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4 SYLVIA WYNTER

What Does It Mean to Be Human?

The Issues

Following in the steps of Frantz Fanon, Humberto Maturana, and Francisco Varela, Sylvia Wynter's works have been pursuing a cognitive shift that in this essay I characterize as decolonial. Why decolonial? Why not postmodern or postcolonial? Wynter's work has consistently called into question whether the "post"—in poststructural, postmodernity, postcolonial—is a useful conceptual frame, thus putting it aside in order to understand, instead, how particular epistemologies are unthinkable and/or unarticulated within hegemonic Western categories of knowledge and philosophy of knowing. Wynter is a radical thinker. She powerfully explores the roots of Western and colonial knowledge systems and uncovers the otherwise veiled link between racial, gendered, and sexual belonging, differential ways of knowing and imagining the world, and the overarching governing codes that have created, maintained, and normalized practices of exclusion. She is not looking to change or supersede epistemic categories and established knowledge, but rather seeks to undo the systems through which knowledge and knowing are constituted. At the same time, Wynter is not proposing to contribute to and comfortably participate in a system of knowledge that left her out of humanity (as a black/Caribbean woman), but rather delink herself from this very system of knowledge in order to engage in epistemic disobedience. Under the rules of the epistemic canon, and according to its racial mandates, if you have been classified in/as difference, then you are required to submit and assimilate to the canon *or* remain outside. Wynter does not follow either of these pathways. She instead engages what I call

the decolonial option, a practice of rethinking and unraveling dominant worldviews that have been opened up by Indigenous and black and Caribbean thinkers since the sixteenth century in América (with accent) and the Caribbean. The decolonial option does not simply protest the contents of imperial coloniality; it demands a delinking of oneself from the knowledge systems we take for granted (and can profit from) and practicing epistemic disobedience.

Wynter's decolonial project calls into question the concept of the Human and its epistemological underpinnings.[1] Her work draws on the research of Chilean scientist, philosopher, and intellectual Humberto Maturana (in collaboration in an early stage with Francisco Varela) and black and Caribbean intellectuals and social theorists. Wynter draws on Maturana's insights, in particular his work on autopoiesis, which uncovers the interconnectedness of "seeing" the world and "knowing" the world: specifically, he shows that what is seen with the eyes does not represent the world outside the living organism; rather, it is the living organism that fabricates an image of the world through the internal/neurological processing of information. Thus, Maturana made the connection between the ways in which human beings construct their world and their criteria of truth and objectivity and noticed how their/our nervous system processes and responds to information.

It is across both neurobiological cognition and decolonial practices that Sylvia Wynter's work and her intellectual disobedience emerge. Wynter suggests that if we accept that epistemology gives us the *principles and rules of knowing* through which the Human and Humanity are understood, we are trapped in a knowledge system that fails to notice that the stories of what it means to be Human—specifically origin stories that explain who/what we are—are, in fact, narratively constructed. Wynter's commentaries on Man1, Man2, and the making of the Human should thus be understood alongside historical and epistemological epochs (medieval, classical) that present humanness through intelligible cosmogonies that, as Denise da Silva argues in this collection, require a juridical-economic colonial presence. To study "Man" or "Humanity" is therefore to study a narrativization that has been produced with the very instruments (or categories) that we study *with*. In short, it is precisely the practice of *accepting* the *principles and rules of knowing* that produces narratives that naturalize, for example, evolution and dysselection and thus biocentric Human origin stories. It follows that we fail to notice that evolution, dysselection, and biocentricity are *origin stories with an ontological effect*. Put simply: we tend to believe our cosmogonies as nat-

ural truth(s); this belief system is calcified by our *commitment* to this belief system; the schema self-replicates, as we continually invest in its systemic belief qualities. In this way, Wynter's writings on the Human and who/what we are are reflective of Maturana's autopoietics.

Wynter refuses to embrace the entity of the Human independently of the epistemic categories and concepts that created it by suggesting instead that our conceptualizations of the Human are produced within an autopoietic system. The problem of the Human is thus not identity-based per se but in the *enunciations* of what it means to be Human—enunciations that are concocted and circulated by those who most convincingly (and powerfully) imagine the "right" or "noble" or "moral" characteristics of Human and in this project their *own* image-experience of the Human into the sphere of Universal Humanness. The Human is therefore the product of a particular epistemology, yet it appears to be (and is accepted as) a naturally independent entity existing in the world.

