"Deprovincializing" sociology: the post colonial contribution

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ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the contributions of post-colonial studies for renewing the contemporary social theory. At first it considers the character of the critique addressed by post-colonial studies to social sciences. After that, it analyses the post-colonial epistemological alternatives, considering three interrelated concepts: entangled modernity, "hybrid" site of enunciation, and decentralized subject. The conclusion is that, in spite of its severity and suspicion among some authors that post-colonial theory can destroy epistemological foundations of social sciences, an important part of post-colonial critique is rather addressed to the theory of modernization. Here, post-colonial positions present affinities with objections, which have already been presented by "conventional" social scientists. Other aspects raised by post-colonial authors do not destabilize, necessarily, social sciences; they can even enrich them.

Keywords: Post-colonial studies; Difference; Sociological theory.

Post-colonial studies do not properly constitute a single theoretical matrix. They form a variety of contributions with distinct orientations, but presenting as a common characteristic an effort of outlining, through the method of deconstructing the essentialisms, a critical epistemological reference to the dominant conceptions of modernity. Initiated by those authors qualified as intellectuals of the black or migratory diaspora – fundamentally immigrants originating from poor countries and living in Western Europe and North America -, the post-colonial perspective has had, first in the literary critique, above all in England and the United States, as from the 1980's, its pioneer areas of diffusion. Thereafter, it was expanded both geographically and to other disciplines, making the works of authors as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, or Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, recurrent references in other countries, inside and outside Europe.

Based on the evidence – trivialized, one has to say, by the debates between structuralists and post-structuralists – that every enunciation comes from somewhere, the post-colonial approach elaborates its critique of the process of production of scientific knowledge, which, in privileging models and subjects that are peculiar to what has been defined as the national culture of the European countries, would reproduce, in other terms, the logic of colonial relationship. Both the experiences of social minorities and the processes of transformation occurred in the "non-Western" societies would continue to be treated in base of their relations of functionality, similitude, or divergence with respect to what has been denominated as the center. Therefore, the prefix "post" in the expression post-colonial does not simply indicate an "after" in a linear chronological sense; it represents a reconfiguration of the discursive field in which the hierarchical relations acquire meaning (Hall, 1997a). Colonial, in its time, goes beyond colonialism, alluding to diverse situations of oppression defined in base of gender, ethnic, or racial boundaries.

Delimitating the precise theoretical domain into which the post-colonial studies are inserted is not an easy task. Perhaps neither an accomplishable one, since the post-colonial studies are precisely aimed at exploring the boundaries, producing a reflection over and above theory, as wants Bhabha (1994). Notwithstanding, it is not difficult to admit the close relationship between post-colonial studies and at least three contemporary trends or schools of thought. The first is the post-structuralism, specially the works of Derrida and Foucault, with whom the post-colonial studies have learned to acknowledge the discursive character of the social. The reception of post-structuralism, however, is not the same in authors like Lyotard and other exponents of the post-modern trend, which is a second important reference to be distinguished here. In fact, the opening towards post-modernism varies considerably according to the approach that is taken into consideration. In general, one accepts talking of *post-modernity* as a condition, that is, an empirical category that describes the decentration of contemporary narratives and subjects. The *post-modernism* is, however, rejected as a theoretical and political program, since for post-colonialism the social transformation and the struggle against oppression shall occupy an important place in the research agenda (Appiah, 1992; Gilroy, 1993, p. 107). Finally, it is the case of mentioning the cultural studies, chiefly in the British version developed at the Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. It is perhaps reasonable to say that the distinction between cultural studies, in the British version, and the post-colonial studies is only chronological. After all, since Stuart Hall, a figure head of British cultural studies, from the mide 1980's onwards, turns his attention from issues related to classes and Marxism to themes as racism, ethnicity, gender, and cultural identities, a complete convergence is verified between post-colonial and cultural studies (Morley & Chen, 1996).

The purpose of this essay is not to outline the genealogy of post-colonial studies, but to discuss the importance of their contribution to the social sciences and, in particular, to sociology. What it is about is discussing, first, the character of the critique addressed by the post-colonial studies to the social sciences. And then, the epistemological alternatives presented by those studies, considering three interrelated blocks of questions: the critique of modernism as teleology of history, the search for an "hybrid" post-colonial site of enunciation, and the critique of the social sciences' conception of subject. The conclusion to which I arrive is that, in spite of their incisiveness - and of the suspicion of authors like McLennan (2003) that the post-colonial theory implodes the epistemological basis of the social sciences -, much of the post-colonial critique is not addressed to the social theory as a whole, but especially to a theoretical school, the theory of modernization, and their criticisms are similar to those raised by social scientists who have nothing to do with the post-colonialism. Other problems raised by post-colonial studies do not necessarily destabilize the social sciences, but, on the contrary, can even enrich them.

The Social Sciences and their Binarisms

It is not without reason that the classic book of Palestinian literary critic Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978), is considered the "foundational manifesto" of the post-colonialism (Conrad & Randeria, 2002, p. 22). In his book, Said delineates a perspective that had begun to be outlined in the pioneer efforts developed by Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1965 [1952]), when he sought to describe the modern world as seen by the perspective of the black and the colonized.

The orientalism referred by Said characterizes a particular form of perception of modern history, and has as starting point the *a priori* establishment of a binary distinction between the Occident and the Orient, according to which it is to that part that represents itself as the Occident the task of defining what is to be understood as the Orient. Thus, the orientalism constitutes a way of apprehending the world and, at the same time, historically, it consolidates itself in base of the production of knowledge oriented by that original binary distinction.

The inspiration animating Said – and an important number of post-colonial authors, as it will be shown farther on – is the Foucaultian critique of the human sciences' "episteme" (Foucault, 1972, pp. 418ss.). What it is about is to show that the production of knowledge is subjected to a circular and self-referring principle, so that the "new" knowledge built on a determined basis of representation reaffirms, *ad infinitum*, the premises inscribed into such system of representations. The orientalism thus characterizes an established and institutionalized mode of production of representations about a determined region of the world, which is nourished, confirmed, and actualized by means of the very images and knowledge that it (re-)creates. [1] The Orient of *Orientalism*, although vaguely referring to a geographical place, rather expresses a cultural boundary which defines the sense between an 'us' and a 'them', within a relationship that produces and reproduces the other as inferior, at the same time that allows for defining the 'us', the self, in opposition to an other sometimes represented as a caricature, sometimes as a stereotype, and always as an agglutinative synthesis of all that the 'us' is not, nor wants to be.

