CHAPTER 6

A Critique of Lazy Reason

Against the Waste of Experience and
Toward the Sociology of Absences and the
Sociology of Emergences

Introduction

In this chapter, I engage in a critique of the hegemonic Western model of rationality, which after Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1985 [1710]) I call *lazy reason*,[1] and propose the prolegomena to another model that I designate *subaltern cosmopolitan reason*, the reason that grounds the epistemologies of the South. The proposal is based on three procedures: the sociology of absences, the sociology of emergences, and the work of intercultural translation. The first two are dealt with in this chapter; the third will be addressed in Chapter 8.

I start from three hypotheses. First, the understanding of the world by far exceeds the West's understanding of the world. The Western understanding of the world is as important as it is partial. Second, the understanding of the world and the way it creates and legitimates social power have a lot to do with conceptions of time and temporality. Third, the most fundamental characteristic of the Western conception of rationality is that, on the one hand, it contracts the present and, on the other, it expands the future. The contraction of the present, brought about by a peculiar conception of totality, turns the present into a fleeting instant, entrenched between the past and the future.[2] By the same token, the linear conception of time and the planning of history permit the future to expand infinitely. The larger the future, the more exhilarating the expectations vis-à-vis the experiences of today. In the 1940s, Ernst Bloch (1995: 313) wondered in perplexity, If we only live in the present, why is it so transient? The same perplexity lies at the core of this chapter.

I propose a subaltern cosmopolitan rationality that, in this phase of transition, must trace an inverse trajectory: to expand the present and contract the future. Only thus will it be possible to create the time-space needed to know and valorize the inexhaustible social experience under way in our world today. In other words, only thus will it be possible to avoid the massive waste of experience we suffer today. To expand the present, I propose a sociology of absences; to contract the future, a sociology of emergences. Because we live in a situation of bifurcation, as

Ilya Prigogine (1997) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1999) show, the immense diversity of social experiences that these procedures reveal cannot be adequately accounted for by a general theory. Instead of a general theory, I propose a theory or procedure of translation, capable of creating mutual intelligibility among possible and available experiences without compromising their identity. This is the topic of

In the preface to his *Theodicy*, Leibniz (1985 [1710]) mentions the perplexity that the sophism that the ancients called "indolent" or "lazy reason" had always caused: if the future is necessary and what must happen happens regardless of what we do, it is preferable to do nothing, to care for nothing, and merely to enjoy the pleasure of the instant. This form of reason is lazy because it gives up thinking in the face of necessity and fatalism, of which Leibniz distinguishes three kinds: *fatum Mahometanum, fatum Stoicum*, and *fatum Christianum.*

The laziness of the reason critiqued in this chapter occurs in four different ways: *impotent reason*, a reason that does not exert itself because it thinks it can do nothing against necessity conceived of as external to itself; *arrogant reason*, a kind of reason that feels no need to exert itself because it imagines itself as unconditionally free and therefore free from the need to prove its own freedom; *metonymic reason*, a kind of reason that claims to be the only form of rationality and therefore does not exert itself to discover other kinds of rationality or, if it does, it only does so to turn them into raw material;[3] and *proleptic reason*, a kind of reason that does not exert itself in thinking the future because it believes it knows all about the future and conceives of it as a linear, automatic, and infinite overcoming of the present.[4]

Under its various forms, lazy reason underlies the hegemonic knowledge, whether philosophical or scientific, produced in the West in the past two hundred years. The consolidation of the liberal state in Europe and North America, the Industrial Revolution and capitalist development, colonialism, and imperialism constituted the social and political context in which lazy reason evolved. Partial exceptions, like romanticism and Marxism, were neither strong nor different enough to

become an alternative to lazy reason. Thus, lazy reason created the framework for the large philosophical and epistemological debates of the last two centuries and indeed presided over them. For example, impotent and arrogant reason shaped the debate between determinism and free will and later that between structuralism and existentialism. No wonder these debates were intellectually lazy. Metonymic reason, in turn, took over old debates, such as the debate between holism and atomism, and originated others, such as the *Methodenstreit* between nomothetic and ideographic sciences and between explanation and understanding. In the 1960s, metonymic reason led the debate over the two cultures launched by C. P. Snow (1959, 1964). In this debate, metonymic reason still considered itself as a totality, although a less monolithic one. The debate deepened in the 1980s and 1990s with feminist epistemology, cultural studies, and the social studies of science. By analyzing the heterogeneity of the practices and narratives of science, the new epistemologies further pulverized that totality and turned the two cultures into an unstable plurality of cultures. Metonymic reason, however, continued to lead the debates, even when the topic of multiculturalism was introduced and science started to see itself as multicultural. Other knowledges, neither scientific nor philosophical, particularly non-Western knowledges, have remained largely outside the debate until today.

As regards proleptic reason, the way it conceived of the planning of history dominated the debates on dialectical idealism and materialism and on historicism and pragmatism. From the 1980s onward, proleptic reason was contested mainly by the theories of complexity and chaos. Proleptic reason, based on the linear idea of progress, was confronted with the ideas of entropy and disaster, although no alternative has yet emerged from such confrontation.

The debate generated by the "two cultures" and the various third cultures thereby emerging—the social sciences (Lepenies 1988) or the popularization of science (Brockman 1995)[5]—did not affect the domination of lazy reason under any of its four forms: impotent reason (determinism, realism), arrogant reason (free will, constructivism),

metonymic reason (*pars pro toto*, dualism), and proleptic reason (evolutionism, progress). There was therefore no restructuring of knowledge. Nor could there be, to my mind, because the indolence of reason manifests itself particularly in the way it resists changes of routine and transforms hegemonic interests into true knowledge. As I see it, in order for deep changes to occur in the structure of knowledge, it is necessary to change the form of reason that presides over knowledge and its structure. In a word, lazy reason must be confronted.

In this chapter, I confront lazy reason in two of its forms: as metonymic and proleptic reason.[6] The two other forms have elicited more debate (on determinism or free will, realism or constructivism).

The Critique of Metonymic Reason

Metonymic reason is obsessed by the idea of totality in the form of order. There is no understanding or action without reference to a whole, the whole having absolute primacy over each one of its parts. There is therefore only one logic ruling the behavior of both the whole and each of its parts. There is thus homogeneity between the whole and its parts, the latter having no independent existence outside their relation to the whole. Possible variations in the movement of the parts do not affect the whole and are viewed as particularities. The most complete form of totality according to metonymic reason is dichotomy, because it combines symmetry and hierarchy most elegantly. The symmetry of parts is always a horizontal relation that conceals a vertical relation. It is so because, contrary to what is proclaimed by metonymic reason, the whole is less, not more, than the sum of its parts. The whole is indeed a part turned into a term of reference for the others. This is why all dichotomies sanctioned by metonymic reason contain a hierarchy: scientific culture/literary culture, scientific knowledge/traditional knowledge, man/woman, culture/nature, civilized/primitive, capital/labor, white/black, North/South, West/East, and so on and so forth.