Implicit in this epistemological framework are the worldviews of those who have been cast as non-Human or less-than-Human: Frantz Fanon's *les damnés*, imperial constructs who can only be understood as the difference outside. Les damnés are the *anthropos* in relation to *humanitas* as *humanitas* is defined by those who conceive of themselves as Human. Here, clearly, imperial epistemologies emerge alongside the widespread coloniality of knowledge: Christian theology, secular philosophy, and sciences that were formed and shaped under European geographic monarchies and nation-states (which also provided the unification of Western knowledge systems in six modern/imperial languages grounded in Greek and Latin). This is the belief system that Wynter's work unveils: the naturalization of and thus a steadfast belief in modes of thinking—the principles and rules of knowing—that calcify a commitment to an epistemological tract that profits from replicating itself. By unveiling this system, she draws attention to the conditions through which the epistemologies of les damnés are made. The epistemologies of les damnés do not seek to arrive at a perfect or true definition of the Human, for there is no Human "out there" beyond the Western imperial concept of Man/Human from the Renaissance on.

Vitruvian Man and 1492

Sylvia Wynter's decolonial project understands that the European Renaissance stamped a concept of Man that brought together the colonization of time, the colonization of space, and the perfection of geometric forms that

have been immortalized in the famous *Vitruvian Man*, drawn by Leonardo de Vinci circa 1487–1490. The correlations in this image between the Human body and the universe hide the fact that the body depicted and the experience upon which Leonardo was relying was a Greco-Roman concept of the human figure. The complicity between colonization of time (specifically detaching Man/Human from a Christian medieval idea of human dependency from God) and the colonization of space (specifically the emergence of "Indians" in the European consciousness coupled with the image of Africans, as descendants of Ham, already embedded in the consciousness of European Christians) prompted a system of categories to emerge: derived from Greek and Latin, this system disqualified Africans from Humanness (thus rendering them appropriate for enslavement) and excluded Indians from the proportions, rationality, and knowledge of God.

Wynter's writings demonstrate that Western epistemology built itself on a concept of Human and Humanity that, in turn, served to legitimate the epistemic foundation that created it. That is, Human and Humanity were created as the enunciated *that projects and propels to universality the local image* of the enunciator. The enunciator assumes, and thus postulates, that his concept of Human and Humanity is valid for every human being on the planet. However, once the universality of the Human has been postulated—and we encounter this formulation in many official documents telling us that humans are "all born equal"—hierarchies are needed and put into place to establish differences between all who were "born equal." Indeed, after we are born, we inhabit a world made of inequality. The discourse that "we are all born equal" is inflected with practices of inequity that shape how we live in the world differentially. The mirage of totality—of epistemic totality that is laden with seeming egalitarian open-mindedness entrenched in our various birthrights—is the trap that Wynter has not only recognized but also struggled against.

Columbus's arrival in the Americas in 1492 and other voyages outside of Europe are landmarks of the moment in which the concepts of Man and of Human became one and the same and, at the same time, came to be understood in relation to race and racism. The epistemology from which Indians were observed and described was, of course, not the epistemology of the Indians. And, given that the arrival of Columbus and his contemporaries did not, in fact, correspond to the worldview of the Indians (and the rest of the non-European world), New World subjects did not imagine that they were being classified by a structure of knowledge that will soon

become both hegemonic and dominant. With this in mind, racism and epistemology become part of the package whose point of reference is Man-as-Human—a reference point that corresponds to Wynter's project to move "beyond Man, toward the Human," which can be found across her works. By uncoupling Man (the Vitruvian Man) as a model of Humanity, the point is not to find the true and objective definition of "what is Human," but to show that such projects are filled with an imperial bend, a will to objectivity and truth—a truth that, as Maturana explains, bolsters the belief system that supports such an epistemology.

The year 1492 is, for many, a turning point in the history of the world. Sylvia Wynter and many black intellectuals (such as C. L. R. James, George Lamming, Wilson Harris, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and so forth) draw attention to the significance of plantations and *palenques* and *kilombos*, colonization, nationalism and independence, gender, and the state in relation to fifteenth-century global processes. The fundamental issue underlying this intellectual tradition of rereading European encounters in the Americas is not class or hegemony or subalternity but rather the question, What does it mean to be human? The year 1492 is also a turning point for the Indigenous populations of the Americas and for South American Jews—as has been recently strongly and convincingly argued by Santiago Slabodsky.[2] Indeed, Jewish history intersecting with 1492 underlines the significance of this fracture in world history. Indians and Africans were, so to speak, absent from written, printed, and distributed history at the time—certainly, toward the end of fifteenth century, each coexisting civilization had its own ways of documenting and dealing with the past. But "history" (Greek *istorein* translated into Latin as *historia*) became an anchor word of Western civilizations, including the narrative of the origins told in the Old and New Testaments. Thus, the triad of *istorein*, translated into *historia*, was coupled with the origin narrative embedded in the Bible *and* the consequent secularization of knowledge. In other words, both the sacred and secular, in Hegel's canonical lesson in the philosophy of history, set the stage for the belief that the *facts* narrated were ontologically independent of the narrative itself.[3]