Stuart Hall (1996a) seeks to generalize the case of the orientalism, pointing out that the polarity between the Occident (*the West*) and *the rest* of the world is in the constitutive basis of the social sciences. Hall's starting point is also the notion of discursive formation, derived from Foucault. Treated in these terms, the discourse is not confused with ideology, understood as a false or falsified representation of the world. Therefore, it is not the case of discussing the tenor of truth of discourses, but the context in which they are produced, i.e., the "truth's regime" within which a discourse acquire meaning, constitutes itself as plausible, and assumes practical efficacy. These truth's regimes, or "regimes of representation" in the variation preferred by Hall, are not closed, and show themselves able of incorporating new elements to the network of meanings in question, maintaining, however, unaltered an original nucleus of senses (*idem*, pp. 201ss.). [2]

Availing himself of Said's idea that discourses use "archives" or sources of common knowledge in their constitution process, Hall enumerates the main resources that, throughout the process of colonial expansion, nourish and form the West/Rest discourse, namely: classical knowledge, biblical and religious sources, mythologies (The *Eldorado*, sexual legends, etc.), besides travelers' reports. Out of these sources, the polarities between the West – civilized, advanced, developed, and good – and the rest – savage, retarded, underdeveloped, and bad – are constituted. Once constituted, these binarisms become tools for thinking and analyzing reality. Hall investigates the works of mid eighteenth century founding authors of the human sciences (basically Adam Smith, Henry Kame, John Millar, and Adam Ferguson), showing how the polarity West/Rest, contemporary of the enlightenment, installs itself within these sciences.

According to Hall, the discourse West/Rest is not dominant only within the limits of those first works of the human sciences. It becomes one of the foundations of modern sociology, that take the social norms, the structures, and values found in the so-called Western societies as a universal parameter defining what are modern societies. Thus, under the lens of sociology, the specificities of "non-Western societies" start to appear as an absence or incompleteness in face of the modern pattern, which is exclusively inferred from the "Western societies". For Hall, good examples of the incorporation of the binarism West/Rest by modern sociology would be categories as patrimonialism, in Weber, and Asian mode of production, in Marx, which, in distinct forms, phrase the internal movement of societies defined as non-Western in an implicitly comparative grammar that takes as pattern the European societies.

The polarity West/Rest is also found in the basis of the historical narrative adopted by the modern social sciences and, especially, by sociology. What it is about is a great narrative centered on the "Western" Nation-State that reduces modern history to a gradual and heroic westernization of the world, without taking into account that, at least since the colonial expansion of the sixteenth century, different "temporalities and historicities have been irreversibly and violently interconnected" (Hall, 1997a, p. 233). [3] This, obviously, does not mean that the author believes in power symmetry and equal possibilities of mutual influence

between the "Occident" and the "rest of the world". It implies, however, that the parts represented as opposed and separated, i.e., as antinomical, in fact complete each other historically and semantically.

The methodology of implicit comparison and the kind of historical narrative of modern sociology cause that everything that is diverse in "the rest of the world" is decoded as *yet* non-existent, as a lack to be compensated by means of social intervention suited for each context in each historical epoch: colonial domination, aid for development, humanitarian intervention, etc. With this, Hall of course does not intend to attribute to the modern social sciences the responsibility for colonialisms and imperialisms. He shows, however, how the disciplines of such field reproduce the colonial perspective in nourishing and legitimizing the dominant model of representation of the relationship between Europe and the rest of the world. [4]

The post-colonial epistemological alternatives

The "deconstruction" of the polarity West/Rest constitutes the common term unifying the different authors associated with the post-colonial frame of reference. It is precisely the identification of the colonialist bias in the process of production of knowledge that, as asserted above, best defines the prefix "post" of the term post-colonial. After all, from the chronological point of view, this prefix refers to ex-colonies with radically distinct post-colonial conditions. [5] Therefore, it is worth examining the post-colonial, the form of "deconstruction" of the polarity West/Rest historically constituted within the context of the colonial relationship, but that perpetuates itself even after the extinction of colonialism, as a manner of orienting the production of knowledge and political intervention.

The task the post-colonial authors propose themselves is not a modest one. Firstly, it requires showing that the polarity West/Rest builds up in the discursive level – and legitimates in the political sphere – an irreversible asymmetrical relationship between the Occident and its other, conferring to the former a kind of superiority that is not circumstantial, historic, and referred to a specific domain – material, technological, etc. The attribution of superiority is ontological and total, immutable, essentialized, since it is part of the very semantic constitution of the relationship's terms. The second step implies showing that the polarity West/Rest is innocuous from the cognitive perspective, since it obscures what it is supposed to elucidate, that is, the internal differences of such multiplicity of social phenomena that are subsumed into that generic other, as well as the effective relations between the imagined Occident and the rest of the world.

Such effort of deconstruction of the (colonial) binarisms has been following diverse courses within the domain of post-colonial studies. And, at least since Spivak's important essay (1988), the expectation of the emergence of an epistemological perspective giving voice to the (post-) colonized was undone. The author shows that the reference to *a* subaltern subject with an own voice is illusory. What she verifies, with the example of India, is a heterogeneity of subalterns who do not have a pre- or post-colonial authentic conscience, but "precarious subjectivities" constructed within the context of colonial "epistemic violence". The meaning of such violence is correlative to that coined by Foucault - in referring to the redefinition of the idea of sanity in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century -, to the extent that it disqualifies the colonized's knowledge and forms of apprehension of the world, stealing her or him, so to say, of her or his capacity of enunciation. Thus, instead of claiming a position of representative of the subalterns - that "listens" to their voices echoed in the heroic insurgencies against the oppression -, the post-colonial intellectual seeks to understand the colonial domination as restrainment of the resistance, through the imposition of an episteme that beforehand turns "silent", i.e., disqualifies, the discourse of the subaltern.

Conscious of the impossibility verified by Spivak, post-colonial studies seek alternatives to the deconstruction of the antinomy West/Rest, which would be distinct from the simple inversion of

the colonial site of enunciation. It is not the case, therefore, of giving voice to the oppressed, but – as defined by Pieterse and Parekh (1995, p. 12) – of a decolonization of the imagination. This implies a critique that would not be simply anti-colonialist,[6] since historically the struggle against colonialism would have occurred still within the colonial epistemological frame of reference, through the reification and freezing of the supposed difference of the colonized, in nativist and nationalist constructions. The post-colonialism ought precisely to promote the deconstruction of these essentialisms, in diluting the cultural boundaries bequeathed as much by the colonialism as by the anti-colonial struggles.

