrative of salvation of modernity was built on the denial of the genocidal violence of colonialism; modernity as historical reality has a constitutive relation to coloniality, to the consumption, negation and destruction of alterity. As Floriberto Díaz, an indigenous intellectual from Oaxaca, Mexico, noted on the occasion of the commemoration of 500 years of colonialism.⁴ They try to erase from their memory the death of millions of indigeneous and black people, over which they established their "colonies", pretending to be "discoverers" and supposedly superior "religion" (Díaz 2007, 369).

The notion of coloniality is an attempt to counter the erasure of colonial violence from the solipsistic narrative of modernity. The geological evidence available today ratifies the first nation's understanding of modernity as mounted on extreme violence. It reflects the magnitude of the mass death and the destruction unleashed by colonial expansion. From a decolonial perspective, we can now say that coloniality marks the

onset of the Western-driven Anthropocene. These events not only speak of the Anthropocene as simply indicating the impact of human presence on earth, but they characterize the Anthropocene as driven by an anthropocentric modernity (Lewis 2015). In other words, the anthropocentric Anthropocene reflects not just the traces of human life on earth, but also the impact of a particularly modern/colonial way of living on earth and of worlding the world. The mass colonial genocide was the early expression of a system geared towards the consumption of life, the consumption of human and non-human life, the consumption of earth.

The 'Orbis Spike' as marker of the onset of the Anthropocene is, for us, confirmation of the genocidal violence of the modern/colonial order, of the coloniality that is co-constitutive of modernity as a global design.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, modernity as defuturing

There was no sound of planes. The morning was still; the place was cool and pleasant. Then a tremendous flash of light cut across the sky. Mr. Tanimoto has a distinct recollection that it travelled from east to west, from the city toward the hills. It seemed a sheet of sun. (Hersey 1946, 8)

On August 6, 1945, an American B-29 bomber named the Enola Gay left the island of Tinian for Hiroshima, Japan carrying the uranium 235 gun-type bomb, named Little Boy. The atomic bomb exploded at 8:16 a.m., in an instant 80,000 to 140,000 people were killed and 100,000 more were seriously injured. ... Three days later, another American B-29 bomber, Bock's Car, left Tinian carrying Fat Man, a plutonium implosion-type bomb. With the primary target unavailable, the secondary target, the Mitsubishi Torpedo Plant at Nagasaki was chosen. The bomb exploded at 11:02 a.m. over the narrow Urakami Valley northwest of downtown Nagasaki. Of the 286,000 people living in Nagasaki at the time of the blast, 74,000 people were killed and another 75,000 sustained severe injuries. (Atomic Archive n.d.a)

Many people on the street were killed almost instantly. The fingertips of those dead bodies caught fire and the fire gradually spread over their entire bodies from their fingers. A light gray liquid dripped down their hands, scorching their fingers. I, I was so shocked to know that fingers and bodies could be burned and deformed like that. I just couldn't believe it. It was horrible. And looking at it, it was more than painful for me to think how the fingers were burned, hands and fingers that would hold babies or turn pages, they just, they just burned away [Ms. Akiko Takakura was 20 years old when the bomb fell]. (Atomic Archive n.d.b)

Hiroshima and Nagasaki have also left an Anthropocene geological marker, the radiological 'bomb spike.' For us, they are a moment in which modernity is revealed in all its destructive power. The atomic bomb was hailed as a technological miracle, as a momentous achievement of science.

It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed ... [T]he greatest marvel is not the size of the enterprise, its secrecy, nor its cost, but the achievement of scientific brains ... What has been done is the greatest achievement of organized science in history. (Truman)

The bomb lays bare the hubris of the anthropocentric artifice. The mass death and devastation of the two cities is inseparable from the progress of modern science and technology. This technoscientific killing rendered the power of devastation of modernity into a tangible and unbearable sight. A wound that defies understanding. Adorno and Horkheimer's (Adorno 1999) critique of the enlightenment reverting into destruction, or Zygmunt Bauman's (Bauman 1991) reflection on modernity and the Holocaust and the thought of Auschwitz as an industrial organization of death, have important affinities to the challenge of thinking of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a distinctively modern, scientific, technological and industrial event.

The blind belief in modernity's narrative of 'scientific progress' as the gradual emancipation of humanity is suspended at the sight of ground zero.



A View Of ground zero in Hiroshima in the autumn of 1945 (U.S. National Archives).