Why is this important? Because in 1492 there is a bifurcation of history that is particularly clear in the case of enslaved Africans, aboriginals (named "Indians"), and Jews. It is the moment, as Carl Schmitt explains, in which "global linear thinking" is defined and linked to the creation of international law.[4] This moment also created and implemented external and internal colonial differences: Indians and blacks were cast as inferior beings outside of

Europe; they were deemed without religion and at the mercy of the Devil. "Global linear thinking" traced the lines in land and sea *and* racial lines. Within these geographic and racial paradigms, and due to the logic of internal colonization within Christian Europe, Jews were portrayed as suspicious beings with the wrong religion. In 1492, Jewish history took a detour and became entangled with the history of Indians and enslaved Africans in the New World: in 1492, Spanish Jewish communities were forced to convert, were expelled, or were killed under the Edict of Expulsion, enacted by Ferdinand and Isabella. Thousands of Jewish exiles fled to South America. This is a point that Slabodsky clearly understood and that, surprisingly, Jonathan Boyarin—in a concerted effort to undermine the turning point that 1492 was for Indians (who described it as *Pachacuti*/the world turned upside down)—failed to see.[5] For these populations, including the populations of European descent in South and Central America and the Caribbean, 1492 is the date that marks history, memory, and being in the modern/colonial world order. While such narratives and experiences are certainly diverse, given the very different homelands of Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and so forth, 1492 unfolds into a series of meaningful and interlocking moments: it is the date that marked the expulsion from paradise, it is the date that prompted the advent and the formation of coloniality or the colonial matrix of power and modern/colonial racism and contemporary articulations of race and racism, and it is the date through which the invention of the modern/colonial Other ascended.[6]

Wynter's contribution to the rethinking of 1492, coloniality, race, and humanness is radical in that her work demonstrates how one can perceive the world with one's eyes (a Western imperial weapon) as one feels the weight of the modern-colonial world in the body as that body dwells in the legacies of colonial histories. If Wynter took from Maturana his radical epistemic shift, and called into question the aims and scaffolding of philosophy and science, she turned to C. L. R. James to meet him in the same struggle: the Afro-Caribbean epistemic revolution against the Eurocentric concept of "Man" and its role in the construction of racism.

Wynter's Epistemic Shift through James's Counterdoctrine

Sylvia Wynter's long, well-researched, and highly insightful articles form a network, wherein her ideas and writings are in conversation with and refer back (and forth) to one another. You can enter the network through engaging with any of her articles and essays, and I will enter through her article

on C. L. R. James, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of Jamesian Poiesis."[7] One of the reasons I am interested in this work is that C. L. R. James has been read, particularly in the United States, as primarily a Marxist thinker due to his *Notes on Dialectics* (1948) and his *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950)—even though his allegiance to Marxism is only partial.[8] Wynter unravels the complexity of the ways in which James's thought is anchored in the history and experience of the slave trade—and thus the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—noticing that his sole preoccupation is not with the emergence of the proletarian consciousness and the Commune and the coup of 18 Brumaire. Wynter puts it in this way:

> The starting point for James's displacement/incorporation of the labor conceptual framework is his insistence on the seminal importance of the trade in African slaves. In particular, he wants to end its repression in normative Western conceptual frames . . . what Wallerstein has called the world system was constituted by James as above all a single network of accumulation. This network can be divided into three phases: (1) circulation for accumulation; (2) production for accumulation; and (3) consumption for accumulation. In each of these phases . . . the source of extractive value . . . [are] different. In the first, it was the African slave, in the second, the working class, and in the third and current phase, it has been the consumer.[9]

These three stages are the core of what Wynter describes as James's counterdoctrine. Yet James's counterdoctrine, she argues, also emerges from his willingness to view and think theoretics and aesthetics *together*. A Jamesian aesthetic and theoretic doctrine emerges, then, in the questioning of "the dictatorship of the master conceptions of Liberalism and Marxism."[10] To understand the Jamesian doctrine, "it is necessary to look at the semiotic foundations of bourgeois thought, the monarchical system of power it delegitimated, and the liberal state it helped to establish."[11]