Entangled histories

The deconstruction of the dichotomy Rest/West passes, in the first place, through the reinterpretation of modern history. In effect, the post-colonial re-reading of modern history seeks to reinsert, reinscribe the colonized into the modernity, not as the other of the Occident, as the synonym of backwardness, of the traditional, of a lack, but as an essential constitutive part of what has been discursively constructed as modern. This implies deconstructing the hegemonic history of modernity, making evident the material and symbolic relations between the "Occident" and the "rest" of the world, so as to show that such terms correspond to mental constructions without immediate empirical correspondence. This is the project pursued by the Indian historian of the University of Chicago, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000). Under the motto of "provincializing Europe", the author seeks to radicalize and transcend the liberal universalism, showing that rationalism and science, rather than European cultural marks, are part of a global history within which the "Western" monopoly in the definition of the modern has been constructed as much with the help of the European imperialism as with the direct participation of the "non-Western" world. That is, the national histories of the non-European countries are presented as narratives of construction of institutions – citizenship, civil society, etc. – that only make sense if projected over the mirror of a "hyper-real Europe", to the extent that they ignore the effective experiences of the populations of those countries. In these national histories, the imagined Europe is the dwelling place of the true modern subject, of whom even the most combative socialists and nationalists seek to construct, through imitation, a national similar (for a critique, see Santos, 2004).

The intent of giving plausibility to the idea of histories that, in spite of being narrated as national histories, present interpenetrations and are reciprocally determined, takes shape through the concepts of "geteilte Geschichten" (shared histories) and "entangled modernity", coined by Randeria (2000), a social antropologist of the University of Zurich. With such concepts, the author seeks, on the one hand, to express the interdependence and the simultaneity of the constitutive processes of contemporary societies, and, on the other, to underline the dichotomic, disjointed representation of the historic intersections in modern representations. The German term "geteilt" bears the sense of the expressions "shared" and "divided", i.e., it is referred to histories that are shared in their unfoldment, but divided in their presentation and representation. It is important to notice that, in emphasizing the interpenetrations of modern history, the author neither seeks to obfuscate the power asymmetries characterizing such relationship nor asserts that everything is intertwined in the same measure or proportion. What it is about is contextualizing the transformations observed in a bunch of interdependent relations between the different regions of the world, so giving sense to the asymmetries and inequalities constructed within the common modern history.

The insistence in the idea of an entangled constitution of modernity carries a double intention. Initially, one seeks to show the epistemological blindness that the West/Rest binarism bequeaths to the different disciplines. That is, in treating that "other" of the Occident, in an evolutionist and hierarchic form, as a vacuum of sociability, a "pre-stage of the European self", disciplines as the sociology end up taking by new, and resulting from contemporary globalization, processes as "the weakening of national sovereignty, the processes causing labor's informality

and flexibility, the dependence from remote events, the cultural hybridity" (*Idem*, p. 45) – all of them, in fact, very well known by the (post-) colonial societies.

At the same time, the emphasis in the intercrossed constitution of modernity seeks to cast light on the role of colonies as a field of experimentation for modernity. If, at least since the publication of Karl Marx's *Capital*, the importance of the colonial expansion for the formation of capitalism is well known, the post-colonial emphasis in a shared history seeks to draw attention to other dimensions of that interdependence. Conrad and Randeria (2002, p. 26) refer different studies which show, in this perspective, how the (modern) idea of reforming the social order by means of the "strategically oriented intervention" is engendered in the second half of the nineteenth century, first in the colonies, and only then imported by Europe as a possibility of "modernization". Examples of such process are the projects of urban restructuring, first experienced in North Africa and, then, applied in France, as well as the technique of identity verification through digital impression, initially put into practice in Bengal.

The site of post-colonial enunciation: a praise of the hybrid

Instead of searching for facts and connections which could reposition the (post-) colonized in modern history, other authors, more convinced of the possibilities of the post-structuralism, concentrate their (post-colonial) effort in the relationship between discourse and power, seeking to find a locus of enunciation that could escape from essentialist ascriptions and transgress the cultural boundaries traced by colonial thought. The Indian literary critic Homi Bhabha (1994) is who more pertinaciously pursues this strategy. His interest is turned to the spaces of enunciation which are not defined by the polarity inside/outside, but are situated between the divisions, in the intermediate space between the borders that define any collective identity.

In contraposition to the constructions of homogenized identities that seek to imprison and localize the culture, one finds the idea of the difference, contextually articulated, in the lacunae of sense between the cultural borders. Difference here does not have the sense of biological or cultural heritage, nor of reproduction of a symbolic belonging conferred by the place of birth, or the dwelling place, or even the social or cultural insertion, etc. The difference is constructed in the very process of its manifestation. It is not an entity or an expression of an accumulated cultural stock. It is a flow of *ad hoc* articulated representations, within the space between the lines of the totalizing and essentialist external identities – the nation, the working class, the blacks, the immigrants, etc. In these terms, even the remission to a supposed legitimacy bequeathed by an "authentic" and "original" tradition is to be treated as part of the performatization of the difference – in the linguistic sense of the act of enunciation and in the dramaturgic sense of the *mise en scène*. Thus, such claim of legitimacy needs to be understood from the discursive contextualization into which it is inserted:

> Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The ›right‹ to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privileged does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are ›in the minority‹. The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restarting the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a received tradition. (Bhabha 1994: 2)

The affirmation of the difference, as described by Bhabha, cannot be understood as social action in the terms normally used by sociological theories, since the action cannot be inscribed into a theoretical narrative. In other words, one does not find in Bhabha a decipherable relationship between action and structure, or an alignment between *self* and society that could be de-codified into a generalizing sociological model: "There can be no final discursive closure of theory" (*Idem*, p. 30; see also McLennan, 2000, p. 77). Even the idea of subject must be understood outside the canons of the social sciences. Rigorously, Bhabha avoids the remission to the idea of a subject that would be defined by the link to a place in the social structure or that would be characterized by the support of a determined set of ideas. The subject is always a provisional subject, a circumstantial subject, constrained between a speaking subject and a reflexive, "spoken" subject. The second never reaches the former, and can only succeed him. This, however, does not imply the impossibility of resistance to domination.

The possible subversion is related to the slipping of the sense of signs. The idea, borrowed from the post-structuralism, is that signs have inexhaustible possibilities of signification, and that they only may gain a particular sense, yet provisional and incomplete, in a determined significative context. Not any particular discursive context plainly exhausts the repertory of meanings attributable to a sign; the creative action is that which subverts, redefines the sign, from an enunciatory locus displaced from the closed systems of representation. According to Bhabha, it is not the case, therefore, of an intervention informed by a competitive system of representation, but of a bordering locus, in some way outside the totalizing systems of signification and, therefore, capable of introducing inquietude, and revealing the fragmentary and ambivalent character of any system of representation. The effectiveness of the intervention is also always contingent, open, undefined, an action within the subject's area of influence, but out of his control.