All this is well known today and needs no further elaboration. I focus on its consequences.[7] The two main ones are the following. First, because nothing exists outside the totality that is or deserves to be intelligible, metonymic reason claims to be exclusive, complete, and universal, even though it is merely one of the logics of rationality that exist in the world and prevails only in the strata of the world comprised by Western modernity. Metonymic reason cannot accept that the understanding of the world is much larger than the Western understanding of the world. Second, according to metonymic reason, none of the parts can be conceived outside its relation with the totality. The North is not intelligible outside its relation to the South, just as traditional knowledge is not intelligible outside its relation to scientific knowledge or woman outside her relation to man. It is inconceivable that each of the

parts may have its own life beyond the dichotomous relation, let alone be a different totality or part of a different totality. The understanding of the world promoted by metonymic reason is therefore not only partial but also very selective. Western modernity, controlled by metonymic reason, has a limited understanding not only of the world but also of itself.

Before I deal with the processes that sustain understanding and police its limits, I must explain how such a limited rationality ended up having such primacy in the last two hundred years. Metonymic reason is, together with proleptic reason, the response of the West, intent on the capitalist and colonialist transformation of the world, to its own cultural and philosophical marginality vis-à-vis the East. As Karl Jaspers and others have shown, the West constituted itself as a deserter from a founding matrix—the East (Jaspers 1951, 1976; Needham 1954–2008; Marramao 1995: 160).[8] This founding matrix is truly comprehensive because it encompasses a multiplicity of worlds (both earthly and nonearthly) and a multiplicity of times (past, present, future, cyclical, linear, simultaneous). Its holism has no need to claim totality or to subordinate parts to itself. It is an antidichotomic matrix because it does not have to control or police limits. On the contrary, the West, aware of its own eccentricity vis-à-vis this matrix, takes from it only what can encourage the expansion of capitalism and colonialism. Thus, the multiplicity of worlds is reduced to the earthly world and the multiplicity of times to linear time.

Two processes preside over such a reduction. The reduction of the multiplicity of worlds to the earthly world comes about by means of secularization and laicization as analyzed by Max Weber (1958, 1963, 1968), Reinhart Koselleck (1985), and Giacomo Marramao (1995), among many others. The reduction of the multiplicity of times to linear time is achieved by replacing the rich soteriological idea that used to link the multiplicity of worlds (salvation, redemption, reincarnation, or metempsychosis) with such concepts as progress and revolution upon which proleptic reason came to be based. Based on this truncated conception of Eastern wholeness, the West took possession of the world

in a productive way and turned the East into a stagnated, unproductive center. The angst caused by metonymic reason led Weber to counter the unproductive seduction of the East with the disenchantment of the Western world.

As Marramao (1995: 160) notes, the supremacy of the West, created from the margins, never turned culturally into an alternative centrality vis-à-vis the East. For this reason, the power of Western metonymic reason always exceeded the power of its foundation. This power is, however, undermined by a weakness that paradoxically grounds the very reason for its power in the world. This dialectic between power and weakness ended up translating itself into the parallel development of two opposite urges: (1) *Wille zur Macht* from Hobbes to Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt, and Nazism/fascism, and (2) the *Wille zur Ohnmacht* from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Hans Kelsen, liberal democracy, and the rule of law. In each of these urges, totality is nonetheless present. Totality, because it is truncated, must ignore what it cannot contain and impose its primacy on its parts; further, the parts, to be maintained under its control, must be homogenized as parts. This explains why the totality in the weak power version of *Wille zur Ohnmacht* is allowed to impose itself powerfully and even violently on the non-Western world. Liberal democracy and the rule of law are imposed worldwide through the conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and, whenever convenient, through military intervention. Because it is unsure as to its foundations, metonymic reason does not insert itself in the world through argumentation and rhetoric. It does not explain itself; rather, it imposes itself by the efficacy of its imposition. Such efficacy manifests itself in a twofold way: by productive thought and by legislative thought. Instead of the reasonableness of argumentation, it resorts to productivity and coercion.

Grounded on metonymic reason, the transformation of the world cannot be based on or accompanied by an adequate understanding of the world. Inadequacy, in this case, meant violence, appropriation, destruction, and silencing for all those who, outside the West, were

subjected to metonymic reason; in the West, it meant alienation, malaise, and uneasiness. Walter Benjamin (1972: 213–219) was witness to this uneasiness when he showed the paradox that has dominated life in the West ever since: the fact that the wealth of events translates itself into the poverty, rather than wealth, of our experience.[9] This paradox came to coexist with another: the fact that the vertigo of change frequently turns itself into a feeling of stagnation.

Today, and thanks to the rise of so many social movements grounding their activism, at least in part, on non-Western premises, it begins to be apparent that metonymic reason has contracted the world in the very process of expanding it according to its (metonymic reason's) own rules, thus causing the crisis of the idea of progress and hence the crisis of the idea of totality that grounds it. The abbreviated version of the world became possible because of a conception of the present time that reduces it to the fleeting instant between what no longer is and what is not yet. The brevity of the gaze conceals the abbreviation of the gazed upon. As such, what is considered contemporaneous is an extremely reduced part of the simultaneous. The gaze that sees a person plowing the land only sees in that person the premodern peasant. Koselleck (1985) acknowledges this much when he speaks of the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous (see Chapter 5). But Koselleck does not address the fact that in such asymmetry a hierarchy is hidden, namely, the superiority of those who establish the time that determines contemporaneity. The contraction of the present thus conceals most of the inexhaustible richness of the social experiences in the world. Benjamin identified the problem but not its causes. The poverty of experience is the expression not of a lack but rather of an arrogance: the arrogance to refuse to see, let alone valorize, the experience around us only because it is outside the reason that allows us to identify and valorize it. The critique of metonymic reason is therefore a necessary condition to recuperate the wasted experience. At stake is the expansion of the world through the expansion and diversification of the present. Only by means of a new time-space will it be possible to identify and valorize the inexhaustible richness of the

world and the present. But this new time-space presupposes another kind of reason. Up until now, the aspiration of the expansion of the present was formulated by literary creators alone. One example among many is Franz Kafka's parable about the precariousness of modern man stuck between two formidable adversaries, the past and the future:

> He has two antagonists: the first pushes him from behind, from his birth. The second blocks the road in front of him. He struggles with both. Actually the first supports him in his struggle with the second, for the first wants to push him forward; and in the same way the second supports him in his struggle with the first; for the second of course is trying to force him back. But this is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two protagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? However that may be, he has a dream that some time in an unguarded moment—it would require too, one must admit, a night darker than anything that has ever yet been— he will spring out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience of such warfare, as judge over his struggling antagonists. (1960: 298–299)