Wynter's analysis of the Jamesian doctrine runs parallel to the arguments advanced by the collective workings of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality.[12] Wynter argues that in order for power to be effective, it has to have, within it, discursive legitimization. As we have learned from Michel Foucault, and Wynter follows suit, discursive formations go hand in hand with institution-building: "Cultural conceptions, encoded in language and other signifying systems, shape the development of political structures and are

also shaped by them. *The cultural aspects of power* are as original as the structural aspects; each serves as a code for the other's development. *It is from these elementary cultural conceptions that complex legitimating discourses are constructed*."[13] Thus, the complicity between institution-building and legitimizing discourses allowed an ethno-class (Wynter's term), the European bourgeoisie, to displace the monarchy and the hegemony of aristocratic classes. And Wynter explains: "It was not enough to gain politico-economic dominance. It was also necessary to replace the formal monarchical system of signification with a cultural model that 'selected' its values as normative. The elementary cultural conceptions upon which the monarchical system of signification rested can be designated as 'the symbolics of blood.'"[14]

Wynter focuses on the paradigmatic change, in the internal history of Europe, between the monarchic and the bourgeois ethno-classes, and brings into focus the ways in which broad intellectual, social, and geographic shifts—during the Renaissance, between the European Middle Ages and the Renaissance monarchic system—are due, in great part, to the emergence of sixteenth-century Atlantic commercial circuits and the changes this generated in Europe itself. More specifically, she underscores the first moment of accumulation as it is tied to the exploitation of labor and the initiation of the modern/colonial slave trade Atlantic triangle. Here Wynter's argument recognizes the ways in which the massive exploitation of labor corresponds to the massive appropriation of land. The colonization, expropriation, and violence directed at lands and peoples engendered a new type of economy based on the reinvestments of gain and the impulse to increase production that would create and satisfy a global market. In Wynter's analyses, "capitalism," as we know it, is revealed to be *one* economic *aspect* of the emerging colonial matrix of power; this framework, in turn, challenges analyses that focus solely on the capitalist underpinnings of the slave trade and land exploitation by delineating features, particularly those brought into view by non-Europeans, that are not simply driven by economic matters (cultural practices, social exchanges, political shifts).

Wynter's analysis thus seeks to think through the nuances of colonial encounter with and beyond a capitalist frame. Indeed, she reveals that the economy of colonialism, alone, analytically belies a much broader narrative of coloniality and encounter. This framework lends to her reading of C. L. R. James. Wynter removes James from Marxists' co-option and describes his thinking by reading his life through a "pieza conceptual frame."[15] But what is the "pieza conceptual frame"? The "pieza," Wynter tells us, was

the name given by the Portuguese during the slave trade to the African who functioned as the standard measure. A pieza "was a man of twenty-five years, approximately, in good health, calculated to give a certain amount of physical labor value against which all the others could be measured—with for example, three teenagers equaling one pieza and older men and women thrown in a job lot as refuse."[16] Wynter suggests that in the "Jamesian system, the pieza becomes an ever-more general category of value, establishing equivalences between a wider variety of oppressed labor power."[17]

The "pieza," then, can be seen as the anchor, the reference point for a sensibility that emerged in the sixteenth century alongside the conquest of the Caribbean islands, Anáhuac and Tawantinsuyu; it is a measure, furthermore, that did not exist before conquest and that set in motion what today we call "capitalism." This specific sensibility was the facility through which the ruling class, the merchant class, and conquistadores could build an institution and a legitimating discourse that made certain human lives were dispensable vis-à-vis differential categories of value—from the symbolic of blood (the monarchic moment) to the symbolic of skin color (the secular moment whose foundation was established in the Spanish colonies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries).[18]

The metaphoric and methodological uses of "pieza" trouble Marxist-oriented analyses that suggest that slavery and racism play a secondary role in the constitution of capitalism. For this reason, Wynter argues that "the pieza frame" requires a repositioning of the mode of production in relation to the mode of domination in which the former becomes a subset of the latter. Connecting this framework to James's theoretics—noticing James's system as a remark on the significance of the pieza system—is a way of rethinking European analyses of capitalism. As Wynter writes, "economic exploitation only follows on, and does not precede, the mode of domination set in motion by the *imaginaire social* of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, the capitalist mode of production is a subset of the bourgeois mode of accumulation which constitutes the basis of the middle-class hegemony."[19]