The razed land of ground zero is a sordid demonstration of the defuturing effect of modernity. The death of more than 200,000 people, the complete obliteration of streets, homes, everyday objects, the hollowing-out of life worlds, the charring of living bodies, of hands and fingers testify to modernity's propensity to 'defuture.' Arendt warns us that '[a]t some turning-points of history ... at some heights of crisis ... an "empty space" a kind of historical no man's land, comes to the surface ... [a] gap, the opening of an abyss of empty space and empty time' (Arendt 1994, 158). Modernity's relentless destruction of relationality is such an abyssal movement.



'Battered religious figures stand watch on a hill above a tattered valley. Nagasaki, Japan'.
Photo by Cpl. Lynn P. Walker, Jr. (Marine Corps).

In the emptying of time and space, in their reduction to the surface of representation, lays the defuturing of modernity. Defuturing expresses the foreclosure of relationality, the loss of relationality as grounding precedence, of space as hosting and enabling and time as the radical multiplicity and potentiality of what has been. The chronology of modernity confines earth and bodies to the surface of an empty present, its power lies in the logic of separation in its severing of our relations, in the emptying of our historical site of experience. Time and space are vacated, divested of their relationality and submitted to the logic of exchange, to the surface of representation, to the dominion of logistics and instrumental systems of mediations, to the hubris of the anthropocentric artifice. Modernity's devastation needs to be understood as the closure of future growth, the radical reduction and harnessing of the 'to come' into mechanical processes governed by the logistics of appropriation, consumption and pollution, and a self-referential symbolic environment.

The severing of our linkages to what has been lived, to the grounds of our historical existence, means the foreclosure of alternative futures. It is in our possibilities of remembrance, of religation to what has been that the possibility of hope dwells. Here, the orientation of the decolonial option as a radical return to overcome modernity's emptying of time and space comes forth in its full clarity. Caring, as opposing defuturing, would mean a gathering remembrance that resists the oblivion, obliteration, dispersal inbuilt in the affirmation of modernity as *the* world historical reality. The decolonial option announces itself as a path to exit modernity through the overcoming of the metaphysics of presence.

Modernity, the project of civilization built on futurity, on the cult of novelty and endless progress, on the mirage of scientific and technological utopias, has brought about the foreclosure of the future. In a sort of negative dialectic, modernity, in all its orientation towards the future, has meant the continuous loss of the radical diversity of the 'to come.' Its control over the world's historical reality, its instrumental trajectory toward futurity, is intertwined with coloniality as oblivion, with the erasure of the radical multiplicity of the worlds that have been and their trajectories.

Writ large, in its material expression, modernity did not just take the future away from the peoples it damaged and exploited but it also set a process in motion that negated the future and established conditions that defutured the lives of the newly born and the unborn. (Fry 2017 [in this volume])

The instrumental futurity of scientific and technological progress cannot be separated from consumption of the heritage of the earth's diversity and the reduction of worlds. The consumption of the earth's heritage, its material and organic diversity and the radical reduction of human heritage has meant the foreclosure of alternative trajectories into the future. Coloniality as the destruction of alterity of earth and worlds has to be understood as defuturing, the reduction and impoverishment of the roads into the future. We have severed the roads into the future by negating through consumption and devastation the alternatives contained in the earth's material heritage, its biodiversity and the diversity of 'human' worlds.

Worldlessness as the emptying of our historical site of experience and the loss of human diversity, of alternative worlds, and earthlessness as the loss of earth's diversity signal the irretrievable loss of the relations that hold alternative trajectories of hope, alternative relations to earth, to community, to language, to bodies, to ourselves; alternative forms of worlding the world with earth.

The coloniality of the commodity

An analysis of the coloniality of the commodity reveals the extraction of earth and the exploitation of life that lies hidden under its glittering surface. It shows the falseness of its novelty. Coloniality exposes the provenance of the commodity, its kinship to earthlessness and the loss of relational worlds. Following Marx's movement of thought, we could say that there is a definite modern/colonial relation of extraction and exploitation that assumes, in the eyes of the consumer, 'the fantastic form of a relation between things' (Marx 1983).

Allow us to continue paraphrasing Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism (Marx 1983) with a decolonial inflection. The commodity is a mysterious thing, simply because in it the coloniality that has led to its production, the extraction from earth and the exploitation of people appear as a libidinal object of consumption. Its power of attraction is, in a perverse way, the manifestation of the consumption of life. The fetishism of the commodity turns the consumption of life, of earth and human worlds into desire and pleasure. The dazzling spectacle of modernity is erected on the suffering of coloniality, it cannot be sundered from a genealogy of genocide, devastation and earthlessness.