The expansion of the present lies in two procedures that question metonymic reason in its foundations. The first consists of the proliferation of totalities. The question is not to amplify the totality propounded by metonymic reason but rather to make it coexist with other totalities. The second consists of showing that any totality is made of heterogeneity and that the parts that comprise it have a life outside it. That is to say, their being part of a certain totality is always precarious, whether because the parts, besides being parts, always hold, at least in latency, the status of totality or because parts migrate from one totality to another. What I propose is a procedure denied by metonymic reason: to think the terms of the dichotomies regardless of the power articulations and relations that bring them together as a first step in freeing them of

such relations and to reveal other alternative relations that have been obscured by hegemonic dichotomies—to conceive of the South as if there were no North, to conceive of woman as if there were no man, to conceive of the slave as if there were no master. Deepening the understanding of the power relations and radicalizing the struggles against them imply imagining the dominated as beings free from domination. The Afro-descendent activist, researcher, or artist who turns her activism, research, or art into a struggle against racism deepens her struggle by imagining what her citizen activism, research, or art might be if there were no racism, if she did not have to start from a specific identification that was imposed on her and oppresses her. The assumption underlying this procedure is that metonymic reason was not entirely successful when it dragged these entities into the dichotomies, because components or fragments not socialized by the order of totality were left out. These components or fragments have been wandering outside the totality like meteorites hovering in the space of order, not susceptible to being perceived and controlled by order until social movements become strong enough to bring them home and turn them into empowering resources for the struggles against invisibility and domination.

In this transition phase, in which metonymic reason, although much discredited, is still dominant, the enlargement of the world and the expansion of the present must begin by a procedure that I designate the *sociology of absences*. This consists of an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is in fact actively produced as nonexistent, that is, as a noncredible alternative to what exists. From a positivistic point of view—which best embodies the metonymic reason in the realm of the social sciences—the empirical object of the sociology of absences is deemed impossible. The sociology of absences is a transgressive sociology because it violates the positivistic principle that consists of reducing reality to what exists and to what can be analyzed with the methodological and analytical instruments of the conventional social sciences. From the point of view of subaltern cosmopolitan reason, reality cannot be reduced to what exists because what exists is only the visible

part of reality that modern abyssal thinking defines as being on this side of the line and within whose confines it elaborates its theories (see Chapter 4). Beyond that line, on the other side of the line, there is nothing of relevance, and it can therefore be easily dismissed or made invisible or irrelevant. In sum, whatever is on the other side of the line is produced as nonexistent. The sociology of absences is the inquiry into the workings of this abyssal line in our time.

The objective of the sociology of absences is to transform impossible into possible objects, absent into present objects. It does so by focusing on the social experience that has not been fully colonized by metonymic reason. What is there in the South that escapes the North/South dichotomy? What is there in traditional medicine that escapes the modern medicine/traditional medicine dichotomy? What is there in woman apart from her relation with man? Is it possible to see the subaltern regardless of the relation of subalternity? Could it be possible that the countries considered less developed are more developed in fields that escape the hegemonic terms of the dichotomy? In sum, is conceiving in an empowering way only possible on the other side of the line?

There is no single, univocal way of not existing. The logics and processes through which metonymic reason produces the nonexistence of what does not fit its totality and linear time are various. Nonexistence is produced whenever a certain entity is disqualified and rendered invisible, unintelligible, or irreversibly discardable. What unites the different logics of the production of nonexistence is that they are all manifestations of the same rational monoculture.

Five Modes of Production of Nonexistence

I distinguish five logics or modes of production of nonexistence.

The first derives from the *monoculture of knowledge and the rigor of knowledge*. It is the most powerful mode of production of nonexistence. It consists of turning modern science and high culture into the sole criteria of truth and aesthetic quality, respectively. The complicity that unites the

"two cultures" resides in the fact that both claim to be, each in its own field, exclusive canons of knowledge production or artistic creation. All that is not recognized or legitimated by the canon is declared nonexistent. Nonexistence appears in this case in the form of ignorance or lack of culture.

The second logic resides in the *monoculture of linear time*, the idea that history has a unique and well-known meaning and direction. This meaning and direction have been formulated in different ways in the last two hundred years: as progress, revolution, modernization, development, and globalization. Common to all these formulations is the idea that time is linear and that ahead of time proceed the core countries of the world-system and, along with them, the dominant knowledges, institutions, and forms of sociability. This logic produces nonexistence by describing as backward whatever is asymmetrical vis-à-vis whatever is declared forward. It is according to this logic that Western modernity produces the non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous and that the idea of simultaneity, by concealing the asymmetries of the historical times that converge into it, fails to recognize the possible different ways of being contemporaneous. As I argue in Chapter 5, the encounter between the African peasant and the officer of the World Bank on his field trip illustrates this condition. In this case, nonexistence assumes the form of residuum, which in turn has assumed many designations for the past two hundred years, the first being the primitive, closely followed by the traditional, the premodern, the simple, the obsolete, and the underdeveloped.

The third logic is the logic of social classification, based on the *monoculture of the naturalization of differences*. It consists of distributing populations according to categories that naturalize hierarchies. Racial and sexual classifications are the most salient manifestations of this logic. Contrary to what happens in the relation between capital and labor, naturalized social classification is based on attributes that negate the intentionality of social hierarchy. The relation of domination is the consequence, rather than the cause, of this hierarchy,

and it may even be considered an obligation of whoever is classified as superior (for example, the white man's burden in his civilizing mission). Although the two forms of classification (race and sex) are decisive for the relation between capital and labor to stabilize and spread globally, racial classification was the one most deeply reconstructed by capitalism, as Immanuel Wallerstein and Etienne Balibar (1991) and most incisively Aimé Césaire (1955), Anibal Quijano (2000), Walter Mignolo (2000), Enrique Dussel (2001), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2004), and Ramón Grosfoguel (2007), among others, have shown. According to this logic, nonexistence is produced under the form of an insuperable, because natural, inferiority. Inferior people are insuperably inferior and cannot therefore constitute a credible alternative to superior people.

The fourth logic of production of nonexistence is the *monoculture of logic of the dominant scale*. According to this logic, the scale adopted as primordial determines the irrelevance of all other possible scales. In Western modernity, the dominant scale appears under two different forms: the universal and the global. Universalism is the scale of the entities or realities that prevail regardless of specific contexts. For that reason, they take precedence over all other realities that depend on contexts and are therefore considered particular or vernacular. Globalization is the scale that since the 1980s has acquired unprecedented relevance in various social fields. It is the scale that privileges entities or realities that widen their scope to the whole globe, thus earning the prerogative to designate rival entities as local. According to this logic, nonexistence is produced under the form of the particular and the local.[10] The entities or realities defined as particular or local are captured in scales that render them incapable of being credible alternatives to what exists globally and universally.