The locus of enunciation between the systems of representation is defined by Bhabha as a "third space" and corresponds to the context "in which the spatial contingency of national and racial borders is combined with […] the temporal contingency of the indecidable" (Philips, 1999, p. 68). That is, the third space is not referred to a fixed locus in the social contexture, but to a moment in which the constructed and arbitrary character of the borders become evident. This happens when signs are dislocated from their spatial and temporal framework of reference and, so to say, are still in movement, i.e., not yet inscribed into another totalizing system of representation. This displacement characterizes the moment of "hybridization" of the sign; and, although operated with the participation of the subject, it is a fortuitous, aleatory, contingent interaction.

The idea of hybridism adopted by Bhabha has its origins in the analysis of the linguist and theoretician of culture Mikhail Bakhtin, who distinguishes an involuntary "mixture of two social languages within a same assertion" and the "dialogical confrontation" of two languages in the form of an "intentional hybridism" (Grimm, 1997, p. 53). Bhabha denies the intentional aspect, showing that the phenomenon of hybridization is not dependent upon the will of the subject. Besides, in the colonial relationship, the hybridization serves not only to the reaction to domination, but also to the affirmation of the very power of the colonizer. According to the author, differently of what has been postulated by the "Western post-structuralists", "purists of the difference", the power is not uniquely produced by means of transparency – of the rules of classification, of inclusion and exclusion, of the colonizer's and colonized's identities, etc. Chains of meanings are fused in the colonial relationship, which hybridize the claimed pure identity of the colonizer. At the same time, if the colonized on a certain aspect merely imitates the colonizer, he also dislocates, hybridizes signs of the colonial domination, empting them of the domination's symbology (Bhabha, 1995 [1985], p. 34).

From the use coined by Bhabha, the concepts of "hybridism" (and "hybridization") become generalized in post-colonial studies, although gaining in each author distinct nuances (for a

comparison, see Papastergiadis, 1997). [7] In spite of the different uses, the concept allows for operating two fundamental movements. The first is de-constructivist: in revealing the hybrid feature of every cultural construction, one seeks to dismantle the possibility of an homogeneous locus of enunciation. Any locus of enunciation is, from the start, an heterogeneous place, so that the claim of homogeneity always implies an arbitrary hierarchization. The second movement is, if one may say so, normative: the hybridism defines a cosmopolitan global condition. What it is about is the reference to a culture and a hybrid world as an allusion to a world *ecumene* over and above racial, national, ethnical, etc., barriers: "[…] an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). This cosmopolitan ideal confers a positive connotation to the multiplication of possibilities of perception of the world from a locus outside the spatial and symbolic context of the imagined communities, which comes along with globalization. This "invitation" to hybridization is in general inherent in contemporary biographies, and it finds its emblematic representation in the figure of the migrant. The cosmopolitism as hybridization is, thus, inscribed into the horizon of possibilities as an alternative to modernist universalism:

> The later [modernism] combated ethnicity in the name of universalism, the identity of all people and thus of their individual rights. The former [post-colonialism] does the same in the name of mixture and hybridity, a claim to a humanity so fused in this cultural characteristics that no ›ethnic absolutism‹ is possible. This is what I have referred to a cosmopolitism without modernism […]. Cosmopolitanism without modernism is not without modernity as such, but without the rationalist, abstract and developmentalist project of modernism (Fridman, 1995, p. 76).

Over and beyond its role as remission to a locus of enunciation that imposes itself between the cultural borders and as a cosmopolitan ideal, the term hybridism acquired, in the field of sociology, with an essay of Nederveen Pieterse (1995, 2003), a macro-analytic use as a category for the study of globalization. The author considers that current analyses in that field seek, in general, to associate globalization and modernity, and end up becoming an annex of the theory of modernization, translating globalization as a westernization of the world. Those authors claiming to escape such vision of globalization, as Therborn, Amin, Pred, and Watts, point out that each society "reworks" modernity, defining their own modernizing paths. They invariably fall, however, into a polycentrism that continues to offer a static and one-dimensional representation of globalization: "the multiplication of centers that, notwithstanding, remains based on the centrism" (Pieterse, 1995, p. 48). According to Pieterse, all these approaches do not take into account something that is fundamental in the process of globalization, which is precisely the globalization of diversity.

The author postulates that globalization should be understood as hybridization, what implies a process of multiplication and interpenetration of the available modes of organization – transnational, international, macro-regional, national, micro-regional, municipal-, as well as a combination, in the different social spheres, of varied logics of coordination, besides the emergence, in the cultural realm, of a *mélange global*. This idea corresponds to a generalization of processes of cultural interpenetration that, as particular cases, are described by expressions such as creolization, *mestizaje*, orientalization, cross-over culture, and that put in relief the hybridization of the parts involved and the permanent emergence of new blends. This does not imply assuming that the parts assembled in the *mélange* are pure, originary. In this sense, the hybridization that occurs in globalization corresponds to a blend of blends.

In order to give plausibility to his argument, Pieterse counterposes to the idea of culture - as a set of orthogenetic and endogenous properties of an organic and homogeneous community, in general associated to a determined geographic place – the concept of a trans-local, heterogenetic, and heterogeneous culture, developed in diffused networks. While, in the first

case, cultural interchanges are viewed as a static phenomenon always referred to a center, in the second the interchanges are fluid, de-centered, and transcultural. Globalization would represent the process, obviously non-linear, conducing to the generalization of this second type of cultural relation, which would thus lead not to homogenization, but to diversification, not to cultural hegemony, but to cultural interpenetration, not to westernization, but to the *mélange global*, i.e., to hybridization (*Idem*, pp. 61ss.).