While the commodity form turns the consumption of life into a pleasure principle, the individual is turned into a consumer. The consumer that is made to desire and enjoy the consumption of life is subjectified in the image of the colonizer, of the corporation, of the 'human' that reigns over life over nature and subjugated others. The consumer, the normative and hegemonic subjectivity of late modernity, needs to be confronted with the question of ethical life.

Is it possible to live an ethical life in a world in which everyday life and self-identity are bound to the pursuit and enjoyment of the consumption of the life of others, the life of earth? Is it possible to live an ethical life in a world whose functioning is constitutively bound to the suffering of human and nonhuman others?

'[T]he existence of the things qua commodities' (Marx 1983) signals the loss of the thing, its transmogrification into the commodity. In the commodity the mediation and instrumentalization of earth and labor is disconnected from its appearance as commodity. The commodity derives its symbolic meaning from the simulacrum of modernity (Baudrillard 1968). Its symbolic existence circulates in the empty time of novelty and the surface or representation.

The reign of the commodity form has signified the loss of the thing. Commodity and thing express two radically different ways of being on earth and worlding the world. Modernity's earthlessness corresponds to the commodity's thinglessness. 'The jug and the juice box are literally worlds apart' (Willis 2006, 89) The loss of the thing and the enshrinement of the commodity form is the material expression of the loss of earth and the loss of nonanthropocentric ways of relating to earth and of worlding the world. 'The bomb's explosion is only the grossest of all gross confirmations of the long-since-accomplished annihilation of the thing' (Heidegger 1971, 169). The loss of the thing is a loss of the relation with reality that gets subsumed and replaced by the artifice of modernity, and in particular by the commodity form. While the commodity realizes the empty present of novelty and the anthropocentric reign over presence, the thing as an expression of nonanthropocentric relationality is forgotten. The circulation of the commodity shows the replacement of relationality with logistics and the exchange of abstract equivalences.

The commodity form transmogrifies the thing as relation into artifice and simulacra. The temporal and material relationality of the thing is substituted by the empty time of novelty of the commodity, by the superficiality of simulacra and artifice. The experience of the commodity as artifice is confined to the surface of the empty present.

The separation between the thing and the commodity enables us to distinguish relationality from modernity's movement towards the real. Whereas modernity's movement towards the real is that of incorporation, instrumentalization, logistics and assemblages within the realm of immanence, and the realm of beings implies the emptying of time and space, the emptying of our site of experience, relationality indicates a movement towards the real, a form of realization in the mode of precedence, a mode of *theing*,⁵ of coming into presence in relation, through the grounding precedence of time.

'The jug is not a vessel because it was made, rather, the jug had to be made because it is this holding vessel' (Heidegger 1971, 166).

The thing needs to be understood as a relational form. It is the expression of a coming into presence. The recalling of the thing allows us to think of presence not as timeless space that is ready at hand, the superficial space of pure immanence and representation, but as grounded in precedence, as a receptive presence. This relational notion of presence is in turn an opening that sustains and allows for the flourishing of precedence.

The thing expresses what we have come to call *theing*, a mode of coming into presence, a form of realization whose movement, whose temporality is that of precedence. The thing and *theing* express the gathering/projection of the mode of precedence, a mode of realization that recalls and foregrounds, that sustains and gives, that is before the before.

The modern dichotomy between time and space is undone in the thought of the relation between presence and precedence. Unlike empty reified space, in relational thought presence appears both as the expression of precedence, as the coming forth and congealment of precedence, and as that which receives and hosts us, that which, in its holding and receiving, shelters and touches us.

Precedence and the decolonial

The decolonial comes under the sign of the return and opposes itself to the reduction of the real to immanence, to the enclosure of reality, the realm of historical experience within the metaphysics of presence. The decolonial does not replace the immanence of materiality with transcendental notions of futurity, of humanity or divinity. The decolonial challenges modernity's reduction of the real to empty presence, to the surface of the present, by positing the question of precedence. The question of precedence delinks from Western philosophy's grounding dichotomy between immanence and transcendence. The question of precedence names a relationality that exceeds in its temporality both presence as pure immanence and the transcendental as a mode of futurity. The mode of precedence cuts through the metaphysics of presence by bringing to the fore the radical openness, the radical multiplicity in time that precedes, as grounding and as always already ahead, any formation in the field of immanence, in the surface of the present.