Here is precisely where the Afro-Caribbean analysis set in motion by C. L. R. James and the modernity/coloniality perspective set in motion by Anibal Quijano join forces, with both outlooks maintaining their respective local histories in the modern/colonial world *with* the broader singular experiencing of the colonial wound. A black in the Caribbean and a mestizo in the Andes are not the same "rank" in the modern/racial classification, yet they are sensitive to and aware of the colonial wound; they are cognizant

of the simple fact that one does not see and feel capitalism in the same way across time and space and thus across different colonial settings. Instead, what you see and feel from different and differential colonial places is the colonial matrix of power of which the economy is only one component: domination precedes accumulation, and domination needs a cultural model or a colonial matrix that legitimizes and naturalizes exploitation. The mode of production is a subset of the mode of domination. And, the mode of domination has been set, transformed, and maintained in the colonial matrix. In the colonial matrix, the legitimizing discourse encompasses authority, gender and sexuality, knowledge and subjectivity, authority and economic organization. In short, Wynter shows us that the Marxist analysis focuses on economic organization, while the pieza frame and the colonial matrix focus on the layered workings of colonial praxis—with the "cultural model" of Europeanness overriding (although not erasing) the perspective of those it marginalizes.

Wynter's Epistemic Shift through Fanon's Sociogenesis

To delink and decolonize means to adumbrate what was hidden and ignored—and to do this is to recognize, extend, and invent new concepts. In nineteenth-century Europe, where the "capitalist" economy was dominant, Marx's "surplus value" and Freud's "unconscious" became concepts that were firmly embedded in the internal organization of Europe itself. While both proved to be inadequate descriptive statements, Frantz Fanon utilized them concomitantly to work through the complexities of coloniality, subjectivity, and liberation. It is through Fanon—and his now much cited statement that "beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny"—that Wynter develops the sociogenic principle.[20] The sociogenic principle is the process of languaging and knowing. It uncovers the differential workings of power embedded in the ranking of languages in the modern/colonial world order. As Fanon writes: "To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization. . . . The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter—that is, he will be closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio with his mastery of the French language. A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied in that language. . . . Mastery of language affords remarkable power."[21]

Sylvia Wynter extends and enhances Fanon's sociogenic principle by en-

visioning a *scientia* (and I write it in the Renaissance style to distinguish it from the concept of *science* that unfolded from Galileo to Newton and from Newton to Einstein; and from Buffon and Linnaeus to Darwin). Or, more aptly, this area of her work can be posited as *decolonial scientia* based on Fanon's sociogenic principle. Fanon's hypothesis, Wynter argues, is groundbreaking because it is derived from his awareness of reporting in the *third* person, his own experience in the *first* person ("Look, a Negro"!).[22] The experience he tracks, in other words, is of *Being* through the eyes of the imperial Other. Here he uncovers the *experience* of *knowing* that he is being perceived, in the eyes of the imperial Other, as not quite human. Thus, the *decolonial scientia* is the *scientia* needed not simply for progress or development but for liberating the actual and future victims of knowledge for progress and development. This does not reveal a case for *studying the Negro problem* from the perspective of any of the already established social sciences or humanities—for, if that were the case, sociogenesis would become an *object* of study rather than *being the historical foundation and constitution of future and global loci of enunciation*. This *scientia*, built upon the sociogenic principle (in this case the lived experience of the black man, although this is not the only colonial experience or colonial wound that would sustain the emerging *scientia*), makes clear from the start that the mind/body problem (or the soul/body if we take a step back from secularism to Christian theology) *only makes sense in the domain of ontogenesis*. Put differently, the sociogenic principle reveals what the ontogenesis principle hides: that race is not in the body but rather is built in the social imaginary grounded on colonial differences. Wynter follows Fanon by setting the limits of ontogenesis: ontogenesis is an imperial category while sociogenesis introduces the perspective of the subject that ontogenesis classifies as object.[23] It is from sociogenesis that concepts such as "double consciousness" and "border epistemology" come into clear view. The concept of sociogenesis underlines that: I am who I am in relation to the other who sees me as such; and, in a society structured upon racial hierarchies, becoming black is bound up with being perceived as black by a white person (as Fanon understood that he *was* black, according to the child's and the mother's eyes, in the oft cited train scene in "The Fact of Blackness"). This process of being seen and seeing oneself is sociogenesis or DuBoisian double consciousness. The sociogenic principle is not introduced as an object of knowledge but rather as a locus of enunciation that links knowledge with decolonial subjective formations.