Finally, the fifth logic of nonexistence is the *monoculture of the capitalist logic of productivity*. According to this logic, capitalist economic growth is an unquestionably rational objective. As such, the criterion of productivity that best serves this objective is unquestionable as well. This criterion applies both to nature and to human labor. Productive nature is nature at its maximum fertility in a given production

cycle, not nature at its maximum fertility in a series of cycles of production that allow for its vital restorative cycles to be preserved. Similarly, productive labor is labor that maximizes generating profit likewise in a given production cycle; unpaid labor, plus all the other productive activities that guarantee the reproduction and flourishing of personal, family, and community life are not considered productive labor. According to this logic, nonexistence is produced in the form of nonproductiveness. Applied to nature, nonproductiveness is sterility; applied to labor it is sloth, indolence, or lack of qualification.

There are thus five principal social forms of nonexistence produced by metonymic reason: the ignorant, the residual, the inferior, the local, and the nonproductive. They are social forms of nonexistence because the realities to which they give shape are present only as obstacles vis-à-vis the realities deemed relevant, be they scientific, advanced, superior, global, or productive realities. They are therefore disqualified parts of homogeneous totalities that, as such, merely confirm what exists and precisely as it exists. They are what exists under irretrievably disqualified forms of existing.

The social production of these absences results in the subtraction of the world and the contraction of the present, hence in the waste of experience. The sociology of absences aims to identify the scope of this subtraction and contraction so that the experiences produced as absent may be liberated from those relations of production and thereby made present. To be made present means for them to be considered alternatives to hegemonic experience, to have their credibility discussed and argued for and their relations taken as an object of political dispute.[11] The sociology of absences aims thus to create a want and turn the lack of social experience into a waste of social experience. It thereby creates the conditions to enlarge the field of credible experiences in this world and time, thus contributing to enlarging the world and expanding the present. The enlargement of the world occurs not only because the field of credible experiences is widened but also because the possibilities of social experimentation in the future are increased. The expansion of the present

occurs as what is considered contemporaneous is augmented, as present time is laid out so that all experiences and practices occurring simultaneously may eventually be considered contemporaneous, even if each in its own way.

How does the sociology of absences work? It starts from two inquiries. The first one inquires about the reasons why such a strange and exclusive conception of totality could have acquired such primacy in the past two hundred years. The second inquiry aims to identify the ways to confront and overcome such a conception of totality as well as the metonymic reason that sustains it. The first inquiry was dealt with in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I focus on the second inquiry.

Homogeneous and exclusive totalities and the metonymic reason that sustains them can be superseded by confronting each one of the modes of production of absence mentioned above. Because metonymic reason shaped conventional social science, the sociology of absences cannot but be transgressive and, as such, is bound to be discredited. Nonconformity with such discredit and the fact that social movements have been acting out the sociology of absences with no need to name it[12] make it possible for the sociology of absences not to remain an absent sociology.

Five Ecologies against the Waste of Experience

The sociology of absences operates by substituting ecologies for monocultures. By ecology I mean sustainable diversity based on complex relationality. It is therefore a normative concept based on the following ideas. First, the value of diversity, complexity, and relationality must be recognized: nothing exists by itself; something or someone exists because something else or someone else exists. Second, complex and relational diversity means that the criteria that define diversity are themselves diverse. Third, the choice among them is a political one, and in order to respect diversity, it must be based on radical and intercultural democratic processes. Fourth, the robustness of the relations depends on nurturing diversity and exerting vigilance against monocultural temptations that

come from both within and without, even if the distinction between what is within and what is without is intrinsically problematic. Corresponding to the five monocultures I distinguish five ecologies.

The Ecology of Knowledges

The first logic, the logic of the monoculture of scientific knowledge and rigor, must be confronted with the identification of other knowledges and criteria of rigor and validity that operate credibly in social practices pronounced nonexistent by metonymic reason. I dedicate the next chapter to the ecology of knowledges.

The Ecology of Temporalities

The second logic, the logic of the monoculture of linear time, must be confronted with the idea that linear time is only one among many conceptions of time and that, if we take the world as our unit of analysis, it is not even the most commonly adopted. The predominance of linear time is the result not of its primacy as a temporal conception but of the primacy of Western modernity that embraced it as its own. Linear time was adopted by Western modernity through the secularization of Judeo-Christian eschatology, but it never erased, not even in the West, other conceptions of time such as circular time, cyclic time, glacial time, the doctrine of the eternal return, and still others that are not adequately grasped by the images of the arrow or circle. That is why the subjectivity or identity of a given person or social group at a given moment is a temporal palimpsest. It is made up of a constellation of different times and temporalities, some modern, some not, some ancient, some recent, some slow, some fast, and they are all activated in different ways in different contexts or situations. More than any other, the social movements of the indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples are witness to such temporal constellations.

Moreover, the different cultures and the practices they ground have different temporal codes and different intertemporal relations: the relation between past, present, and future; how early and late, short and long term, life cycle, and urgency are defined; how life rhythms, sequences, synchronies, and diachronies are accepted. Thus, different cultures create different temporal communities: some control time, some live inside time; some are monochronous, some are polychronous; some concentrate on the necessary minimal time to carry out certain activities, some on the necessary activities to fill up time; some privilege schedule-time, some event-time, thus underscoring different conceptions of punctuality; some valorize continuity, some discontinuity; for some time is reversible, for some it is irreversible; some include themselves in a linear progression, some in a nonlinear progression. The silent language of cultures is above all a temporal language.

The need to take into account these different conceptions of time derives from the fact, pointed out by Koselleck (1985) and Marramao (1995), that societies understand power according to the conceptions of temporality they hold. The most resistant relations of domination are those based on hierarchies among temporalities. Such hierarchies are constitutive of the world-system. They reduce much social experience to the condition of residuum. Experiences become residual because they are contemporary in ways that are not recognizable by the dominant temporality: linear time. They become disqualified, suppressed, or rendered unintelligible for being ruled by temporalities that are not included in the temporal canon of Western capitalist modernity.

The sociology of absences starts off from the idea that societies are made up of different times and temporalities and that different cultures generate different temporal rules. It aims to free social practices from their status as residuum, devolving to them their own temporality and thus the possibility of autonomous development. Once such temporalities are retrieved and acknowledged, the practices and sociabilities under them become intelligible and credible objects of political argumentation and debate. Let me offer an example: once liberated from linear time and

devolved to its own temporality, the activity of the African or Asian peasant stops being residual and becomes contemporaneous with the activity of the high-tech farmer in the United States or the activity of the World Bank executive. By the same token, the presence or relevance of the ancestors in one's life in different cultures ceases to be an anachronistic manifestation of primitive religion or magic to become another way of experiencing contemporaneity.