The understanding of the mode of precedence, as relationality, as worldhood and earthliness, is a gift and a teaching from non-Western ontologies, it comes from listening to the epistemic outside of modernity, to non-Western genealogies of thought and their notions of existence. In particular, it comes from listening to the notions of time prevalent in the first nations of Abya Yala, in which the past is understood as what is always ahead of us. In contrast with the modern notion of the past as fixed and gone, many first nations have a notion of the past as illuminating our present.

The simple life of those that preceded us, their particular ways of understanding well-being and wealth, are a mirror for the new generation to wage the value of their inner being and the greatness of their ancestral philosophies.⁶ (Abuelo Zenon in Walsh 2015, 85).

In the notion of the ancestral that is at the root of first-nations and Afro-descendent struggles, we see a temporal relationality that we are here describing as the mode of precedence, the ancestral is what is before us, it is before the before. It is always ahead and always already there. This being there, this *theing* is what in its precedence grounds relational temporalities. It designates a coming into presence that is always already there in its grounding projection, in its being always already ahead and anterior, in its foregrounding, in its being before the before.

The mode of precedence is what grounds and enables the possibility of relational temporalities. We now see that modernity/coloniality consists in the separation, the severing of relations, of relationality, and the establishment of mediations, that confine experience and power to the realm of immanence, to the surface of the present, to empty presence (Vázquez 2012). Modernity, its metaphysics of presence, its enclosure of experience, operates by reducing presence to materiality and the present to the time of the now.

The decolonial comes as a response to the confinement of experience to the metaphysics of presence and to the harnessing of earth and all beings to modernity's field of domination.

Modernity reigns over immanence through appropriation and representation, by expropriating, extracting, consuming, and representing and producing the world as artifice.

For the Amazonian indigenous and the quechua-lamas in particular, there is no essentialisms, that is to say a being with its own, unique and exclusive specificity and identity. No entity is self-sufficient and nothing can exist in an absolute way. It is only in the relation with the forest, the water and the animals that one becomes somebody and can realize oneself, and always in respect to the wisdom of others, being that of the human or of a plant. Alien to any anthropocentrism, in the quechua-lamas life experience, every entity partakes in other forms of life, it is heterogeneous in itself.⁷ (Rengifo 2015, 12).

The decolonial option orients itself toward the possibility of an ethical life that undoes the mastery of the self, that sees beyond anthropocentrism, where temporality is a becoming in relation, is a grounding precedence and ceases to be vacated into an empty chronology, confined in the totalizing immanence of the metaphysics of presence. There is no possibility of an ethical life, of intercultural justice without a radical questioning of modernity's monopoly over the real and coloniality's erasure of relational worlds.

Time and again, the decolonial comes under the sign of the return, of healing, of remembrance and liberation. It is a radical challenge to the metaphysics of presence, to the artifice of modernity. It is radical because it takes its root in the voices, the modes of being in the world, the worlds of meaning that have been denied the right to exist, that have been erased, that have been denigrated.

The mode of precedence confronts the totalizing immanence of modernity, its enclosure of the realm of experience in empty time and empty space. The decolonial alternatives to modernity do not come as utopias, as transcendental futurity; nor as a play of assemblages in the surface of immanence. In the mode of precedence, what has been is not a fixed past nor a monument to be revived. In the mode of precedence, the decolonial relegates earth and lived worlds, the negated alterities of modernity, to reconfigure our historical experience.

It is in the enactment of relationality that the temporality of precedence is activated, as a source of dignity, hope and ethics. Precedence as a mode of realization counters the oblivion that underlies the fragmentation and emptying of our realm of experience. It counters the movement of loss and dislocation toward earthlessness and wordlessness, toward thingness and homelessness. Precedence shows us that we have been awaited on earth.

We were stolen from our bodies
 We were stolen from our homes
 And we are fighters in this long war
 To bring us all back home. (Driskill 2004)

What is at stake is worldhood, the possibility of being at home in and with earth. The struggle for worldhood opposes itself to the homelessness of modernity's artifice. It challenges the violence of being deprived of the relation to a world of meaning, the violence of unworlding. It challenges the coloniality of being expelled outside of one's world of meaning and incorporated into the world as artifice, the violence of earthlessness and wordlessness. It is a struggle against being homeless with no word, no earth and no relational body.