Although innovator, the use by Pieterse of the idea of hybridization as a category for the analysis of globalization presents serious problems that he partially acknowledges: "What is missing is acknowledgement of the actual unevenness, asymmetry and inequality in global relations" (*Idem*, p. 54). To me, however, the inexactitude of the concept does not seem a problem of theoretical refinement, as if it were possible to make it more precise by means of new researches, as Pieterse seems to believe. The problem is a methodological one. In the operation developed by Pieterse, the concept of hybridization accumulates so much functions and definitions that it ends up becoming synonym of what it should explain, as reveals the very title of his essay: "Globalization as Hybridation". Eventually, the author de-centers as much the concept of modernity as that of culture, but does not de-centers, on the contrary unifies, the logic of production and reproduction of modernity and culture: such logic is a hybrid logic. Although understanding the critical sense that the appeal to the idea of hybridization can have for authors like Bhabha or Pieterse, its use as an analytical category is, in my view, a mistake. The multi-use concept functions as a mill that first breaks and then fuses the nuances and differentiations that should precisely come to light through the analysis. Starting from the idea of hybridization, the analyst is led to a circular reasoning: he starts with the premise that modernity (ies), cultures, people, globalization, himself, are hybrids, and triumphant, after an enormous effort of de-construction and metonymies, he concludes that modernity (ies), cultures, people, globalization, himself, are, Eureka!... hybrid.

From the difference to the subject

The conception of difference, as formulated by Bhabha as well as by Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, results from the post-structuralism and, more specifically, from the notion of *différance*, in the sense attributed by Derrida. Considering that it is not possible here to elaborate more lengthily on a debate still much alive - and with developments in so diverse fields as the feminist theory, the international law, and the theory of culture -, it is the case of noticing that, in coining the neologism *différance*, as a debasement of the French *différence*, Derrida indicates the existence of a difference that is not translatable into the process of signification of signs, nor organizable into identity polarities – I/other, we/they, subject/object, woman/man, black/white, significant/signified. Such binary distinctions and classifications constitute the Western, logocentric mode of apprehending the world, and form the basis of the modern structures of domination. They create, yet, the illusion of complete, totalizing representations, which do not leave residues. The incompleteness of representations, however, lies in language itself, since significant and signified never correspond each other entirely. The *différance* refers to the surplus of meaning that has not been, nor can be signified and represented into the binary differentiations.

This is not to suggest a new binarism between a prior complete reality, as the prior pre-linguistic being, on one side, and its partial, reduced linguistic representation, on the other. There is not a reality prior to the discourse. Social reality is constructed by language, and in this sense, the *différance* can only be constituted on the orbit of the discourse. The notion of *différance* precisely breaks with the idea of a pre-existing ontological, essential difference, which could be discursively presented and represented. The *différance* is constituted on the act of its manifestation, on the very sphere of representations, differences and differentiations. The subject is de-centered as well. It is formed on the mobile chains of signification. Rigorously, it is part of those chains. It is not prior to the language, nor constitutes an entity and an

independent identity, nor even that which, as one could think, acts over the *différance*, seeking to fulfill the "surpluses" of sense it expresses, (re-)constituting the totalities. What it is about are not subjects inscribed into a structure, but chains of signification in which subjects and structures have similar status of floating signals that acquire or lose their signification – always incomplete – in the semantic game of the differentiation (see Dietrich, 2000).

In his debate with Lévi-Strauss, Derrida (1972) shows that the fact of attributing an open, arbitrary, and indefinite character to the linguistic games marks his rupture with the structuralism. To this author, the idea of game in Lévi-Strauss involves a certain "ethics of presence", as if it could be a remote origin, an essence behind the sign that, in some moment, could be actualized, made present in the language. To Derrida, two forms of conceiving social sciences are defined here: the first searches for a remote origin, for the truth behind the illusions of the representation; the second accepts the participation in the uncertain game, from a floating position. This second, to which he adheres, is de-constructivist, always searching for the metaphysical residue present in generalizing discourses, be they of differentiation or universalization.

The radicality involved in the idea of *différance* and in the dilution of the opposition between subject and structure operated by Derrida is, according to my understanding, interpreted or, perhaps better, operated in a distinct way by Bhabha, on one side, and by Hall and Gilroy, on the other. Both uses are based on the post-structuralism in order to escape the idea of the fixed, essential, difference, be it imposed or self-attributed. Difference, here, is an "enunciatory category". In effect, the post-structuralism has, in both cases, a central importance in the deconstruction of polar discourses opposing an "I" to an "other", an "us" to a "they". This applies as much to the colonial-imperialist as to the nationalist discourse, or even to the multiculturalist discourse, despite its good intentions. In all these cases, the difference is celebrated as a homogeneous identity, as an irreducible sameness, since what is established here is a correspondence between socio-cultural insertion into a pre-discursive structure and an enunciatory locus determined in the linguistic or political game. With this, the difference is tamed, homogenized, imprisoned within a new boundary, losing precisely its unforeseeable, uncertain, contingent character, from which, according to Bhabha, Hall and Gilroy, result their subversive possibilities. Instead of identity, these authors prefer to speak of identification, as a circumstantial position in the networks of signification (Hall, 1996b, pp. 2ss.).

Bhabha, however, seems to take up to the last consequences the contingency of the linguistic games in which the differences are constituted and negotiated. To me, it does not seem authorized the reception of his positions made by intellectuals linked to social movements (immigrants, feminists), who seek to infer from the author a theory of social transformation, in which a subject "negotiator" of differences is put into relief with the end of the political resistance and of the subversion of the relations of domination. The freezing of an enunciatory locus as subversive ignores the contingent character of the agency, a fundamental piece of Bhabha's argumentation. As I have already indicated, the re-signification of the relations of domination, the possibility of political resistance is, for Bhabha, irremediably subordinated to the principle of causality: the resistance cannot be a volitive act of the subject, since it occurs in the interactions. In the following passage, this position is once more emphasized:

> The process of reinscription and negotiation – the insertion or intervention of something that takes on new meaning – happens in the temporal break in – between the sign, deprived of subjectivitiy, in the realm of the intersubjective. Through this time-lag – the temporal break in representation – emerges the process of agency […] (Bhabha, 1994, p. 191).

Papastergiadis (1997, p. 297) is right when he claims that Bhabha's preoccupation is not with salvation, remission, but rather with a chronicle of the processes, "through which the tactics of survival and continuity are articulated". In fact, Bhabha wagers on the multiplication of

differences, understood as processes of hybridization that are articulated between the cultural borders, and sees in them the possibility of subverting totalizing discourses, hegemonic or not. That is, the dissemination of the hybrid situations – which accompany the migrations of people and signs – has a positive sense to the extent that they create the conditions of possibility for the articulation of new differences. This explains the author's attention towards the immigrants, the national minorities, etc. Their importance, however, is not that of the reflexive actor that confronts the dominant discourses. Their transforming effect is related to the opening of possibilities for the construction of new senses, provided by the presence of the immigrant. That is, the spatial and temporal displacement of the signs hybridizes, potentially, the contexts of signification, introducing uncertainty, ambivalence, noise, and doubt into what seemed coherent, "pure", precise, ordained. Such wager, however, does hot imply "re-centering" the subject, giving him a role of social protagonist, as fosterer of the hybridization. The process escapes the actor's control. There is not a teleology of the hybridism, nor a reification of the conscience of an actor that could put it into effect. What the author affirms is that the migrations of signs enlarge the contexts for the production of hybrid chains of signification – just as a possibility! The presence of "foreign signs" can also lead – and effectively leads – to the petrification of the cultural borders, through the construction of the figure of the "outsider" as the "other" of the dominant identity itself – the so-called *othering* processes. To what extent the migration of signs will produce more hybridization or more ascriptions is something that, as already mentioned, the migrant subject can influence, but not control. The subject is a sign in the chain of significations.