The diversity of the temporal codes of the movements and organizations that fight in different parts of the world against the exclusion and discrimination produced or increased by neoliberal globalization encourages development of a different kind of temporal literacy, which I would call *intertemporality*. To build coalitions and organize collective actions among movements or organizations with different temporal rules is no easy task. Movements and organizations based on a monochronous, discontinuous schedule-time, conceived of as a controlled resource with linear progression, have difficulty understanding the political and organizational behavior of movements and organizations constituted in the light of a continuous, polychronous event-time, conceived of as a time that controls us and progresses in a nonlinear mode, and vice versa. Such difficulties can be overcome only through mutual learning, that is to say, through intertemporal literacy.

The Ecology of Recognition

The third logic of the production of absences is the logic of social classification. Although in all logics of production of absence the disqualification of practices goes hand in hand with the disqualification of agents, it is here that the disqualification affects mainly the agents and only secondarily the social experiences of which they are the protagonists. The coloniality of modern Western capitalist power consists of collapsing difference and inequality while claiming the privilege to ascertain who is equal or different. The sociology of absences confronts coloniality by looking for a new articulation between the principles of equality and

difference, thus allowing for the possibility of equal differences—an ecology of differences comprised of mutual recognition. It does so by submitting hierarchy and difference to critical inquiry. It consists of deconstructing both difference (to what extent is difference a product of hierarchy?) and hierarchy (to what extent is hierarchy a product of difference?). The differences that remain when hierarchy vanishes become a powerful denunciation of the differences that hierarchy reclaims in order not to vanish.

Feminist, indigenous, and Afro-descendent movements have been at the forefront of the struggle for an ecology of recognition. The ecology of recognition becomes crucial as the social and cultural diversity of collective subjects fighting for social emancipation increases. The identification of various forms of oppression and domination, as well as the multiple forms and scales of the struggles against them (local, national, and transnational), confers a new visibility to the different and unequal dynamics of global capitalism, dynamics capable of generating different contradictions and struggles.

It has thus become obvious that the naturalization of differences is the consequence of ontological coloniality, meaning the coloniality of being (what counts as being, including human being), which in turn founds the coloniality of knowledge and power. That is why the Eurocentric conceptions of social regulation and social emancipation do not allow for the creation of circles of reciprocity comprehensive enough to found the new demand for balance between the principles of equality and of recognition of difference. It was on the basis of the denunciation of such denial of reciprocity that feminist, postcolonial, peasant, indigenous, ethnic, gay, and lesbian struggles fought for the creation of subaltern and insurgent public spheres. The struggle for the recognition of differences opened up new resistance repertoires geared up by the idea of strong citizenship, thus becoming a privileged forum for articulating economic with social and cultural redistribution. By enlarging the reciprocity circle —the circle of equal differences—the ecology of recognition creates a new exigency of reciprocal intelligibility. The multidimensionality of forms of

domination and oppression gives rise to forms of resistance and struggle mobilizing different collective actors, vocabularies, and resources not always mutually intelligible, which may pose serious limitations to the redefinition of the political space. Hence, the need for intercultural translation as analyzed in Chapter 8.

The Ecology of Trans-scale

The sociology of absences confronts the fourth logic, the logic of global scale, by recuperating what in the local is not the result of hegemonic globalization and what in it may potentially lead to counterhegemonic globalization. There is no globalization without localization. What today is viewed as local is very often a localized globalism, that is, the result of the specific impact of hegemonic globalization on a given social entity or condition. The localization of the German language is the result of the globalization of the English language, as much as the local conditions on the shores of Africa where toxic waste has been dumped is a product of neoliberal globalization. And long before globalization, colonialism was (and still is) the greatest producer of local conditions. By deglobalizing the local vis-à-vis hegemonic globalization, the sociology of absences also explores the possibility of counterhegemonic globalization based on alternative local/global articulations. This inquiry involves elucidating what in the local is not reducible to the impact of hegemonic globalization and what in it is or may become a seed of resistance against the unequal power relations produced or favored by such globalization.

The sociology of absences in this domain requires resorting to what in the previous chapter I called the curious perspective, the use of cartographic imagination, whether to see in each scale of representation not only what it reveals but also what it conceals or to deal with cognitive maps that operate simultaneously with different scales, thus allowing for the identification of new local/global articulations. Many of the emancipatory movements of the last decades started out by being local struggles fought against the social exclusion imposed or increased

by neoliberal globalization. Only more recently have these movements developed local/global articulations in order to create counterhegemonic forms of globalization. The World Social Forum is a vital (albeit embryonic) manifestation of this process (Santos 2006b).

As concerns the privilege granted to universalism as a measure for everything else considered not universal, the sociology of absences proceeds by excavating the long historical process of Western modernity. It interpellates those specific understandings of social and natural reality (social justice, success, dignity, respect, wealth, solidarity, community, cosmic order and harmony, spirituality, nature, well-being, East/West divide, and so forth) that gradually came to be invoked in very different contexts and always for the same purpose of grounding and legitimizing structures of power and domination. In so doing it also illuminates other specific understandings that, on the contrary, were in the same process confined to a given context and the range of their validity closely and often violently policed. In the latter case, the sociology of absences inquires into the possible presence of such understandings in the different regions of the globe that were subjected to European historical colonialism and capitalism (Europe included) and into the ways in which they may be present as empowering resources in the struggles of oppressed social groups against capitalism and colonialism. To the extent that their presence can be detected, they can be used as building blocks for the construction from below of self-consciously partial universalisms whose main function consists of showing the specific kind of particularism that is at work in Western-centric abstract universalism.

The Ecology of Productivities

Finally, in the domain of the fifth logic, the logic of capitalistic productivity, the sociology of absences consists of recuperating and valorizing alternative systems of production, popular economic organizations, workers' cooperatives, self-managed enterprises, solidarity economy, conceptions of property beyond private individual property, and

so on, which have been hidden or discredited by the monopoly of capitalist productivity. I have in mind movements of peasants and indigenous peoples fighting for land and land property, urban movements fighting for housing, indigenous movements fighting for their historical territories and the natural resources meanwhile therein discovered, movements of lower castes in India fighting to protect their lands and forests, movements in favor of ecological sustainability, popular economic movements, movements against the privatization of water or welfare services, and movements against development megaprojects (such as, for instance, large dams forcing the displacement of many thousands of people). This is perhaps the most controversial domain of the sociology of absences, for it directly confronts the paradigms of development, of infinite economic growth, of the primacy of private property, and of the accumulation that sustains global capitalism. It shows that the specific concept of productivity that came to dominate was historically chosen not because of its intrinsic or innate value but rather because it served better than any other an economic paradigm based on greed and possessive individualism and not on cooperation and shared social prosperity.