What is at stake is the freedom that comes from worlding the world in relation. The freedom of naming the world in the language that precedes and relates us and the freedom of inhabiting the world in the plenitude of our communal body, a relational body that is always already earth. Language and body hold in their relationality, in their grounding precedence, the radical freedom of worlding the world.

Notes on decolonizing design

Thinking about 'design for/by the global South' (Fry 2017), requires us to think not just about design as modernity's mode of worlding the world and its mediation-objectification of earth, it also calls on us to think about design across the 'North/South divide,' across the colonial difference. We need to complement the question of the modernity of design with that of the coloniality of design. Whereas the modernity of design points towards the ways of worlding the world as artifice and of mediating and objectifying earth and life in general, the question of the coloniality of design points towards design as a form of unworlding the world and the consumption, the deadening of earth.

A design for/by 'the global South' needs to challenge the geopolitics of design that has constituted itself along the modern/colonial divide, along the colonial difference. Design, as the modern mode of relating to and producing the real, has functioned coextensively with modernity's epistemic expansion and domination. The geopolitics of knowledge reproduce the modern/colonial divide in terms of knowledge, imposing modernity as the only valid epistemic territory and erasing other worlds of meaning. Concurrently, the geopolitics of design refer to the control of form and of our ways of inhabiting the earth and worlding the world.

Modernity replaces the relation to earth and relationality as worlding with mediation and objectification. Modernity's design inserted itself as that power of mediation that came to replace, to sever our relationality with others, with earth, with other than human and with ourselves. Can we think of a design for/by 'the global South' as a decolonial moment? Can we think of a design that is capable of healing, of enabling relationality, of recovering the possibilities of listening to the communal, to the ancestral, of caring and nurturing earth, of enabling the formation and dignification of other worlds of meaning?

A decolonial notion of design would need a fundamental change in the relation to the world, a change that requires the articulation of a different mode of realization, of worlding the world. Modern/colonial design has been subservient to the metaphysics of presence and hence to a mode of being that reduces presence to empty time and empty space. This mode of being enabled modernity to rule over the realm of immanence and to produce the world as an artifice of form, function and simulation. The world, including the earth, was turned into a series of material objects to be classified, appropriated, manipulated, ordered or produced within the logic of space, turning the surface of immanence into the whole of the real. The reduction of earth and the world to such a conception of space is what marks modernity's reality principle.

A relational design, design as earthliness and worldhood, and not as earthlessness and wordlessness, would be a design in the mode of listening, a design enabling the thing to come forth, enabling the preceding relation of earth, language and body to come forth. A relational design would recognize and enable precedence as gift, as the holding that gives what has been forgotten by the artifice of modernity and its domain of forms as representation.

Can design be at the service of the thing as relation, instead of at the service of the object as representation, of the commodity form?

How can design escape the timelessness and totalizing confinement of representation?

Can design abandon the logic of the object and be put at the service of the thing, of worlding the world in relation?

Can design move from a thinking that merely represents to a *thinging* that co-responds and recalls?

Can relational design be a form of being with earth and worlding the world that overcomes the metaphysics of presence and articulate the decolonial mode of precedence?

Notes

1. For an important analysis of processes of nonexistence, see Santos (2006, 2014).
2. To read more on defuturing, see Tony Fry's (2017) article in this volume.
3. I want to thank Mark Jackson for bringing the Orbis Spike to our conversation.
4. my translation: 'Tratan de borrar de su memoria las millones de muertes de indios y negros, a costa de los cuales lograron establecer sus "colonias", haciéndose pasar por "descubridores" y "religión" supuestamente superiores' 369 (Floriberto Díaz 2007, 369–374).
5. In reference to Kusch's (2010) distinction between 'ser' and 'estar', being and being-there in Spanish.
6. My translation: 'la vida simple de los que nos antecedieron, sus formas particulares de entender el bienestar y la riqueza, son un espejo para que las nuevas generaciones puedan medir el valor de su ser interior y la grandeza de sus filosofías ancestrales'.
7. My translation: 'Para el indígena amazónico y el quechua-lamas en particular, no hay esencialismos, es decir un ser con una especificidad y una identidad propia, única y excluyente. Ninguna entidad es suficiente por sí misma y nada puede existir de manera absoluta, Es sólo en la relación con el bosque, el agua y los animales que uno es alguien y que puede realizarse, y siempre respetando la sabiduría ajena, sea éste del humano, o de una planta. Ajeno a todo antropocentrismo, en la vivencia quechua-lamas, toda entidad participa también de otras formas de vida, es heterogénea en sí misma'.

Notes on contributor

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