As a counterpart, Hall wants to go beyond the textual games of inscription and re-inscription, seeking to construct, in base of the idea of de-centered subjects, a political sociology of cultural negotiations.

Hall seeks to distinguish three conceptions of subject: the Cartesian subject or the subject of the Enlightenment – self-referred, with a self-centered identity constituted by reason -, the subject of sociology, and the de-centered subject, denominated as post-modern. The subject of sociology is constituted in its relations with "significant others":

> "who mediated to the subject the values, meanings, and symbols – the culture – of the worlds she/he inhabited […]. The subject still has an inner core essence that is the real me, but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds outside and the identities which they offer" (Hall, 1992, p. 275).

G. H. Mead, C. H. Cooley, and the symbolic interactionists would be the central figures in the development o such conception of subject and identity, which became classic in sociology. The conception of de-centered subject results from different theoretical developments, which, on the whole, produce the image of an individual that does not have a permanent or essential identity. The idea of a complete and single identity reveals itself a fantasy in face of the multiplication of systems of representation confronting us with "a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, anyone of which we could identify with – at least temporarily" (*Idem*, p. 277). In this context, the sensation that we have a unified identity coming along with us throughout our lives is provided to us by a "narrative of the self", through which the whole of our experiences is re-signified from a thread of coherence and continuity.

Hall's conception of a de-centered subject can be understood as a development, in fact a mitigation, of Foucault's theoretical project about the subordination of subjects to discourses. In order to arrive to his own formulation, Hall (1997b, pp. 41ss.) reconstructs Foucault's reflection with the purpose of showing that the latest works of the author indicate two different senses of such subordination. The first is associated to the moment of construction and institutionalization, in different epochs, of the disciplinary discourse which, by classifying people, constitutes the different subjects. At the same time, however, discourses produce a

"place for the subject", to the extent that they open space for an individual positioning. That is, the discourse acquires sense once we position ourselves and, in such way, we become subjects in face of the truth regime established by a determined discursive formation. Such positioning is not confounded with autonomy and intention of the subject. Even so, according to Hall, it allows for identifying a moment, in the process of production of the self, marked by the self-constitution, by the subjectification.

That moment, in the sphere of the discursive production of the self, represents the basis of the notion of de-centered subject postulated by Hall. What it is about is analyzing the relation between subject and discursive formation, so as to indicate the mechanisms leading the individuals to identify or not to identify themselves with determined positions,

> "[…]as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and ›perform‹ these positions, and why they never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves." (Hall, 1996e, p. 13).

The key concept used by Hall in order to describe the positioning process of the subject within a discursive formation is the idea of articulation, analyzed in the two senses the word possesses in English, i.e. the sense of speaking, articulating, being articulated, and the sense of connecting two elements that, in determined circumstances, may constitute a unity, as the "articulated truck", in which the driving cab and the rear wagon may constitute a circumstantial unity.

The principle of the possible but not necessary articulation can be observed as well in the process of constitution of individual subjects who permanently re-position themselves in face of the discursive formation, as in the production of collective subjects. The theoretical task, yet not accomplished, is precisely to show under which circumstances discourses and subjects are formed, i.e., are articulated. Within this scope, a theory of articulation represents

> "[…] both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects. Let me put that the other way: the theory of articulation asks how an ideology discovers its subject rather than how the subject the necessary and inevitable thoughts which belong to it; it enables us to think their historical situation, without reducing those forms of intelligibility to their socio-economic or class location or social position." (Hall, 1996b, p. 141).

The reference to collective subjects should not suggest the idea of groups pre-discursively constituted, that is, constituted from objective, material conditions, and that would be, so to say, in the waiting of a discourse able to decipher their common condition and to constitute them as subjects. Subjects and discourses are formed in a simultaneous manner or, in other words, subjects can only be articulated in base of discourses. Articulation, however, remains for Hall a concept strictly analytical-descriptive applying to any form of relation between subject and discursive formation, that is, it does not qualify *a priori* whether a determined position assumed by the subject reproduces the relations of domination or has the sense of re-signifying the social relations.

In Stuart Hall's work, there is not a normative locus outside the discourse or prior to the political game, from which one could valuate the positions assumed by the subject. There aren't either normative constants that could function as measures for assessing what turns to be "desirable". Yet, or precisely for this reason, the analytical instruments developed by the author, when applied to the study of concrete contexts, allow not only for describing phenomena, but

also for contextualizing them politically and normatively. Therefore, in order to assess whether the sought identification reproduces the hegemonic categorizations or articulates itself to new differences, Hall make use of auxiliary categories which, to a certain extent, permit valuations in the political and normative sense. Here, are worth noticing the concepts of politics of representation, trans-coding, and new ethnicities, especially constructed on the light of the experience of anti-racist struggles in England, in the last four decades.

Actually, Hall distinguishes two moments in the cultural resistance against racism. The first coincides with the phase in which the term *black* has been coined as a common reference both to the experience of marginalization and the dominant racist practices in Great Britain. The strategy of resistance, in that period, combines the struggle for the access to the right of construction of the blacks' own representations and the contestation of the "marginality, the stereotyped quality, and the fetishized nature of the Blacks' images, through the contraposition of a 'positive' set of images of Blacks" (Hall, 1996c, p. 442; see also 1996d). The focus of the resistance to racism, in that first phase, is defined by Hall as the field of the relations of representation, in opposition to what predominates in the second phase, which he calls as politics of representation. This idea refers to the discursive constitution of the social, and implies understanding representation not only as an expression and public presentation of pre-constructed realities and relations, but as a constitutive moment of social relations. Politics of representation refers, therefore, to an intervention turned to influencing the very terms in which the social is constituted (Hall, 1997b, 1997c).