The scale of these initiatives varies widely. There are microinitiatives carried out by marginalized social groups, both in the global South and in the global North, trying to gain some control over their lives and communities; there are proposals for economic and legal coordination at the international level aimed at guaranteeing the respect for basic patterns of decent work and environmental protection; there are initiatives for the control of global financial capital; there are efforts to build regional economies based on principles of cooperation and solidarity.

These alternative conceptions and practices of production and productivity share two main ideas. First, rather than embodying coherent projects of economic systems alternative to global capitalism, such practices are mainly the localized efforts of communities and workers to create pockets of solidary production, often with the support of networks and coalitions of transnational progressive advocacy. These alternatives are much less grand than those of twentieth-century socialism, and their

underlying theories are less ambitious than the faith in the historical inevitability of socialism that dominated classical Marxism. As a matter of fact, the viability of such alternatives largely depends, at least in the short and medium run, on their capacity to survive under global capitalism. Aware as they are of their proper context, they nonetheless point to alternative forms of economic organization and give them credibility. The second idea is that these initiatives share a comprehensive conception of "economy" in which they include such objectives as democratic participation; environmental sustainability; social, sexual, racial, ethnic, and cultural equity; and transnational solidarity.

In this domain, the sociology of absences enlarges the spectrum of social reality through experimentation on realistic economic alternatives for building a more just society. By upholding organizational and political values opposed to global capitalism, economic alternatives broaden the principle of citizenship beyond the narrow limit defined by political liberalism and keep alive the promise of eliminating the current cohabitation of low-intensity democracy and economic despotism.

In each of the five domains, the objective of the sociology of absences is to disclose the diversity and multiplicity of social practices and confer credit to them in opposition to the exclusive credibility of hegemonic practices. The idea of multiplicity and nondestructive relations is suggested by the concept of ecology: the ecology of knowledges, the ecology of temporalities, the ecology of recognition, the ecology of trans-scale, and the ecology of productivities. Common to all these ecologies is the idea that reality cannot be reduced to what exists. It amounts to an ample version of realism that includes the realities rendered absent by silence, suppression, and marginalization—in a word, realities that are actively produced as nonexistent.

In conclusion, the exercise of the sociology of absences is counterfactual and takes place by confronting conventional scientific common sense. To be carried out it demands sociological imagination. I

distinguish two types of imagination that, although they belong together, can be analyzed separately. The epistemological imagination allows for the recognition of different knowledges, perspectives and scales of identification and relevance, and analysis and evaluation of practices; the democratic imagination allows for the recognition of different practices and social agents. Both the epistemological and the democratic imagination have a deconstructive and a reconstructive dimension.

The Critique of Proleptic Reason

Proleptic reason is the face of lazy reason when the future is conceived of from the vantage point of the monoculture of linear time. The monoculture of linear time expanded the future enormously at the same time that it contracted the present, as we saw when metonymic reason was analyzed. Because the meaning and direction of history reside in progress and progress is unbounded, the future is infinite. Because it is projected according to an irreversible direction, however, the future is, as Benjamin clearly saw, an empty and homogeneous time.[13] The future is as abundant as it is empty; the future only exists, as Marramao (1995: 126) says, to become past. A future thus conceived need not be an object of thought, and in this consists the laziness of proleptic reason.

Whereas the objective of the critique of metonymic reason is to expand the present, the objective of the critique of proleptic reason is to contract the future. To contract the future means to make it scarce and hence the object of care. The future has no other meaning or direction but what results from such care. To contract the future consists of eliminating, or at least diminishing, the discrepancy between the conceptions of the future of society and the future of individuals. Unlike the future of society, the future of individuals is limited by the duration of their lives—or reincarnated lives, in cultures where metempsychosis is a matter of faith. In either case, the limited character of the future and the fact that it depends on the management and care of individuals makes it possible for the future to be reckoned with as an intrinsic component of the present. In other words, the contraction of the future contributes to the expansion of the present.

Whereas the expansion of the present is obtained through the sociology of absences, the contraction of the future is obtained through the sociology of emergences. The sociology of emergences consists of replacing the emptiness of the future (according to linear time) with a future of plural and concrete possibilities, utopian and realist at one and the same time and constructed in the present by means of activities of

care.

To call attention to emergences is by nature speculative and requires some philosophical elaboration. The profound meaning of emergences can be observed in the most diverse cultural and philosophical traditions. As far as Western philosophy is concerned, emergences have been a marginal topic, one dealt with most eloquently by Ernst Bloch. The concept that rules the sociology of emergences is the concept of Not Yet (*Noch Nicht*) advanced by Bloch (1995). Bloch takes issue with the fact that Western philosophy has been dominated by the concepts of All (*Alles*) and Nothing (*Nichts*), in which everything seems to be contained in latency but from whence nothing new can emerge. Western philosophy is therefore a static philosophy. For Bloch (1995: 241), the possible is the most uncertain and the most ignored concept in Western philosophy. Yet only the possible permits the inexhaustible wealth of the world to be revealed. Besides All and Nothing, Bloch introduces two new concepts: Not (*Nicht*) and Not Yet (*Noch Nicht*). The Not is the lack of something and the expression of the will to surmount that lack. The Not is thus distinguished from the Nothing (Bloch 1995: 306). To say no is to say yes to something different. The Not Yet is the more complex category because it expresses what exists as mere tendency, a movement that is latent in the very process of manifesting itself. The Not Yet is the way in which the future is inscribed in the present. It is not an indeterminate or infinite future but rather a concrete possibility and a capacity that neither exists in a vacuum nor is completely predetermined. Indeed, it actively redetermines all it touches, thus questioning the determinations that exist at a given moment. Subjectively, the Not Yet is anticipatory consciousness, a form of consciousness that, although extremely important in people's lives, was completely neglected by Freud (Bloch 1995: 286–315). Objectively, the Not Yet is, on the one hand, capacity (potency) and, on the other, possibility (potentiality). Possibility has both a dimension of darkness insofar as it originates in the lived moment and is never fully visible to itself and a component of uncertainty that derives from a double want: (1) the fact that the conditions that render

possibility concrete are only partially known, and (2) the fact that the conditions only exist partially. For Bloch, it is crucial to distinguish between these two wants: it is possible to know relatively well conditions that exist only very partially, and vice versa.