If modern/imperial epistemology (in its diversity, but always imperial

diversity) and *scientia* were spatially, chronologically, and subjectively located vis-à-vis the sociogenic principle, the project of *decolonial scientia* would emerge and recontextualize our global nodes of space, time, and subjectivity. To recast space, chronology, and subjectivity through sociogeny and think about *decolonial scientia* can be imagined as follows:

a) Spatially: *decolonial scientia* is located at the borders (territorial as well as linguistic, subjective, epistemic, ontological) and created by the consolidation and expansion of the modern/colonial epistemic matrix. This matrix emerged in the sixteenth century and was guided by theology and attendant imperial/colonial connections between Atlantic Europe and the Americas. These processes folded and unfolded, in the hands of England and France, and were projected into/onto Asia and Africa, from the late seventeenth century to the mid-twentieth century. This framework was later taken up by the United States and evidenced the ways in which the basic principles and structures of knowledge were expanded by the use of the English language and the meteoric enlargement of scientific knowledge and technology. Consequently, *decolonial scientia* is literally all over the globe, in the same way that modern/imperial science is, and it moves constantly from the "third" to the "first" world, and from the latest Western imperial countries to the "emerging empires."[24]

b) Chronologically: *decolonial scientia* regionalizes—on the one hand—the chronological line of the imperial matrix of knowledge. This reveals the ways in which Europeans themselves conceived, narrated, and practiced their own conception of knowledge. And, *decolonial scientia* reorganizes—on the other hand—chronology into global space. In imperial scientia connections through time, including epistemic breaks and paradigmatic changes, followed one another in a linear fashion. *Decolonial scientia* links the space of colonial and decolonial struggles around the world to recent large-scale migrations of the "barbarians" to the "civilized regions."

c) Subjectively: *decolonial scientia* draws attention to colonial subjects or modern subjects that detach themselves from imperial knowledge and subjectivity. Contrary to the male, Christian, and Eurocentric subjects and subjectivities that dominated the structure of modern/imperial knowledge systems, the decolonial subject is at the border of non-European languages, religions, epistemologies (and thus subjects that

have been categorized, through imperial knowledge, as racially subordinate, sexually deviant, economically disadvantaged, and so forth), and imperial subjects who, instead of "saving the colonial Other" through themselves, join and accept the guidance of the decolonial subjectivity.

Decolonial scientia puts forth three types of tasks. First, it reimagines rather than denies the links between geo-history and knowledge and between biography and knowledge. Second, it explores the consequences that Western expansion (today called "globalization") had and continues to have for the population and the environment (exploitation of natural resources, for example, as *needed* by imperial economy). This emphasizes the ways in which both particular lands and peoples have been and are targeted for conversion to Christianity, conversion to civilization, to development models, and, most recently, *for* human rights and democracy. With this in mind, it is necessary to look at responses globally and avoid the imperial trap that looks at *local responses* to *global designs*. Third, *decolonial scientia* generates knowledge to build communities in which life (in general) has priority over economic gains, economic growth, and economic development. This is knowledge that will subject economic growth to human needs rather than submit human needs to economic growth and development.

What Is It Like to Be Human? Sociogenesis and Coloniality of Being

In her rehistorization of the human, Wynter distinguishes between two kinds of histories. One is the history of the emergence and spread, on planet earth, of living organisms (and, with this, the overrepresentation of Man-as-Human in postmedieval and modern epochs). The second history is that of the sociohistorical *conditions* that made it possible for the elite of European Man to construct such an idea—of Man-as-Human—and to be successful in implementing it. As she notes, the *idea* of Man at a particular moment of world history, the European Renaissance, was also the foundational step for building racism as we sense and know it today.[25] This rehistorization of the human shifted the geography of reason. Instead of accepting that there is a universal perspective provided by Man's consciousness and imploring it to be recognized in the house of Humanity, Wynter shifts the perspective, thus rehistorizing what it means to be human from within the perspective of sociogenesis, double consciousness, and, I would add, *la conciencia de la mestiza*. In her work there is not a claim for recognition *within* the hegemonic concept of Humanity but a claim for recognition that the imperial

(racist and patriarchal) concept of Man/Human is no longer sustainable. In Wynter's words, outlining the inventions of Man should be accompanied by the history of living organisms of the human species and alternative stories:

> It is the story in which the idea of humanism, of its de-godding of our modes of self-inscription first erupts, where Man and its human Others—that is, Indians, Negros, Natives (and I would add, Jews and Muslims)—are first invented. And this history is the history of the expansion of the West from the fifteenth century onwards, and an expansion that is carried out within the terms of its own cultural conception of its own origins. And you see, it is this ethnoculturally coded narrated history that is taught both in a now global academia as well as in all our schools, while it is this history in whose now purely secular terms we are all led to imagine ourselves as Man, as purely biological and economic beings. The *history* for Man, therefore, narrated and existentially lived as if it were the *history-for* the human itself.[26]

Crucial in Wynter's statement is her concept of *history-for*. It is through this concept that she is able to show the ways in which the local concept of Man/Human and its imperial universality puts out of consideration any other self-conceptualization in languages and civilizations that were not Greek and Latin and thus based in Western Christendom. What Wynter calls "human" (without capitals) and the attendant story of the spread of the human species around the planet from their originary site of becoming—what is now known as Africa—are complemented by Iranian philosopher Ali Shari'ati's assertion that in the Qur'an a distinction is made between *Bashar* (being) and *Ensan* (becoming). In this conceptualization we (humans in noncapitals) are all Bashar; we are collectively that species of living organisms that spread around the planet from times immemorial, thousands of years ago, many centuries before the elite of the European Renaissance classified themselves as Man/Human and disregarded those who fell outside of this category. Bashar (being) and Ensan (becoming) are explained by Shari'ati as this: "The difference between Ensan, Bashar and all the other natural phenomena such as animals, trees, etc., is that all are 'beings' except Ensan who is 'becoming.' . . . But man in the sense of the exalting truth, towards whom we must constantly strive and struggle in becoming, consists of divine characteristics that we must work for as our ideal characteristics. . . . Mind you that becoming Ensan is not a stationary event, rather, it is a perpetual process of becoming and an everlasting evolution towards infinity."[27]

I am not offering this definition as a replacement for the Christian humanist definitions. I am just noting that Shari'ati has the same right to be wrong as the European humanists. In other words, I am underscoring that each definition is *truth-for* and moving toward pluriversality and thus seeks to delink from the belief and expectation of universality. And this assertion cannot be made from the perspective of *humanitas* if it is maintained as the point of reference to which one has to aspire. Decolonial thinking and living are not to assimilate but to deny the universal pretense of *humanitas*.

The problem Wynter and all of us face is that we (and I mean all those who are not fully incorporated in the Western construction of Man/Human, that is, all of the "we" who do not identify as Human because "we" have been placed outside of it) have to work through, confront, and engage the concept of Man/Human in order to crack the Vitruvian circle in which Leonardo has depicted the visual image of Man/Human. This working through, confrontation, and engagement require border thinking or border epistemology. Now we (you, reader, and me) must be ready to go into Wynter's *truth-for* and its theoretical, political, and ethical implications. Notice first the Western conditions in which Man/Human emerged. Wynter puts it as follows:

> The issue of race as the issue of the Colonial Question, the Nonwhite-Native Question, the Negro Question, yet as one that has hitherto had no name, was and is fundamentally the issue of the genre of human, Man, in its two variants. The clash between Las Casas and Sepúlveda was a clash over this issue—the clash as to whether the primary generic identity should continue to be that of Las Casas's theocentric Christian, or that of the newly invented Man of the humanists, as the rational (or ratiocentric) political subject of the state. . . . And this clash was to be all the more deep-seated in that the humanists, while going back to the classics and to other pre-Christian sources in order to find a model of being human alternative to the one in whose terms the lay world was necessarily subordinated, had effected their now new conception and its related "formulation of a general order of existence" only by transuming that of the Church's matrix Judeo-Christian conception, thereby carrying over the latter's schematic structure, as well as many of its residual meanings.[28]

Truth-for is a crucial piece of Wynter's argument, and it is the hinge that connects the two stories through the racial contours of colonialism: the global story of the human species and the local story of the European Re-

naissance Man/Human that appropriated and universalized the first. The starting assumption in her thinking is that "every form of life, every living species would now be able to know its reality only in terms of its specific *truth-for*."[29] This premise *already* questions the assumption that there is a truth-for someone who can know the truth-for everyone else. For Wynter the premise that every living species has its own *truth-for* applies to the particular species we are now referring to as humans: the species that can semiotize, that is, translate into audible or visible signs, its own conception of its own being as a species and its place among other species:

> For example, before the voyages of the Portuguese and Columbus we can say that all geographies, whatever their great success in serving human needs, had been ethnogeographies—geographical *truth-for* a genre of human. Before Copernicus, the same—all astronomies by means of which humans had regulated and legitimated their societies had been, in their last instance, ethnoastronomies. Before Darwin, again, the same thing. Knowledge of biological forms of life had been, in spite of their great value for human needs, ethnobiologies. And now the rupture with these forms of *truth-for* is going to be made possible only by means of the two intellectual revolutions of humanism, the first which took place in the Renaissance Europe, the second which took place at the end of the eighteenth century in Great Britain. . . . Or to put it more precisely, in our case, an ethno-class or Western bourgeois form of humanism, whose *truth-for* at the level of social reality is truth for Man cannot be truth for the human.[30]

The main task of Sylvia Wynter during the past thirty or more years, at least since the publication of "Ethno or Socio Poetics" (1976), has been to erode the foundation of the Western imperial (racial and patriarchal) concept of Man/Human.[31] Two pillars in her conceptual genealogy of thoughts that clearly stand out are her analyses, rethinking, and utilization of the ideas advanced by C. L. R. James and Humberto Maturana. From James, and the black and Caribbean intellectual tradition (see also Eudell in this volume), she calls into question the white, post-Renaissance concept of Man/Human. From Maturana, she posits that "creation" of the image of the world is the result of autopoietic (self-generating) processes and links this to the work of Frantz Fanon and the repetitive constitution of Man-as-Human. What she proposes, overall, is a shattering of the imperial concept of Humanity based on the ideal of White Man, and to reconceptualize it not by

providing a new definition or image but by starting with the question: What does it mean to be Human? Wynter follows this by thinking through that which we have inherited from imperial Europe, the possibilities and limitations of purely Western science and knowledge systems, and how humanness can be recognized as connective and interhuman. With this, it is crucial to take away the right that an ethno-class attributed to itself to "possess" or embody the truth of what Human is and means. Wynter's argument calls for a radical delinking from that myth and the urgent need to move in a different direction. Wynter summarizes this project in a famous sentence: "Towards the Human, after Man."[32]

Notes

1. I have capitalized "Human" and "Humanity" here to draw attention to what Wynter refers to as the descriptive statement that reinvented Man-as-Human under the colonial-biocentric model. See Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 263–264.
2. Slabodsky, "De-colonial Jewish Thought and the Americas," 269–290.
3. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*.
4. Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Ius Publicum Europaeum*.
5. Boyarin, *The Unconverted Self*.
6. Murena, *El pecado original de América*; Quijano and Wallerstein, "Americanity as a Concept," 549–557; Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*. In terms of racism and its contemporary articulations, I suggest along with others that "racism" as we sense it today emerged in 1492. Greek and Aztec cultures differentiated between themselves and "foreigners" (the barbarians, the Chichimecas) for example, thus drawing attention to ethnic classifications. But racism, as we sense it today, goes hand in hand with the historical foundation of capitalism (which neither Greeks nor Aztecs knew). See Mignolo, "Racism as We Sense It Today," 1737–1742.
7. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 63–91.
8. James, *Notes on Dialectics*; James, *State Capitalism and World Revolution*. It would be helpful for the reader to also remember Antonio Gramsci's work. It is clear that the problems that James and Gramsci have with Marxism—rather than with Marx—are related to their respective embodied histories: a white from southern Italy who writes about "the Southern Question" and a Black Caribbean for whom "the Human Question" and racism are of primary concern. Both kinds of experience were off the Marxists' radar.
9. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 81–82.
10. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 65.
11. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 65.

12. For an overview, see Mignolo and Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*.
13. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 65 (emphasis added).
14. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 65.
15. James, *C. L. R. James and Revolutionary Marxism*; Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 73.
16. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 81
17. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 81.
18. Castro-Gómez, *La Hybris del Punto Cero*; Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, chapter 2.
19. Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," 81 (emphasis added).
20. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 11.
21. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 17–18.
22. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 109.
23. Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle," 30–66.
24. Such as China, Russia, and perhaps in the near future, India and the Islamic Middle East; further in the future, one can see that in the Andes, under the leadership of Bolivia, the model of Tawantinsuyu will interact with the model of the liberal/colonial state as well.
25. Mignolo, "*Racism as We Sense It Today*," 1737–1742.
26. Scott, "The Re-enchantment of Humanism," 198.
27. Shari'ati, "Modern Man and His Prisons," 47.
28. Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 288.
29. Scott, "The Re-enchantment of Humanism," 196.
30. Scott, "The Re-enchantment of Humanism," 196 (emphasis added).
31. Wynter, "Ethno or Socio Poetics," 78–94.
32. Taken from Wynter's article title "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," 257–337.