This second phase characterizes the moment in which the anti-racist resistance interacts with the discourses of post-structuralism, post-modernism, psychoanalysis, and feminism. In such phase, one observes what Hall defines as "the end of innocence", i.e., the acknowledgement that the category *black* is a political and cultural construction, "which cannot be based on a set of racial categories trans-culturally or transcendentally fixed, and that, therefore, does not find any support on nature" (Hall, 1996c, p. 443). The end of the centered subject – *black people* – as a positive totality forces the anti-racist movement to face the problem of the difference and the *différance*, in the terms above treated. That is, if the racist forms of representation organize the world into binary, fixed, and ontological differences – black or white, *black or British* -, the anti-racism cannot be restrict to the search of a positive representation of who, in these polarities, is considered inferior; what is needed is the dismantling of the system of representations itself. Hence, the wager on the politics of representation, what implies acknowledging and plainly assuming the heterogeneity and the decentration of the subject, seeking the multiple *différance* within the binary difference (black/white) and recouping the intersections between race, class, gender, and ethnic group. It is precisely in the articulation of these differences – all them mobile, changeable, constructed on the moment of their discursive manifestation – that the subject of the anti-racist resistance is constituted as a "new ethnicity". [8]

(Im-) possibilities of a post-colonial sociology

Searching to translate in sociological terms the post-colonial reflection – fundamentality in base of Homi Bhabha's work – and evaluate its impact over the theoretical production in the field of the social sciences, McLennan (2003) arrives at an ambivalent outcome. On the one hand, he shows that the post-colonial studies hit the Achilles' heel of sociology in three different forms. In the first place, they delegitimize a certain sociology of development, showing that it still insists on the representation of an "other" as inferior and lacking civilization. In second place, they hit the multicultural or pluralist sociology, when they show the implausibility of the idea of an impartial space of representation of pre-existing cultural differences. In third place, they have an impact over the whole of the disciplines of the social sciences attached to the generalizing style of theorization, showing their incapacity for capturing the social dynamics: "[…] Postcolonial cultural studies, by highlighting performativitiy and liminality rather than structural positioning and rationalist assessment, offers a wider canvas and a more inclusive sense of the

richness of social experience than sociology" (*Idem*, p. 82). At the same time, however, McLennan shows that, in case of having some analytic pretension, the post-colonial theory would be a prisoner of the same dilemma imposed to sociology. After all, theorizing implies, in some moment, reducing experience to the priorities and conceptual categories of the chosen analytical frame of reference.

I would like to propose an approximation between post-colonial studies and the social sciences somewhat distinct from that suggested by McLennan. I will restrain my observations to the field of sociology, leaving to the reader more familiar with the respective areas, the task of reflecting about the relations between the post-colonial theory and other fields of the social sciences, especially anthropology and political science.

First of all, one has to abandon the reactive and defensive posture assumed by sociology and take the radicality of the post-colonial discourse – anti-generalizing, anti-establishment, and "threatening" sociological modernism – not in its terms, but as a performative strategy of constructing new institutional spaces. The interest here is to overpass the rhetoric mist, so as to identify which effectively are the new impulses the post-colonial studies may bring to sociology. It is not the case, therefore, of confronting "theoretical styles" or epistemologies, but of singling out some points of tangency and possibilities of translation. With such purpose, I resume the route of presentation of the post-colonial epistemological alternatives, starting from the three formerly distinguished moments, which are: the critique of the teleological reading of modern history, the search for a hybrid locus of enunciation, and, finally, the "articulation" of the decentered subject.

Sociology is undoubtedly vulnerable to the post-colonial critique of the teleological vision of modernization. Notwithstanding, it seems to me that the particular target of that critique is not sociology as such, but a particular branch of the discipline – the macro-sociology of modernization. The critique of the theory of modernization – a school of though that lives its golden phase in the United States in the 1950's and 1960's – remounts at least to the end of 1960's, when one attacked precisely the ethnocentric character and the endogenicity of such sociological orientation, and the supposition that the "modernization" of the economy would automatically result from changes in other spheres, as the democratization of politics and cultural secularization (Knöbl, 2001).

Projected over the discussion around the theory of modernization, the generic post-colonial critique of the modernizing teleology of the human sciences, and of sociology in particular, can be better focalized, thus losing part of its sharpness. One understands that, even remaining justified and important, it deals with problems more directly related to a particular theoretical orientation, and is referred to insufficiencies that, within sociology itself, have long been identified and by-passed in some way. In this sense, conceptions as that of an entangled modernity do not enlighten a zone of obscurity of sociology, nor are formulated in base of, so to say, an external position immune to the "truth regime" of sociology. Despite their rhetoric radicality, they concur, within sociology itself, with macro-sociological categories turned to a non-evolutionist description of modernization, and subjected to validation criteria peculiar to that discipline. That is, to the extent that they strive for some form of academic resonance, post-colonial studies do not have how to escape deepening their interlocution with other intellectual orientations disputing the same theoretical terrain, thus abandoning their anti-establishment posture.

As yet, this task remains unaccomplished. In effect, up to this moment, the post-colonial interest in the contributions which, within the very field of sociology, seek to overcome the macro-sociological reference frame of the theory of modernization - as it is the case of authors like S. Amin (1989), I. Wallerstein (1997), or G. Therborn (1995, 2000) -, has not been more than a summary discard in one or other marginal reference (Pieterse, 1995; Conrad and Randeria, 2002; for a somewhat more circumstantiated critique, see McLennan, 2000).

The second moment of the above mentioned post-colonial critique deals with the search for a hybrid site of enunciation, i.e., a locus in the intermediate space between the cultural borders. The idea of a third space over and beyond the cultural borders, although susceptible of being constructed as a moment within the literary text (Bhabha offers different examples in such direction), seems to me destitute of any sociological relevance. That is, there are no third places in the social topography; all enunciatory places immediately define borders. In this sense, the praise of the hybrid is a discourse - as the nationalism, the avant-gardism, or the nativism - that, in being enunciated, establishes new identity borders. In determined political and historical circumstances that discourse may have the effect of showing the contingent character of the constructed cultural unities – the nation, the ethnic group, the social movement. This, however, is not inherent to the very nature of the discourse on hybridism, but to the articulations that such discourse permits or stimulates under specific conditions: the same praise of the hybrid that allows for an elite of cultivated immigrants in Great Britain to construct its tribune for criticizing the arrogance of the Englishness, or to deconstruct the claim of unity and purity of the "German people" (Ha, 1999), may serve, as it has been the case in Brazil in the 1940's, as cement for the nationalist, homogenizing, heterophobic ideology of miscegenation [*mestiçagem*].

As analytical category and, more precisely, as macro-sociological category for the study of globalization, the concept of hybridism is equally inadequate, since it is always reposited, in a circular movement, as synonym of the processes it intended to explain.

One can conclude that the term hybridism does not present any interest for sociology. This may investigate the hybridism as discourse of the actors, to the extent that such discourse, under determined circumstances, introduces doubt where hover essentialist certainties, and empowers cultural minorities. As normative or analytical category, however, the ineptitude of the concept is evident.

It is finally worthing to resume the importance of the post-colonial contribution for the discussion between subject and difference or, more precisely, for providing a basis to a micro-sociology of the cultural articulations. As I sought to show, the post-colonial studies have here a theoretical importance that surpasses their particular areas of research, such as the studies on national minorities, ethnical relations, or racism. In effect, in that phraseology exempt of the "rhetorical excesses of the literary post-structuralism" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 110) and stimulated by the imperative of political positioning [9] - as sought by authors like Hall and Gilroy -, the discussion on the decentered subject leads to an innovative theorization of the relationship between difference, subject, and politics. The authors trace a path that prevents both the misunderstandings of post-modern currents, which decree the complete fragmentation of the subject, and the praise that reifies the "Western Subject", as developed, for example, by Alain Touraine (1992) or Habermas (2001).

They construct, therefore, an analytical framework that permits to study the relationship between subject and discourse and, at the same time, to identify the space of creativity of the subject. Such contribution of the post-colonial studies remains unique and, surely, helps the social sciences to finally meet again their creative vigor.

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NOTES

[1] Since its publication, Said's *Orientalism* mobilized important criticisms. It is worth mentioning the objections of methodological nature emphasizing Said's difficulty in constructing a critical locus immune to the problems – circularity, non-representability, etc. – that he identifies in the orientalism (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 1999, pp. 80ss). Said himself reformulates and refines his former positions in his subsequent works, particularly in his discussion on cultural imperialism (Said, 1993).

[2] The emphasis on the openness of the West/Rest system of representations, suggested by Hall, differentiates him from Said, since for the latter the accent falls on the non-logical character of the orientalist discourse. Both authors, however, accentuate the self-referred character of the system of representation that is being criticized. In other words, for Hall as well, the incorporation of new elements into a determined discursive formation always reproduces the internal semantics that is dominant within such formation.

[3] This and all the other citations from German, and Spanish have been translated by the author, with some stylistic freedom, into Portuguese. [N.T. – in this English version, such citations are retranslations from the Portuguese.].

[4] Although his alternative to the Euro-centrism, based on the theology of liberation and the Marxism, distinguishes him from the post-colonial authors, the theologian Enrique Dussel is producing in Latin America a kind of critique identified with the post-colonial perspective. According to the theologian, modernity contains an *ad intra* rational nucleus that is universalistic and cosmopolitan. *Ad extra*, it nourishes a mystic representation of itself, which he summarizes in seven constitutive elements, as follows: 1) modern civilization defines itself as superior; 2) superiority obliges, as a moral requirement, to develop the uncultivated; 3) the road for such educative process shall follow the European path; 4) as the barbarians resist the civilizing process, one should resort to violence if necessary for assuring modernization; 5) the task requires victims, and, as in a ritual of sacrifice, the modernizing hero invests his victims with the aura of participants in the redeeming process; 6) "for the modern, it is the barbarian 'fault' (the resistance to the civilizing process) what allows for the 'Modernity' to present itself not only as innocent, but also as the 'emancipator' of its own victims faults"; 7) the civilizing character of modernity imposes inevitable costs to the "backwarded" peoples (Dussel, 2000, p. 70). The vigor of Dussel's critique of Eurocentrism can be estimated in the context of his polemics with Habermas' and Apel's discursive ethics, Vattimo's post-modernism, and Taylor's communitarianism (Dussel, 1998).

[5] One of the problems in dealing with the post-colonial as chronology, as a perspective generically associated to the decolonization, is the imperial condition of a post-colony, the United States. Mignolo (1996) seeks to synthesize the discussions on this question, establishing a relationship between the theoretical production and the different post-colonial "conditions". He understands that post-modernity was the particular form of critique that could better flourish in the United States: "[…] if modernity consists as much in the consolidation of the European history as in the silent history of peripheral colonies, post-modernity and post-coloniality (as operation of literary construction) are distinct sides of a process of contraposition to modernity from different colonial heritages: 1. heritages from/in the center of colonial empires (ex.: Lyotard); 2. colonial heritages in colonies of settlement (ex.: Jameson, in the United States); and 3. colonial heritages in colonies of sound settlement (ex.: Said, Spivak, Glissant)" (p. 14).

[6] In a pioneer and influent essay, Shohat (1992) shows that if the post-colonial assumes the form of a "'third-worldist' anti-colonialism", it runs the risk of reaffirming the binarism center/periphery, strengthening what it supposedly had to combat, i.e., the Eurocentric representation of modernity.

[7] Simultaneously with the post-colonial authors, Garcia Canclini (1990) begins to use the term "hybrid cultures" in referring to Latin America. Differently from the political importance attributed to the hybridism by those authors, for Garcia Canclini contemporary hybridism in Latin America is characterized by the absence of a political sense: if, historically, the cultural combination was used for legitimizing domination or with emancipatory purposes, the hybridism today is just an allegoric and disordeined mixture, a rather esthetical than political expression. Another important distinction between the post-colonial studies and Canclini's contribution is found in the degree of elaboration: while in the post-colonial studies, the hybridism, despite its problems, is a key concept – sometimes more, sometimes

less coherent - within a theory of culture, in Canclini hybrid is an expression of a rather generic use, without theoretical ambition and consistency.

[8] Initially constructed in base of the anti-racist struggle in England, the idea of new ethnicities passes to be used by Hall in order to deal with the new forms of cultural articulation that go along with the recent migratory movements and the displacement – potential, at least – of the cultural borders centered on the national States. Of course, this does not mean that all the claimed new identities have the character of the new ethnicity, defined by the acknowledgement of its very transitoriness, contingency, and heterogeneity. The process that make vulnerable the cultural borders equally produces movements claiming for pure identities, stabilized by the definition of a symbolic boundary "we/them" and by the obfuscation of all the other axes of differentiation (Hall, 1992, pp. 309ss.; 1997d).

[9] Dealing with cultural studies, in a lecture of 1990 (Hall, 2000, p. 42), Hall makes clear that his posture is not, of course, one of disregard for theory. What it is about, according to him, is to seek a coexistence with the irreducible tension between theory and politics: "What it is about is not an anti-theory, but the conditions and problems for the development of a theoretical work as political project".