The Not Yet inscribes in the present a possibility that is uncertain but never neutral; it could be the possibility of utopia or salvation (*Heil*) or the possibility of catastrophe or damnation (*Unheil*). Such uncertainty brings an element of chance or danger to every change. This uncertainty is what, to my mind, expands the present while at the same time contracting the future and rendering it the object of care. At every moment, there is a limited horizon of possibilities, and that is why it is important not to waste the unique opportunity of a specific change offered by the present: carpe diem (seize the day). In accord with Marxism, which he in any case interpreted in a very creative way, Bloch thinks that the succession of horizons leads or tends toward a final state. I believe, however, that disagreeing with Bloch in this regard is irrelevant. Bloch's emphasis stresses the critique of the mechanical conception of matter, on the one hand, and the affirmation of our capacity to think and act productively upon the world, on the other. Considering the three modal categories of existence—reality, necessity, and possibility (Bloch 1995: 244, 245)—lazy reason focused on the first two and neglected the third one entirely. According to Bloch, Hegel is mainly responsible for the fact that the possible has been neglected by philosophy. For Hegel, because the possible is contained in the real, either it does not exist or is not different from what exists; in any case, it need not be thought of. Reality and necessity have no need of possibility to account for the present or future. Modern science was the privileged vehicle of this conception. For this reason, Bloch (1995: 246) invites us to focus on the modal category that has been most neglected by modern science: possibility. To be human is to have a lot ahead of you.

Possibility is the world's engine. Its moments are want (the manifestation of something lacking), tendency (process and meaning), and latency (what goes ahead in the process). Want is the realm of the Not,

tendency the realm of the Not Yet, and latency the unstable double realm of Nothing and All, for latency can end up either in frustration or hope.

The sociology of emergences is the inquiry into the alternatives that are contained in the horizon of concrete possibilities. Whereas the sociology of absences amplifies the present by adding to the existing reality what was subtracted from it by metonymic reason, the sociology of emergences enlarges the present by adding to the existing reality the realistic possibilities and future expectations it contains. In the latter case, the enlargement of the present implies the contraction of the future inasmuch as the Not Yet, far from being an empty and infinite future, is a concrete future, forever uncertain and in danger. As Bloch (1995: 311) says, next to every hope there is always a coffin. Caring for the future is imperative because it is impossible to armor hope against frustration, the advent against nihilism, redemption against disaster—in a word, because it is impossible to have hope without the coffin.

The sociology of emergences consists of undertaking a symbolic enlargement of knowledges, practices, and agents in order to identify therein the tendencies of the future (the Not Yet) upon which it is possible to intervene so as to maximize the probability of hope vis-à-vis the probability of frustration. Such symbolic enlargement is actually a form of sociological imagination with a double aim: on the one hand, to know better the conditions of the possibility of hope; on the other, to define principles of action to promote the fulfillment of those conditions.

The sociology of emergences acts both on possibilities (potentiality) and on capacities (potency). The Not Yet has meaning (as possibility) but no direction for it can end either in hope or disaster. Therefore, the sociology of emergences replaces the idea of determination with the idea of care. The axiology of progress is likewise replaced by the axiology of care. Whereas in the sociology of absences the axiology of care is exerted vis-à-vis already available alternatives, in the sociology of emergences the axiology of care is exerted vis-à-vis possible alternatives. Because of this ethical and political dimension, neither the sociology of absences nor the sociology of emergences is a conventional sociology. But they are not

conventional for another reason: their objectivity depends on the quality of their subjective dimension. The subjective element of the sociology of absences is insurgent or subaltern cosmopolitan consciousness and nonconformism before the waste of experience. The subjective element of the sociology of emergences is anticipatory consciousness and nonconformism before a want whose fulfillment is within the horizon of possibilities. As Bloch (1995: 306) says, the fundamental concepts are not reachable without a theory of the emotions. The Not, the Nothing, and the All shed light on such basic emotions as hunger and want, despair and annihilation, and trust and redemption. One way or another, these emotions are present in the nonconformism that moves both the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences. Both try to encourage collective actions of social change that always require emotional intelligence, be it enthusiasm or outrage. At its best, the emotional effects establish a balance between the two currents of personality, what I call the *cold current* and *warm current*. The cold current is the current concerned with knowledge of the obstacles and the conditions of change. The warm current is the current of the will to action, change, and overcoming the obstacles. The cold current prevents us from being deceived; if we know the conditions, we are not so easily conditioned. The warm current, on the other hand, prevents us from becoming easily paralyzed or disillusioned; the will to challenge sustains the challenge of the will. The balance of the two currents is difficult, whereas the imbalance, beyond a certain limit, is a factor of perversion. Excessive concern about being deceived risks changing the conditions into unsurpassable obstacles, thus leading to immobility and conformism. On the other hand, excessive concern about being disillusioned results in total aversion to all that is not visible or palpable, thus, by the same token, leading as well to immobility and conformism.

Whereas the sociology of absences acts in the field of social experiences, the sociology of emergences acts in the field of social expectations. As I mentioned earlier, the discrepancy between experiences

and expectations is constitutive of Western modernity. Through the concept of progress, proleptic reason polarized this discrepancy so much that any effective linkage between experiences and expectations disappeared; no matter how wretched current experiences may be, they do not preclude the illusion of exhilarating expectations. The sociology of emergences conceives of the discrepancy between experiences and expectations without resorting to the idea of progress and seeing it rather as concrete and measured. Whereas proleptic reason largely expanded the expectations, thus reducing the field of experiences and contracting the present, the sociology of emergences aims at a more balanced relation between experience and expectation, which, under the present circumstances, implies dilating the present and shrinking the future. The question is not to minimize expectations but rather to radicalize the expectations based on real possibilities and capacities, here and now.[14]

Modernist expectations were grandiose in the abstract, falsely infinite and universal. As such, they have justified death, destruction, and disaster in the name of redemption ever to come. Against this disguised form of nihilism, which is as empty as the triumphalism of hegemonic forces, the sociology of emergences offers a new semantics of expectations. The expectations legitimated by the sociology of emergences are both contextual, because gauged by concrete possibilities, and radical, because, in the ambit of those possibilities and capacities, they claim a strong fulfillment that protects them, though never completely, from frustration and perversion. In such expectations resides the reinvention of social emancipation, or rather emancipations.

By enlarging the present and contracting the future, the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences contribute, each in its own way, to decelerating the present, giving it a denser, more substantive content than the fleeting instant between the past and the future to which proleptic reason condemned it. Instead of a final stage, they propose a constant ethical vigilance over the unfolding of possibilities, aided by such basic emotions as negative wonder provoking anxiety and positive wonder feeding hope.

The symbolic enlargement brought about by the sociology of emergences aims to analyze in a given practice, experience, or form of knowledge what in it exists as tendency or possibility. It acts both upon possibilities and capacities. It identifies signals, clues, or traces of future possibilities in whatever exists. Here too the point is to investigate an absence, but while in the sociology of absences what is actively produced as nonexistent is available here and now, albeit silenced, marginalized, or disqualified, in the sociology of emergences the absence is an absence of a future possibility as yet not identified and of a capacity not yet fully formed to carry it out. To fight the neglect suffered by the dimensions of society that appear as signs or clues, the sociology of emergences pays them "excessive" attention. Herein resides symbolic amplification. This is a prospective inquiry operating according to two procedures: to render less partial our knowledge of the conditions of the possible and to render less partial the conditions of the possible. The former procedure aims to understand better what in the researched realities turns them into clues or signs; the latter aims to strengthen such clues or signs. As the kind of knowledge underlying the sociology of absences, the one underlying the sociology of emergences is an argumentative kind of knowledge that, rather than demonstrating, persuades, rather than wishing to be rational, wishes to be reasonable. It is a kind of knowledge that evolves to the extent that it credibly identifies emergent knowledges or practices.

Conclusion

While the sociology of absences expands the realm of social experiences already available, the sociology of emergences expands the realm of possible social experiences. The two sociologies are deeply interrelated; the ampler the credible reality, the wider the field of credible clues and possible, concrete futures. The greater the multiplicity and diversity of the available and possible experiences (knowledges and agents), the more expanded the present and the more contracted the future. As increasingly revealed by social movements, diversity and multiplicity may give rise to intense social conflicts in such diverse domains as biodiversity (between biotechnology and intellectual property rights, on one side, and indigenous or traditional knowledges, on the other); medicine (between modern and traditional medicine); justice (between indigenous jurisdiction or traditional authorities and modern, national jurisdictions); agriculture (between agroindustrial and peasant technologies); environmental and other social risks (between technical and lay knowledge, between experts and common citizens, between corporations and communities); democracy (between liberal democracy and participatory or communitarian democracy, between individual rights and collective rights); religion (between secularism and state religion, between anthropomorphic gods and biomorphic gods, between institutionalized religiosity and spirituality); and development (between nature and mother earth, between megaprojects and peoples' livelihoods, between development imperatives and *buen vivir* or *sumak kawsay*, between alternative development and alternatives to development, between private property and individual titling of land, on one side, and communal or collective property and communal ancestral land, on the other).

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1. In Chapter 4, I showed how laziness slides into predation. Here, I concentrate on the hegemonic model or form of Western modernity. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, throughout the historical trajectory of Western modernity there were several different

models or versions, some dominant, some suppressed or marginalized. In the end, the disputes among them were decided on the basis of their adequacy for the historical objectives of capitalism and colonialism.

2. Paradoxically, and as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, the contraction of the present may occur through the infinite repetition of undifferentiated fleeting instants or moments. Once the bridges to the past and future are cut off, the instant can hardly be distinguished from the eternal, a kind of secular eternity.

3. I use metonymy, a figure of speech related to synecdoche, to signify the part for the whole.

4. I use prolepsis, a common narrative device of anticipation, to signify knowledge of the future in the present.

5. João Arriscado Nunes (1998/1999), addressing contemporary debates on this subject, illustrates how the new configuration of knowledges has to go beyond the "two cultures."

6. For a first critique of lazy reason, see my quest for a new common sense in Santos (1995, 2004).

7. In the West, the critique of both metonymic reason and proleptic reason has a long tradition. To restrict myself to the modern era, it can be traced back to romanticism and appears under different guises in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, phenomenology, existentialism, and pragmatism. The laziness of the debates lies in that the latter do not question, in general, the peculiar disembeddedness of knowledge as something set apart from and higher than the rest of reality. This is why, in my view, the most eloquent critiques come from those for whom metonymic and proleptic reason are not just an intellectual artifact or game but the generating ideology behind a brutal system of domination, that is, the colonial system. Gandhi (1929/1932, 1938, 1951, 1960, 1972), Fanon (1961), Martí (1963–1966), Nkrumah (1965b), and Memmi (1965) are some of the outstanding voices. In the colonial context, lazy reason lies behind what Quijano (2000), Dussel (2001), Mignolo (2000), and I (2010) call the "coloniality of power," a form of power that, rather than ending with the end of colonialism, has continued to be prevalent in postcolonial societies.

8. Jaspers considers the period between 800 and 200 BC as an "axial age," a period that lay down "the foundations upon which humanity still subsists today" (1951: 98). In this period, most of "the extraordinary events" that shaped humankind as we know it occurred in the East—in China, India, Persia, and Palestine. The West is represented by Greece, and as we know today, Greek classic antiquity owes much to its African and Eastern roots (Bernal 1987). See also Schluchter (1979). Joseph Needham, with his gigantic magnum opus *Science and Civilization in China*, represents the most ambitious attempt at confronting Western modernity with the limits of its metonymic reason. Before Jaspers and Needham, Schopenhauer was the Western philosopher who best understood the limits of the tradition he came from and felt the need to reach out to

Eastern philosophies. Given the arrogance of lazy reason, this was probably one of the reasons why his classes were deserted by students who experienced much greater comfort in the well-policed boundaries of the philosophical system of Hegel, who was teaching at the same time at the same university, the University of Berlin.

9. Benjamin (1972: 214) thought that World War I had deprived the world of the social relations through which the older generations passed their wisdom on to the younger generations. A new world had emerged after the war, he argued, a world dominated by the development of technology, a world in which even education and learning ceased to translate themselves into experience. A new poverty has thus emerged, a lack of experience in the midst of hectic transformation, a new form of barbarism (1972: 215). He concludes his essay in this way: "We have become poor. Piece by piece we have relinquished the heritage of humankind, often deposited in a pawnshop for a hundredth of its value, only to get back the small change of the 'current balance'" [*Aktuelle*] (1972: 219, my translation).

10. On the modes of the production of globalization, see Santos (1995, 2002a).

11. The sociology of absences does not wish to abolish the categories of ignorant, residual, inferior, local, or unproductive. Instead it wishes that they stop being ascribed according to one criterion alone, one that does not tolerate being questioned by any other alternative criterion. This monopoly is not the result of a work of argumentative reasonableness. Rather it results from an imposition that is justified only by the supremacy of whoever has the power to impose.

12. *Epistemologies of the South: Reinventing Social Emancipation* (forthcoming) treats the ways the social movements are acting out the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences dealt with below.

13. "The concept of historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time" (Benjamin 1968: 261). And he counterposes, "The soothsayers who found from time to time what it had in store certainly did not experience time as either homogeneous or empty" (1968: 264).

14. In Chapter 2, I argued for a new type of subjectivity that is able and willing to carry out the new articulation between current experiences and expectations about the future called for by the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences.