

## José Mariátegui's East-South Decolonial Experiment

David Haekwon Kim

[Pre-Publication Version: *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, vol.7 no.2, Nov. 2015, 157-179]

José Mariátegui (1894–1930) is widely considered to have been one of the greatest Marxist and liberation thinkers of 20<sup>th</sup> century Latin America.[1] Sometimes, he is praised as the Gramsci of Latin America. One of his most significant contributions to political theory was his departure from orthodox Marxism in making the structural conditions and the potential revolutionary consciousness of the Peruvian indigenous the focal point of liberatory politics. He also directly participated in social movements in his homeland, Peru, having served as a leftist journalist, an activist in the populist organization *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* (APRA), a co-founder and co-editor of *Amauta*, a socialist journal of cultural analysis, and the first General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Peru, which later became the Communist Party of Peru.

Like many “Third World intellectuals” of the 1920s, Mariátegui was fascinated by political transformations in Asia generally and China particularly. He was a proponent of what he called “indigenous orientalism.” This has not received much commentary. So this essay pays special attention to his decolonial experimentation with ideas about Asia and China, and the light this may shed on some of his more familiar ideas and on ways of doing comparative political philosophy.

Clearly, East-West and North-South comparisons prevail in our politico-geographic imagination. Also, very little East-West comparative philosophy has made contact with even East-West forms of postcolonial studies. Thus, in the first section, I offer stage-setting, including a sketch of Decolonial Thought and its motivating concerns. In the second section, I broach the subject of Eurocentrism, a topic important both within Decolonial Thought and Mariátegui's political philosophy, and for them as well. In the third section, I offer an introduction to the political thought of Mariátegui and discuss three ways in which he began an East-South dialogue: 1) a reconceived geography of liberation in which Asia and Asians feature prominently, 2) a focus on Chinese revolutionary politics as a heuristic for Peruvian leftist political strategy, and 3) a Sinified hermeneutic for conceptualizing the consciousness of the Peruvian indigenous, one of the central elements of his political theory. Insofar as East-West comparative philosophers wish to consider more radical alternatives to political liberalism, or move outside of the East-West matrix, Mariátegui's decolonial experimentation may offer a valuable model. More broadly, I hope this discussion may contribute to a more robust East-South dialogue.[2]

### **Decolonial Thought as Comparative and Postcolonial Philosophy**

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, nearly every non-Western nation on the planet had been dominated by Western imperialism or neo-imperialism.[3] The occurrence of this phenomenon, a global Western imperium, seems uncontested. Any real controversy seems to concern whether it was *justified* and what to do with its *legacies*—not *whether* it happened. Importantly, for our purposes, the global imperium did not only alter the politics and economies of subordinated nations, often radically so; it also profoundly transformed the global epistemological landscape in its own image, which is the basic

idea behind what we call, “Eurocentrism”.[4] Thus, political epistemology is as important here as ethical and political criticism.

I think some version of these claims can be cast in a way that middle-road liberals and East-West comparativists, like Confucianism-focused comparativists, can in principle endorse. But a strong form of the political epistemology asserts that the global imperium and Eurocentrism form a deep conditioning context for philosophy and the academy more generally.[5] More individualized corrections of bias, ignorance, or narrow-mindedness, then, would be only a part of the solution, and historically-informed institutional transformations would be imperative.

For some, these stronger claims may be too obvious. Who can seriously doubt that global Western imperialism occurred and did so with enduring consequences, that Eurocentrism continues to distort the epistemic landscape of Western culture, politics, and philosophy, and that these conditions must be terminated. And yet when we turn to the major ethical, social, or political philosophers in the West—Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, Rawls, Habermas, Charles Taylor, etc. —there is barely any mention of the elements I have briefly summarized.

As a very broad genus or family of positions, the field of postcolonialism emerged to correct this institutional neglect. Over the last 35 years, due in large part to the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), postcolonial studies has consolidated into an important field of study in the academy. It has given scholars a variety of ways to understand and challenge Western colonialism, Eurocentrism, and how these have shaped the worlds of colonizers and colonized alike. The general framework of postcolonial studies includes a range of hybridized theories deriving from Marx, Gramsci, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Fanon, and others. And this framework has been applied to virtually every area where extant or former colonialism or neo-colonialism has been a reality, which is to say most of the world. One of its most famous variants is the largely or initially South Asian-based Subaltern Studies. Names like Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty will probably sound familiar to a Western scholar of, say, Plato or Kant, even if he or she has never ventured into this sector of the academy. More recently, a largely Latin American-based set of theories, gathered under the heading of “Decolonial Thought” or the “Decolonial Turn” has emerged as both a peer and a rival to Subaltern Studies. Here the work of Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Walter D Mignolo, María Lugones, Eduardo Mendieta, Lewis Gordon, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Linda Martín Alcoff, and others offer compelling analyses of the same broadly-construed problematic, and some of them, in particular Dussel, have published important work prior to the advent of Said’s *Orientalism*. [6]

Decolonial Thought is a significant contribution to the critique of modernity, colonialism, and Eurocentrism. Given its complexity, only a composite sketch is offered here. Combining the epistemic standpoint of the “underside” of the Americas with elements of world-systems theory, Decolonial Thought begins with a geohistorical specificity.[7] Namely, the global capitalist system that emerged in the modern era and tragically intensified in the centuries that followed had as its generative source the post-1492 genocidal plundering of the Americas sustained by the African slave trade. Anibal Quijano, with Immanuel Wallerstein, puts it this way: “The creation of this geosocial entity, the Americas, was the constitutive act of the modern world-system. The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not

have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas” (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992, 549). Quijano elaborates by arguing that what has been called “modernity” was centrally constituted by the rise of global capitalism configured by (1) a dominative control of labor and (2) a racial hierarchical classification of the labor structure (Quijano 2000). Thus, on their view, instances of colonialism were not tragic aberrations of modernity’s promise to humanity. They were normatively-consistent expressions of a globally hierarchical system, a planetary racially-hegemonic capitalist system. This condition, they call, “the coloniality of power” or simply “coloniality.” Consequently, elements commonly placed under the heading of modernity are actually features of coloniality because modernity unmasked turns out to be coloniality. The essential reference to labor domination in global capitalism indicates some Marxist influence. And the essential reference to power and racial classifications of control hearkens to Foucault. But the overall synthesis and theoretic directionality derives from experience and perspective generated from what Dussel has called “the underside of modernity.”

One way to think about coloniality is to broadly ontologize and epistemologize the notion of decolonization, something usually identified as an institutional process of nation-states. Ontologically, our being-in-the-world, to invoke Heidegger, is constituted by what Nelson Maldonado-Torres calls “being-colonized” or the “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres 2004, 39-44). According to Maldonado-Torres, such is the permeation and totality of coloniality. Epistemically, since we experience and know the world from specific social locations or positionalities, those privileged and those suppressed by coloniality will exhibit a knowledge differential in what the world is really like, some classic thematizations of which are Du Bois’ double-consciousness and Anzaldúa’s border identities. Importantly, the nature of modernity-as-coloniality or modernity-as-actually-coloniality is obscured by a certain political epistemology or what some philosophers have been calling “an epistemology of ignorance”: the redemptive discourse of modernity, with its promise of development and progress, mystifies the actual oppressive Eurocentric logic of coloniality (Mignolo 2011). This epistemology of ignorance pervades even roughly kindred intellectual visions and projects. Consider Mignolo’s challenging remarks: “Without decolonizing knowledge and changing the terms of the conversation, the rules of the game would be maintained and only the content, not the terms of the conversation, would be disputed. That is the trap the Christian theology of liberation and Marxism find themselves in – they are both part of Western civilization” (Mignolo 2012, 23). Other decolonial theorists, like Dussel and Maldonado-Torres, add Heidegger, Levinas, Adorno, Horkheimer, Foucault, and others to the list of Eurocentric figures or theories trapped in Eurocentric coloniality.

So how do we escape the trap? Mignolo and others contend that a determinedly *epistemic* decolonization must be pursued by centering critical voices from the “underside of modernity” or what Frantz Fanon called the “wretched of the Earth.”[8] As Mignolo notes, these voices – like those of Cugoana, Mariátegui, and Fanon – speak from their suppressed positions in ways that “epistemically delink” or disengage them from the mystifying discourse of modernity and expose the true nature of coloniality (Mignolo 2011, 52–62, 122–130, and 202–206). So to elude the trap that has ensnared Marxism, Christian liberation theology, and other broadly construed allies in the cause, we must epistemically center the delinking voices of the underside, like Fanon and Mariátegui.[9]

### **Eurocentrism: Toward a More Complex Haunting**

In the foregoing discussion, reference to Marx, Gramsci, Foucault, Derrida, and other European thinkers abound. This raises the specter of a deep unacknowledged Eurocentrism in the very theories that call for the abolition of Eurocentrism. In this section, I only begin a discussion of the complexity of Eurocentrism and the difficulty of escape from it. The problem potentially runs deeper for my project since I focus on a widely-acknowledged forerunner of Decolonial Thought, namely Mariátegui, some of whose Eurocentric-sounding remarks raise the question of a *longer* lineage of Eurocentrism within a perspective that explicitly disavows it. In the preface to his central text, *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, Mariátegui stated the ideal or passion that had shaped his perspective, “I have an avowed and resolute ambition: to assist in the creation of Peruvian socialism” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], xxxiv). In the minds of some of his contemporaries, this could have been taken to imply that Peru is of the same general category as England or France and, hence, that Peruvian socialism must follow the European trajectory of economic evolution. Indeed, Mariátegui spoke in a way that invited such an interpretation when he claimed “I have served my best apprenticeship in Europe and I believe the only salvation for Indo-America lies in European and Western science and thought. Sarmiento, who is still one of the creators of *argentinidad* [Argentine-ness], at one time turned his eyes toward Europe. He found no better way to be an Argentine” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], xxxiv).[10] It is clear that Mariátegui had a deep appreciation for European political thought and that he was eager to incorporate such thinking into his “creation of Peruvian socialism.” But was he Eurocentric? And are the postcolonial theorists of the Subaltern Studies or the Decolonial branches also Eurocentric? As noted earlier, Mignolo is confident that Mariátegui was not and that he offers a model for epistemic delinking. Presumably, Mignolo is confident that he himself has eluded this trap.

An excellent article by Leigh Jenco throws the issue into sharper relief. As noted earlier, most postcolonial scholarship makes heavy use of Marx, Gramsci, Derrida, and Foucault. In response, Jenco offers both a critique of Eurocentrism in postcolonial scholarship and a constructive proposal for how to use non-Western methodologies (in particular those of Wang Yangming and Kang Youwei) to non-Eurocentrically understand the content of non-Western traditions. For the purposes of this essay, I focus on her negative account. Specifically, she notes that while progressive cross-cultural theorists, including postcolonial Subaltern theorists, have done much to problematize the Western perspectives masquerading as universalisms in mainstream social and political analysis, and championed the inclusion of alternative voices, it is also curiously true that “their critiques of ethnocentrism more often take cues from competing Western discourses (e.g. Marxism, German hermeneutics) than from the culturally diverse scholastic traditions whose ideas they are scrutinizing (say, classical Chinese Confucianism, or twentieth-century Islamic fundamentalism)” (Jenco 2007, 742).

Here, of course, Mignolo might cite, as in fact he has, Cugoano, Mariátegui, and Fanon, as paradigms of epistemic delinking from Eurocentrism. But arguably Jenco’s critique, though focused on Subaltern studies, tracks this Decolonial move. For example, Mignolo does not highlight Cugoano’s Fanti origins (now present-day Ghana) or contest his use of Christianity as received from European slave societies (as opposed to more

indigenously syncretized forms of Christianity). And Fanon's work reveals much indebtedness to Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, even if it does not reduce to these French thinkers, and Mignolo does not highlight the indigenous forms of Martinique in emphasizing Fanon's delinking. Also, as noted above, Mariátegui seems almost to encourage the idea that he is Eurocentric, and his work clearly reveals his debt to Marx and Lenin, as well as to Benedetto Croce, Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Sorel, and other Europeans. There seems to be a pattern, then, of 1) first-order rejection of Eurocentric perspectives, which is 2) based on an implicit, and sometimes explicit, second-order European-derived theory, with 3) a general absence of first-order or second-order discourse from non-Western traditions. The upshot would seem to be a second-order re-linking with Eurocentrism. She adds that the "most alarming consequence is not simply that the adequacy of Western models and categories is reaffirmed, but that the capacity to conduct self-sufficient theoretical inquiry in non-Western intellectual or social traditions is implicitly denied..." (Jenco 2007, 745).

In a nuanced article focusing explicitly on Latin American liberation philosophy, including key figures of Decolonial Thought, Manuel Vargas also raises the issue of surreptitious or second-order Eurocentrism (Vargas 2005). Vargas polemically raises the issue not so much to condemn Latin American liberation philosophy or simply to offer a cautionary note, but ultimately to give a sympathetic portrayal of some of the complexities faced by Latin American liberation philosophy and some of the contributions offered by it. He discusses multiple facets of Eurocentrism, but for our purposes, two of them are salient, and here his concerns are aligned with Jenco's. First, regarding reliance on European continental philosophy, he notes that the aim of the theory, namely liberation, "appears compromised when such liberation is framed in terms of the conceptual system that is bound up with the very systems of domination it is supposed to overcome" (Vargas 2005, 9). Second, he notes that even if Latin American liberation philosophy has a variety of virtues, including originality, the heavy use of "European philosophical categories may be taken to imply – however unintentionally – that Latin American concepts, theories, and vocabulary are insufficient to the task of liberation" (Vargas 2005, 9). To address the problem, Vargas vouches for what he calls a "wide philosophy of liberation," which not only subverts or reconfigures the categories of the hegemonic West but also integrates them with the local or indigenous concepts and vocabulary of the "underside" of the West. As he puts it: "... no matter how many times you meet with the indigenous, poor, oppressed, or peripheral peoples of Latin America, if your theoretical work does comparatively little to systematically rely on their categories in the fight against oppression, it will fail to count as a suitably wide philosophy of liberation" (Vargas 2005, 11). Vargas goes on to suggest that if we carry out the demands of a wide philosophy of liberation, then the first-order subversion process must focus more on U.S. than European discourse since it is now the U.S. that has become a hegemon over Latin America. And U.S. discourse is more reliant on "rational choice theory, Adam Smith, and conceptions of rights than it is on Marx, Heidegger, and Levinas" (Vargas 2005, 12).

Clearly, Jenco and Vargas raise concerns that need separate fuller consideration. But I would like here to briefly address some of their points or at least the spirit of their concerns. First, I think it is important to consider something easily overlooked, namely the specific types of objects of Eurocentrism (or America-centrism) or, more broadly,

Westcentrism. Note that Jenco is explicitly concerned with traditions of thought, and she offers some novel suggestions, which I have not been able to entertain here, about the distinction between methodologies and the (first-order) content of these traditions. Vargas, responding to Dussel and other Decolonial and Latin American liberation philosophers, focuses both on traditions of thought and on the actual peoples or collectivities associated with the relevant traditions of thought. Sometimes, there is also consideration of culture, which seems to me not to reduce to scholarly traditions or peoples, even if it is intimately related to both.[11] Thus, conceivably, and indeed actually, there is Eurocentrism or Westcentrism about traditions (e.g. "Western liberalism must supply the norms for evaluating Confucianism and Buddhism."), peoples or societies (e.g. "The United Nations should not give the same level of consideration to Bangladeshis as it does the British."), or cultures (e.g. "Brazilian ways of protesting are juvenile in comparison to American ways."). Perhaps there are still other types of objects.

If this is so, then conceivably one might display Eurocentrism about traditions but not about peoples. One might think: "Germans and French are no better than we Nicaraguans. But the tradition of Marx, Heidegger, Foucault, etc. is the greatest development in philosophy we have yet seen, and it has helped me greatly in understanding why we Nicaraguans should insist on our equality with Germans and French." This person, following a postcolonialist strategy, may also add: "Besides, applying Foucault here, who can really escape the undertow of European discursive regimes in the academy anyway?" Perhaps for this person the well-being of Nicaraguans is far more important than the greatness of its philosophical traditions, and thus the wrongful centering of the needs or claims of Western societies to the neglect of Nicaraguan society is more urgent in the critique of Eurocentrism than the wrongful centering of the norms or concepts of Western philosophies. I think some version of this scenario is not uncommon. And it invites us to consider that there is actually a logical gap in the inference from the thesis that a theory is undermined by Eurocentrism of traditions to the thesis that a people, many of whose members endorse that problematic theory, is harmed by Eurocentrism of traditions. In other words, it must be *shown* that Eurocentrism of traditions is tantamount to Eurocentrism of peoples. Although it does seem likely that the privileging or centering of one people's concepts facilitates the privileging or centering of that same people's interests, the transition is not absolute. For one may engage in the former in a *particular sort of way*, one may "use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house," as far as this is possible, precisely in order to *undo* the latter. I take it that this is what some postcolonialists have done in using Foucault and Derrida to critique the centering of European interests, even if this means centering European concepts at a meta-level. And this is presumably why Mignolo praises the work of Cugoano, Mariátegui, and Fanon.

Consequently, a Decolonial theorist may hold that Eurocentrism of peoples or societies is more important than Eurocentrism of traditions and that the latter, whether or not flawed on its own terms, is especially problematic for its contribution to (not equivalency with) the former. And indeed the centering of European peoples and marginalization of Latin American peoples is a recurring point of contention that shapes Decolonial critiques of more conceptual forms of Eurocentrism. Consider, for example, the powerful meditation of Dussel on Levinas:

He [Levinas] told me how his generation's great political experiences have been Stalin and Hitler ... But when I pointed out to him that European modernity, with its conquistador ego, colonizers, and imperial culture, the oppressor of peripheral peoples, had been the experience of not just my generation but also of the last five hundred years, he could only grant that he never had thought that the "Other" could be the "indigenous peoples, Africans, or even Asians." (Quoted in Mignolo 2003, 84)

The upshot for Jenco, then, is that though she may be right in her critique of Eurocentric reinscription at the second-order level in Subaltern Studies (and perhaps also some instances of Decolonial Thought), her account and that of postcolonial studies appear to have different evaluative priorities, though not radically different ones. Postcolonialists, especially Decolonialists, prioritize the abolition of oppression, and the elimination of Eurocentrism of traditions is an important feature of the elimination of Eurocentrism of peoples or societies. With this in mind, postcolonial theorists and Decolonialists in particular may contend that Jenco's account offers an important cautionary note and that their liberatory approach may not so much be undermined by Eurocentrism of traditions but be *incomplete*. In Vargas' language, Decolonial Thought can be still *wider*, as it strives to integrate local indigenous concepts with its subversion of Western concepts. Indeed, Jenco's positive proposals about non-Western methodologies may assist us here, though that is a topic for another discussion.

Also, if we contextualize the concern with Eurocentrism of traditions, we can see better how a liberatory orientation may require us to *risk* Eurocentrism of traditions, which is something that can be easily overlooked. Note that an overfocus on non-Western traditions will do little to unsettle Eurocentrism since it is so deeply entrenched that its adherents, sometimes unwitting, typically cannot "hear" critiques of Eurocentrism unless these are couched in European or broadly Western discourse. So if we follow Jenco's advice and commend the methodologies of non-Western traditions, like those of Wang Yangming and Kang Youwei, this will likely have little impact since most people will be uninterested in Chinese sources as serious philosophy. As a result, though the Euro-theoretic critique of Eurocentrism is incomplete without non-Western alternative methods, so too the latter is incomplete without the former.

I think there are at least three reasons for risking Eurocentrism of traditions, the cumulative impact of which may generate a deep, even if not exclusive, commitment to European or Western theory. The most obvious reason is that challenging suspect ideas from the West requires actually engaging with that conceptual network. Second, to challenge oppressive structures from the West, their supportive or sense-giving ideas must be engaged with and criticized (and Vargas contends that this is why we must shift from a European to a U.S.-focused project). Third, to support transformative or anti-hegemonic social movements of the West, their supportive or sense-giving network of ideas needs to be deeply considered and encouraged. In regards to the third point, though it may seem too obvious, it is helpful to recall that Marxism as a movement opposed to inequality and dehumanization was one of the few that seemed to be operating dynamically at local, regional, and global levels. Clearly, Foucault and Derrida assist us with the first two aims. But, historically, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until fairly late in the

20<sup>th</sup> century, Marxism served all three aims. I think this helps to explain why so many “Third World intellectuals,” like Mariátegui, were inspired by Marxism.

As we shall see below, Mariátegui fit the model I have described: He prioritized the abolition of Eurocentrism of peoples over the elimination of Eurocentrism of traditions, and contextualized the latter within the former. But, as noted, this sort of project is incomplete. Mariátegui, as it turned out, also sought a “wider liberation.” he was keen to center the conditions, consciousness, and potentialities of the Peruvian indigenous in his account. Finally, my earlier quote of his strong celebration of European ideas can be understood in terms of this three-fold risk of Eurocentrism. For Marxism, though not complete in itself (again indigenous thought was deemed crucial), offered a powerful way to critique the ideas and mechanisms of coloniality, and Marxist movements seemed to be compelling ways to collectively enact decolonization. As we shall see, experimental conceptions of Asia and China played a non-trivial role in his type of “epistemic delinking.”

### **Mariátegui’s Decolonial Experimentation**

In Mariátegui’s classic text, *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* (1928) and several of his 1920’s essays on anti-imperialism, socialism, and Latin America, we find a consistent thread of references to Asia or the East. Some of his essays are almost entirely on Asia, where this is advertised in such titles as “Revolutionary and Socialist Agitation in the East,” “East and West,” and “Gandhi.” It might be a bit of a curiosity as to why Mariátegui, who is famous for trying to Peruvianize Marxism and in some sense Peruvianize Peru, made consistent reference to Asia. As it happened, revolutionary ferment in China and India after WWI generated a global audience. For example, China’s May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement (1919), China’s United Front movement and its violent collapse in the 1920’s, and the Satyagraha campaigns in India in the same decade attracted the attention of students of social transformation the world over. Perhaps the world-historical significance of the recent Russian Revolution (1917) primed Mariátegui’s political imagination to ascribe import to these further challenges to or paroxysms of coloniality. In any case, his interest in these events and peoples were expressed in some classic civilizationist discourses of East and West, including some outmoded stereotypical forms. Nevertheless, much of the impetus for considering Asia, especially China, in relation to Latin America, especially Peru, seemed to be broadly decolonial and Marxist.

#### *Mariátegui’s Marxism in Brief*

Mariátegui’s Marxism famously had at least two general distinguishing features. First, well before Mao sinified Marxism, Mariátegui Peruvianized Marxism: he pressed conventional Marxist analysis as far as it could go in explaining historically and geopolitically specific features of a largely feudalistic and imperialistically dominated Peru, and, as needed, he modified the analysis to sync with its object (Peru) and thereby its ultimate aim (liberation). Mariátegui faced the puzzle of how to explain the persistence of so much feudalism alongside a comparatively smaller-scaled capitalism in post-independence Peru, when the European trajectory, which became normative for societal development, consisted of leaving behind feudalism, embracing capitalism, and undergoing deepening contradictions that would set the stage for a socialist revolution.

Orthodox Marxism faced a dilemma in its consideration of Peru, China, and many other places of the “Third World” that deviated from its conception of law-like historical development: Revise its historicism (and thus decenter the European historical process) or explain (sometimes via problematic racialism) the inadequacy of the peoples that failed to be rightly historical. Mariátegui opted for the former, a normative decentering of Europe, and his primary foci were what he called the “Land Problem” and the “Indigenous Problem” or “Indian Problem,” each of which got its own chapter in the *Seven Essays*.

On his view, what is called “Peru” began with the native communism of the Incas or the Quechua(-speaking) people more generally. Their economy was one with the reality of the *ayllu*, a form of community that was both intensively communalistic and also communist in the sense of not having private property on the model of modern societies. This extended period of history was transformed by the Conquistadors, whose genocidal domination established colonial feudalism. So many of the indigenous were forced into cruel servitude on the large estates, *latifundia*. After Independence, the *Latifundium*-based feudalism remained, and the Spanish masters were replaced by Peruvian land-holding or land-ruling elites. The *gamonal*-class ruled the *latifundium* and the feudal system, and Mariátegui called this historical phase, *Gamonalismo*.

Interestingly, he noted that the *gamonales*, in spite of having fertile soil and superior technology, generally ran the estates with little more productivity than did autonomous Indians on their difficult arid terrain. Thus, the largely incompetent *gamonales* had a retarding effect in terms of economic development along the orthodox Marxist trajectory. Mariátegui put it starkly, “The *gamonal* as an economic factor is, therefore, completely disqualified” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 73). Moreover, concurrent with *gamonalismo*, was the rise of local capitalism, still relatively small compared to the feudalistic structures, and the insertion of the *gamonales* and *latifundia* into the global imperialistic structures of capitalism described by Lenin. As Mariátegui noted, “When London can obtain a commodity more cheaply and in sufficient quantity from India or Egypt, it immediately abandons its suppliers in Peru. Our *latifundistas*, our landholders, may think that they are independent, but they are actually only intermediaries or agents of foreign capital” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 70). Furthermore, complicating the persistence of feudalism was the racialized hierarchy of the *criollo* (the more “purely” European-based denizens of Peru) and *mestizo* generally standing over the Indian (the more “purely” indigenous people of Peru). And those locked into the feudal system were largely comprised of the indigenous.

Mariátegui’s response to Peruvian coloniality was to insist on the standard Marxist line of global revolution and thus the necessity of gathering all peoples of the world under a unified vision. He was a strong supporter of Lenin’s extension of Marx in regards to global imperialism and the idea of advanced stages of capitalism. But, at the same time, he insisted that the style of revolutions could and ought to bear the imprint of the local situation (Mariátegui 1996 [1928b], 89). Here something distinctive turns up. On the Marxist view, those privileged and those oppressed in the structures of production play special causal roles, where, on the European paradigm, the capitalists deepen contradictions, the proletariat revolt, and the economic structure moves closer to the next phase of development. On the Peruvian scene, supposed Mariátegui, the *gamonales*, *latifundistas*, bourgeoisie, and colonial capitalists deepen contradictions, and the feudal

laborers, largely Indian, and the proletariat respond with resistance or revolution. In addition, since the population in general and in the underclass was largely indigenous, the Indian would figure prominently as a causal force in the non-European unfolding of history. But there is something more. It mattered that this central causal force was Indian and not *criollo* because the indigenous could contribute elements of the Incan communism they inherited, which Mariátegui described as “the most advanced primitive communist organization that history has known”(Mariátegui 1996 [1928b], 89). The Indian, then, both occupies the right economic position and possesses a special economic consciousness by which to revolutionize Peru, though, as we shall see, these need to be shaped in a particular way. Consequently, even if socialist theory is distinctively European, as is capitalist reality, socialist reality can be reclaimed in the case of Peru, and any socialist theory must be revised to acknowledge this. And, as noted, such reclamation must proceed in conjunction with a concerted global revolution (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 26). With the focus on local and global labor control and racialization, the geohistorical significance of 1492 and its aftermath, and voices from the “underside” of colonial modernity, it is clear why Mariátegui would be considered a forerunner of Decolonial Thought.

A second distinctive feature of Mariátegui’s Marxism was his insistence on a paradox, an insistence that by some lights invited the charge of Idealism: world events must be understood in terms of the operations of an economic base, but at the level of consciousness and will, there is a deeply felt liberty, striving, or dynamism that requires some treatment on its own terms even as it is contextualized within an economic framework. Such liberty, striving, or dynamism is necessary, according to Mariátegui, because economic and democratic change requires willful enactment of collective agency, not awaiting the movements of history. As Ofelia Shute has clarified in her pioneering study, during his three-year “exile” in Europe in the early 1920’s, Mariátegui was notably influenced by such figures as Bergson, Nietzsche, Benedetto Croce, Georges Sorel, and perhaps Gramsci (Schutte 1993, 26-29 and 38-47). These figures emphasized, among other things, myth, will, consciousness, striving, embodiment, affectivity, creativity, transformation, and culture. Importantly, he also spiritualized the affectivity, dynamism, and creativity of political transformation, claiming that “revolution is always religious” and that “Communism is essentially religious” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 212).[12] Clearly, he had a more aesthetic, affective, and immanent conception of spirituality than what, say, standard institutional Christianity presented. Though Mariátegui expressed continuing commitment to Marxism, this infusion of ideas arguably introduced genuine complexity into his system of thought, a matter that needs separate treatment.[13] As a result of this dynamical configuration of Marxism, Mariátegui spent a good deal of time on art, literature, education, and revolutionary myths and consciousness in his writings. In fact, as many have noted, most of the pages of his classic text, *Seven Essays*, are devoted to precisely these sites of imagination and well-springs of social transformation. Finally, returning to the earlier point about reasons for risking Eurocentrism, Mariátegui did not first endorse Marxism and then come to appreciate the need to make it more “voluntaristic” or dynamic; rather, he came to Marxism precisely because it seemed to offer a transformative engagement structure that matched his prior liberatory aspirations. Perhaps, then, he was ultimately a Marxist Decolonialist (of Peru) more so than a Peruvian Marxist.

### *Mariátegui's Indigeneity*

These foregoing two sets of thoughts – the Peruvianizing of Marxism and the emphasis on “voluntarism” in Marxism – converge upon the Indian. Much of Mariátegui’s vision of social transformation is conveyed in this passage: “We certainly do not wish socialism in America to be a copy and imitation. It must be a heroic creation. We must give life to an Indo-American socialism reflecting our own reality and in our own language. Here is a mission worthy of a new generation” (Mariátegui 1996 [1928b], 89). The Indian, then, as specially-positioned economic actor and cultural inheritor of Incan communism, offers a unique and unique-making contribution to Peruvian socialism and *mestizaje*. Elements of Incan culture partially refashioned in present-day struggle place both an indigenous and efficacious configuration on the project of transforming Peru and perhaps Latin America more generally. The Indian is not a relic of the past, nor simply a statistical majority in the present. The Indian is the future – the willed future – of Peru.[14] As he put it, “Indigenism ... has its roots in the present; it finds its inspiration in the protest of millions of men. The vice-royalty was; the Indian is. And whereas getting rid of the remains of colonial feudalism is a basic condition for progress, vindication of the Indian and of his history is inserted into a revolutionary program” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 274).

Importantly, Mariátegui treated Incan culture and Indian futurity with sophistication, even if certain of his claims turn out to be problematic. To begin, he objected to views such as the pro-colonialist Riva Agüera’s claim that Incan or Quechua cultures had become extinct and thus Other to modern Peruvians (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 192–3). He also challenged notions that exoticized Incas or Quechua and rendered them mere literary devices or window dressing (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 271–2). As he saw it, the ancient cultures were neither extinct nor completely intact, and many *mestizo* writers were producing, even if imperfectly, what he called “indigenist” literature that was attuned to some of the deep structures of the early Incas and Quechua. Interestingly, he seemed to think that the liberatory task of reconstructing elements of Incan culture had to be pursued even if the results to some extent outstripped available hermeneutic resources. This was not an invitation to interpretive distortion or license. Rather, on his view, revolution required real-time and real-life epistemology and could not be delayed by overly stringent criteria of authenticity. As he put it,

Indigenist literature cannot give us a strictly authentic version of the Indian, for it must idealize and stylize him. Nor can it give us his soul. It is still a mestizo literature and as such is called indigenist rather than indigenous. If an indigenous literature finally appears, it will be when the Indians themselves are able to produce it. (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 274)

Presumably, then, revolution-making required building the conditions for full indigenous self-expression, but such building required an *antecedent* careful borrowing and reconstruction of indigenous culture as part of the “heroic and creative meaning of socialism.”[15] This raises the question of what resources were available for the reconstruction of Incan communist culture for modern socialist revolution, and I will return to this shortly. In any case, Mariátegui also stated that the point of “heroic creation” was not to “resurrect” the Incas, as if an idyllic return to the pre-Columbian condition would be the remedy for the social ills of his day. Rather, he claimed that “Constructive generations think of the past as an origin, not as a program” (Mariátegui

1971 [1928a], 274). And as “constructive generations” take up the “task of redressing political and economic wrongs” perpetrated against the indigenous, it will be conceptual mixture, critical refinement, and creative development that must be emphasized in the reconstruction of Incan cultural elements (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 272).[16]

*“Agitation in the East” and “Indigenous Orientalism”*

In light of this brief introduction to Mariátegui, I consider three aspects of his decolonial orientation salient to East-South dialogue. And I think it is crucial to bear in mind that his bridging efforts predate two general developments to which current theorists are indebted or responsive, namely (1) the consolidation of serious East-West comparative philosophical scholarship in the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and (2) the Third-World solidarity movements of the “long 1960s,” which were more intensive and often more conceptually mature than similar movements in earlier decades.

First, revolutionary ferment in Asia became a liberatory inspiration for Mariátegui, as it was for many critical intellectuals of modernity’s “underside” during the interwar years (and afterward). This is no small matter since Mariátegui’s theory is liberationist and centrally concerned with hope and aspiration. As a Marxist, Lenin and the Russian Revolution loomed large in his consciousness. As a Latin American activist, the earlier struggles of Bolívar and Martí were of course important to Mariátegui. And, arguably, as an emerging Sino-Peruvian or East-South theorist, the radical political and decolonial experiments in the new Chinese republic captured his imagination.

As seen in such work as his 1923 essay, “Revolutionary and Socialist Agitation in the East,” Mariátegui destabilized the commonly assumed geography of revolution, which centered the white or European proletariat, and began to develop a wider solidaristic vision, an early version of the notion of “Third World” revolution or of a decolonial global transformation. In that essay, he expressed a version of dependency theory, explaining that European societies mitigated the material contradictions internal to their polities by pursuing imperialistic exploitation of Asian and Middle Eastern peoples, which he even described as a “conquistador policy against the East” ((Mariátegui 1996 [1923], 39). But he thought this oppressive global structure would face serious obstacles due to the impoverishment of Europe brought on by WWI, the retention of indigenous cultures in Asia and hence the refusal to grant moral authority to Europe, and the rise of anticolonial rebellions and socialist internationalist movements in the “East.” He also endorsed the notion, debated in the Third International, that anticolonial “revolutionary nationalist” struggles could be endorsed at a particular historical stage, even if they were not socialist revolutions, because they help to undermine the imperial structure of global capitalism.[17] Relatedly, Mariátegui thought that such insurrections in the East could turn out to be like Latin American independence struggles a century earlier (Mariátegui 1996 [1923], 39). Importantly, he contended further that so-called Eastern peoples have been mounting their nationalist and socialist struggles in spite of being normatively displaced by Eurocentrism in Marxism. He critiqued the displacement in the following way:

Bourgeois society developed and matured in the midst of medieval and aristocratic society. Similarly, proletarian society is currently developing and maturing in the midst of bourgeois society. ... socialist theory, proletarian theory,

is a fruit of the problems of the Western peoples, a method to resolve them. ... Socialism, syndicalism, the theories that inspired the European multitudes, therefore, left the Eastern multitudes indifferent. For this reason, there was not an international solidarity of the exploited multitudes, but a solidarity of the socialist multitudes. This was the meaning, the extent, the reach of the old Internationals, the First and Second Internationals. And hence the working masses of Europe would not energetically combat the colonization of the working masses of the East, so distant from their own customs, sentiments, and aims. (Mariátegui 1996 [1923], 37)

In contrast, he held the “provincializing Europe” model of Zinoviev at the Third International, who claimed, according to Mariátegui, that

If Marx said that a European revolution without England would seem like a tempest in a teapot, we say, German comrades, that a proletarian revolution without Asia is not a world revolution. And this had great importance to us. I am a European, too, like yourselves, but I feel Europe is a small part of the world ... We have sensed what is necessary to accomplish the world revolution. And this is the awakening of the oppressed masses of Asia. (Mariátegui 1996 [1923], 38)[18]

This centering of Asia deeply resonated with Mariátegui because it opened up space for the possibility of a world-historical revolution created by what he thought was the civilizationally similar indigenous of Peru. Mariátegui’s praise of Lenin’s analysis of imperialism as the advanced stage of capitalism is clear. Now we can see that Zinoviev (and thus Asian revolution) was united with Lenin (on global colonialism) in the internationalist dimension of Mariátegui’s liberatory hopes and perspective.

And why should this East-South politico-geographic imaginary be important? As noted earlier, so very many of the greatest critical theorists of Europe’s 20<sup>th</sup> century could barely give a nod to the non-white or non-European world. This is not simply a statistical point, but an indication of a prevailing mindset or zeitgeist. Mariátegui’s breaking through this wall, then, is an ethical and epistemic achievement. And I think this achievement manifests not simply in terms of first-order content in his theorizing about social transformation, something which I will talk about more shortly, but also and perhaps most especially at the meta-level of theoretic priorities or directives that generate first-order content. I think few will doubt how powerful a role Eurocentric historicism or grand narratives have played in centuries of Western political thought. By now, it seems clear that these dubious conceptions exerted such force because they operated at the meta-level in a regrettably generative way. Mariátegui, then, took up one type of decolonial alternative, partially but conspicuously an East-South one, to Eurocentric history and geography. And he did this roughly 4 decades before the Third World alliances of the late 1960’s.[19]

A second important feature of Mariátegui’s East-South decoloniality was his use of Chinese praxis as a Peruvian political heuristic. Interestingly, his own description of his motivations for this Sino-Peruvian politico-epistemic project was the avoidance of “eurocentric plagiarism” as well as a “precise appreciation of our own reality” (Mariátegui 1996 [1929], 131). So the trope of China mediates the avoidance of

Eurocentrism and the centering of Peru. Specifically, he looked to the successes, failures, and frameworks of evolving socialist dynamics in China as a way to conceptualize Peru's revolutionary agenda (Mariátegui 1996 [1924]). There are at least three such uses. First, bourgeois nationalism in China was a foil for his thinking of the same in Peru. For example, in his 1929 essay, "Anti-Imperialist Viewpoint," he contended that China could wage a two-stage revolution, beginning with a revolutionary nationalist one and ending with a socialist one, because its people, whatever their class or station, strongly identified with an encompassing nation and could, therefore, defend it *en masse* against colonial powers. In contrast, he claimed that Peru could not because its upper elite and bourgeoisie were so racist and colonially assimilated, and thus so disidentified with the greater masses of Peru, that any basis of nationalist unification was in jeopardy. The implication was that a more purely indigenous and socialist revolution was necessary from the start (Mariátegui 1996 [1929], 131). Second, as the failures of the united front of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China (CPC) became known in the late 1920's, where the former attacked and purged the latter, Mariátegui was able to use that failure and its history as a backboard on which to play off his assessments and prognoses of Peru's APRA (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance). He expressed grave concern that APRA's attempt to switch from being a broad united front alliance to a formal party would generate institutional processes that suppress or betray constituents of the alliance, precisely like he and his fellow socialists. He assessed the prospects of party-formation negatively, repeatedly referring to APRA as a "Latin American Kuomintang" (Mariátegui 1996 [1929], 132). Third and finally, while steering clear of APRA and the formal party strategy, the Indianization of Peru had to continue and potential parallels with China were suggestive. On his view, the CPC consisted of people who were both socialist and hybridized or transformed Confucians. By considering the CPC, he could think more concretely about the prospects of a contemporary indigenous and Peruvian socialist movement. As he put it:

The Indian continues his old rural life. To this day, he keeps his native dress, his customs, and his handicrafts. The indigenous social community has not disappeared under the harshest feudalism. The indigenous society may appear to be primitive and retarded, but it is an organic type of society and culture. The experience of the Orient—in Japan, Turkey, and China itself—has proved to us that even after a long period of collapse, an autochthonous society can rapidly find its own way to modern civilization and translate into its own tongue the lessons of the West. (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 283)

Why should this point about Chinese praxis as model and foil be significant? Partly this is because it strengthens the case I made earlier that an East-South decolonial imaginary is operating in Mariátegui's theorizing. But also this is not just any sort of first-order content. This concerns the implementation of the liberatory vision. Given the departure from the European model, one might think that there weren't enough elements in the world by which to get traction in the practical political theorizing of a new way out of Peruvian coloniality. It turned out that the Chinese model had enough similarity and, importantly, enough difference, to afford Mariátegui a distinctively concrete, fecund, and evolving example by which to formulate a new Peruvian praxis. He said of concepts, that "The perfect, absolute, abstract idea, indifferent to facts, to moving, changing reality, is worthless; what is useful is the germinal, concrete, dialectical, operative idea, rich in

potential and capable of movement” (Mariátegui 1996 [1928b], 88). Sino-Peruvian comparative praxis, then, seemed to have fit the bill.[20]

A third significant element of Mariátegui’s East-South decoloniality was his use of a classic discourse of Asian and especially Chinese cultural forms as a decolonial hermeneutic for understanding and thereby politically mobilizing the indigenous cultural forms of Peru. To begin, we should consider what resources he had available for understanding Indian cultural forms, especially those linked to their communist inheritance or revolutionary potential more broadly. As far as I can tell, Mariátegui relied upon anthropologies of the Inca, indigenist literary productions, and a somewhat limited set of actual encounters with the Peruvian indigenous.[21] How he brought a Sino-Incan hermeneutic into dialogue with his anthropological considerations will be addressed, but before turning to this, several contextual elements should be kept in mind.[22] Mariátegui regarded Asian peoples generally to have cultures that were not colonially destroyed or diminished. In his essay, “East and West,” he remarked that Buddhism, Islam, and other indigenous cultural forms remained in Asia as “fresh and vital” as they had been many centuries ago (Mariátegui 1996 [1925a], 40).[23] The idea that Asia was only colonized politically and economically, but not culturally or spiritually, is commonly cited as a profound difference between Latin America and Asia. So a link between Chinese and Peruvian indigeneity would strengthen the non-Eurocentric character of his decolonial position and add a further link to the radical political relations already discussed. I turn now to a brief discussion of Sino-Peruvian spirituality as they appeared in his anthropological discussions on religion and spirituality.

Mariátegui relied upon the anthropology of his day, such as that of James Frazier, to explain the religiosity or spirituality of the Inca as: pantheistic, animistic, and materialist (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 126). These ideas, and these very words, recur in his descriptions of the Inca. He did not elaborate on their materialism, perhaps because this was simply another way to note their naturally or natively-evolved communism. As for their animism, he thought this is clearly revealed in their polytheism, like the worship of the sun god, and their general sense of spirits enchanting elements of their everyday life. Finally and most interesting for our purposes, in characterizing the Inca as pantheistic, he contended that they experienced sacrality as (1) permeating their social world (not just in the sense of spirits inhabiting nature) and (2) as an affective phenomenon in their ordinary everyday feelings. So, combining these components, the Incan world was formed by an enchanted sociality.[24] He claimed too that the conquistadors and colonial Catholicism could not extinguish this form of spirituality. It entered into a “loveless marriage” with Catholicism and the surviving structure was not a “metaphysical concept, but agrarian rituals, incantations, and pantheism” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 127 and 276–7). Importantly, he was rather keen on emphasizing how the pantheism was an affective, even socio-affective, mode of engagement with the world, rather than an explicit philosophy or metaphysics about, say, monism of divinity and nature, divinity and humanity, or spirit and matter.[25] He claimed, “I attribute to the Indian of Tawantinsuyo a pantheistic sentiment and not a pantheistic philosophy” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 127 fn8). [26]

Elsewhere, Mariátegui also noted that Chinese culture, apparently Confucianism broadly, is closer to Peruvian indigenous culture than Hindu culture. Against those who asserted that Incans were Hindus of a kind, he claimed that,

... their belief rests on similarities of form, not on really spiritual or religious similarities. The basic characteristics of the Inca religion are its collective theocracy and its materialism. These characteristics differentiate it from the essentially spiritual Hindu religion. ... The Quechua religion was a moral code rather than a metaphysical concept, which brings us much closer to China than to India. State and church were absolutely inseparable; religion and politics recognized the same principles and the same authority. Religion functioned in terms of society. (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 126)

Here he added details to the notion of sacral sociality or social pantheism, where this is about engaged modes of being rather than formal doctrinal speculation. So Chinese culture, and Confucianism broadly construed, became an analogical and conceptually generative device by which to depict what is distinctive to Indian/Incan thought and, hence, the unique source of, Mariátegui hoped, the “creative and heroic” will. The Chinese, not the *criollo*—and Confucianism, not liberal individualism—was the interpretive and generative instrument. It is no wonder that Mariátegui claimed that Asian societies are “kindred to the Inca society” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 275). He even claimed of the Peruvian writer José Egurán that he “does not understand or know the people. He is remote from the Indian’s history and alien to his history. He is spiritually too occidental and foreign to assimilate indigenous orientalism” (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 245). And, of course, living before Edward Said, “orientalism” is used here in a neutral fashion.

### *Questions and Openings*

These remarks of Mariátegui generate many questions. For example, it is interesting to consider whether Mariátegui’s account was orientalist (in the pejorative sense of the term) in the way it invoked Confucianism (and Hinduism). Like many orientalists (in the pejorative sense of the term), he too conceived of East and West in outmoded binaristic terms, as when he talked of oriental fatalism and decrepit oriental cultures. But perhaps this is tempered by his attentiveness to the actual politics of China and India rather than the more speculative biases of, say, Kant and Hegel.[27] Also, were the Inca in fact the way that anthropologists of that period claimed? Where did he derive his conception of Confucianism given the dearth of translated texts and commentaries during his day?[28] What differentiates Incan social pantheism from Confucian social pantheism, as he understood these? If we were to fill out the notion of Confucian social sacrality with key Confucian concepts like *xiao* (filial piety), *li* (ritual propriety), and *tian* (as an immanent heaven), would he continue to find a meaningful parallel between the Inca and the Confucian?

I think his account is rather thin here, and so it is unclear how to reply to these questions. But his account plays a special role in a distinctive political project. Moreover, it seems clear that many would find plausible the idea of depicting Confucianism as being crucially about a form of sacral sociality. A good deal of secondary literature emphasizes the immanence of Confucian spirituality and ethics. Herbert Fingarette’s *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* – which incidentally seems to reference Durkheim’s anthropology of religion – made this point in a compelling way and arguably had a rejuvenating effect on Confucian studies in the U.S. And Confucianist philosophers, Roger Ames and David Hall, have contended that, “An appropriate and adequate explication of the meaning of

Confucius' thought requires a language of immanence grounded in the supposition that laws, rules, principles, or norms have their source in the human, social contexts which they serve" (Hall and Ames 1987, 14). Furthermore, religion scholar, Lee Yearley has offered a typology of three ways of being religious, each of which has as a prototypical instance, respectively, Christian dualistic transcendence, Vedic monistic transcendence, and Confucian and Daoist immanence (Yearley 1982). This is an articulate, though not incontestable, typology that roughly maps onto Mariátegui's admittedly thin typology in which he distinguishes between Catholicism, Hindu/Indian transcendence, and Confucian/Chinese immanence. The upshot is that at least in broad strokes there is something to the notion of "indigenous orientalism."

A more interesting question given Mariátegui's transformative aims is whether a sacral sociality or social pantheism can assist in the creation of socialism. For Mariátegui, Western socialism emerges dialectically out of bourgeois-liberalism with its "selfish" and social-ontological individualism. Such individualism and ideological subterfuge about it would be major obstacles to socialism. Thus, perhaps Incan/Confucian sacral sociality can be offered as a replacement for socio-ontological individualism. This would require more development of the notion of sacral sociality. Here, scholarship on Confucianism may help. I think Mariátegui would likely have appreciated these ideas from Henry Rosemont, Jr.

Being ... altogether bound to and with others, it must follow that the more I contribute to their flourishing, the more I, too, flourish; conversely, the more my behaviors diminish others—by being racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.—the more I am diminished thereby. In saying this, I must insist that I am *not* proffering here a Confucian view of selfless or altruistic behavior, for this would imply that I have a (free, autonomous, individual) self to surrender. But this of course would beg the question against the Confucians, whose views clearly show the supposed dichotomy between selfishness and altruism as a Western conceit, as well as the equally Manichean split on which it is based: the individual *vs.* the collective. Overcoming these deeply rooted dichotomies in Western thought is not at all easy, but when it can be done, very different possibilities for envisioning the human condition present themselves. (Rosemont, Jr. 2006, 15)

In seeking a "heroic and creative" socialism, Mariátegui may have availed himself of elements of what Rosemont Jr. suggests as Confucian possibilities of re-envisioning the human condition.

Arguably, the line of influence can go the other way, from South to East. It has become almost a knee-jerk reaction to dismiss Maoism and even Chinese socialism altogether as moribund or stultifying. One might even say that just as the May 4<sup>th</sup> intellectuals "threw the baby out with the bath water" in their wholesale rejection of Confucianism and other native traditions, so too many post-Mao intellectuals, including or especially Confucianists, have done something similar with socialism. As a result, most Confucianist comparative political philosophy is in dialogue with Western liberalism. This includes efforts to identify a "left-Confucianism" (Daniel Bell) or a "progressive Confucianism" (Stephen Angle)—important projects, in my view.[29] But consideration of Mariátegui offers another way. A leading Decolonial philosopher, Enrique Dussel, arguably thinking within a Mariátegui -inspired vein, has written that "The winds that arrive from the South—from Nestor Kirchner, Tabaré Vázquez, Luiz

Inácio Lula da Silva, Evo Morales, Hugo Chávez, Fidel Castro, and so many others – show us that things can be changed. The *people* must reclaim sovereignty!” (Dussel 2008, 101) Those who value the social pantheism or sacral sociality of Confucianism but wish to combine it with a more populist and perhaps more insurgent egalitarianism might consider a more Decolonial Confucianism.

Earlier, I noted that Decolonial theorists typically prioritize the issue of Eurocentrism of peoples over Eurocentrism of traditions and contextualize the latter within the former insofar as there is concern with the latter. It was also maintained that there should be such concern and that the critique of Eurocentrism will be incomplete without some significant employment of non-Western traditions or cultural elements. Mariátegui was sensitive to these issues and was developing an account whose highlighting of Incan cultural forms, and this via Chinese culture, traditions, and praxis, produced a significant anti-Eurocentric position on Peruvian decoloniality. It offers a distinctive and experimental model for how to do philosophy as if decolonization mattered.

### Footnotes

[1] See Gutiérrez 1973; Chavarría 1979; Liss 1984; Vanden 1986; Becker 1993; Quijano 1993; Schutte 1993.

[2] I would like to thank Eduardo Mendieta and Linda Martín Alcoff for positive and productive feedback so many years ago that started me on this path. I have also been helped by discussion with Christopher Connery, Arif Dirlik, Shu-Mei Shih, Coleen Lye, and Christopher J. Lee. More recently, I have been aided by the wonderful discussions and critical insights offered by Leah Kalmanson, Amy Donahue, Rohan Kalyan, and Sam Opondo. Also, the audiences at the *Margins of Philosophy* Conference (Mike Ryan Lecture) at Kennesaw State University and at the Comparative and Continental Philosophy Circle Conference offered helpful feedback on an early version of this essay. Finally, the paper has benefitted from comments from two anonymous reviewers and especially from substantive and careful commentary from Manuel Vargas, to whom I extend a special note of thanks.

[3] See Hobsbawm 1987 and Mills 1997. The fuller story would include Japanese and US imperialisms. I discuss the latter in Kim 2004.

[4] See Amin 1989; Blaut 1993; Mignolo 2011.

[5] I discuss some aspects of this issue in “What Is Asian American Philosophy?” (Kim 2007). But for a deeply informed discussion of this matter, see *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon* (Park 2013). Note that there has even emerged an *explicit* kind of left-Eurocentrism: “A Leftist Plea for ‘Eurocentrism’” (Žižek 1998).

[6] For a sampling of this work, see *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui 2008) and *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel’s Philosophy of Liberation* (Alcoff and Mendieta 2000).

[7] For a sampling of earlier figures in the Latin American philosophical tradition that form the backdrop of Decolonial Thought, see *Latin American Philosophy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Human Condition, Values, and the Search for Identity* (Gracia and Millán-Zaibert 2004).

[8] On this theme, see *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation* (Dussel 1996). Also, see *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Maldonado-Torres 2008).

[9] For an alternative epistemological perspective, see Linda Martín Alcoff’s “An Epistemology for the Next Revolution” (Alcoff 2011), which extends some themes in her book *Visible Identities: Gender, Race, and the Self* (Alcoff 2005).

[10] The particulars of Mariátegui’s remarks here require careful treatment. For insightful discussion of them and Mariátegui’s political theory generally, see Katherine Gordy 2013.

[11] For more on culture and philosophy, see “On the Value of Philosophy: The Latin American Case” (Vargas 2010).

- [12] See also Mariátegui's "Prologue to *Tempest in the Andes*" (Mariátegui 1996 [1927]).
- [13] Mariátegui explains some of his account in "Marxist Determinism" (Mariátegui 1996 [1928c]) and "Materialist Idealism" (Mariátegui 1996 [1928d]). For some recent work that helpfully emphasizes the elements of myth and the impact of figures like Nietzsche, sometimes with implications that challenge a reading of Mariátegui as a Marxist, see Purcell 2012, Diaz 2013, and Rivera 2008. For a reading of Mariátegui as a more orthodox Marxist, see Nuccetelli, 2002.
- [14] Purcell offers a Gramscian gloss on this notion in his fine essay, "Existence and Liberation: On José Mariátegui's Postcolonial Marxism" (Purcell 2012). I think the point here can be made without Gramsci, but Purcell's account should be considered.
- [15] There is a good deal of complexity here. If the subaltern can speak, can he or she be heard? And is the subaltern concept neatly applicable to the case of indigeneity? For a classic essay, see "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak 1988). And should Mariátegui, or anyone for that matter, be speaking for the subaltern generally or certain types of subalterns, like the indigenous? For a classic essay, see "The Problem of Speaking for Others" (Alcoff 1991).
- [16] Moreover, in an essay-like footnote, he addressed the widely discussed "despotism" of Incan society and the claim that such a condition invalidated Incan communism. He offered a complex response. First, he contended that the despotism-critique misrepresented the oppression of the Incas by extending modern liberal categories to the earlier historical period. Second, he asserted that there is in fact no conceptual tension between autocracy and communism per se because communism is a genus and some of its early variants were in fact compatible with autocracy. Importantly, he also contended that prior even to Incan empire-building, presumably the source of the despotism, the "nucleus" of Incan society was the *ayllu*, the basic social structure whose communal bond generated communism. Perhaps partly conjecture, Mariátegui claimed further that the Incan empire built upon the preexisting *ayllu*, modifying without eliminating it (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a], 74–76).
- [17] The Third International was a series of forums or congresses of communist and socialist parties around the world, though particularly from Western and Eastern Europe, that was to set the agenda for international communism. One of its major debates was how to deal with anticolonialism and nationalism in the aftermath of WWI. For more details, see *Marxism and Asia: An Introduction with Readings* (Carrère d'Encausse and Schram 1969).
- [18] The phrase "provincializing Europe" is borrowed from the title of the wonderful book *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Chakrabarty 2000).
- [19] Due to space restrictions, I cannot discuss the related issue of Mariátegui's views on India and Gandhian anticolonialism. See his "Gandhi" (Mariátegui 1996 [1925b]). His view turned out to be similar to that of Indian Marxist M.N. Roy's during roughly that same period. In my opinion, both Mariátegui and Roy misconceive Gandhi's philosophy.
- [20] Perhaps another angle of entry in discussing the significance of this second element of Mariátegui's East-South decoloniality is to think in terms of Dussel's feasibility principle for liberatory ethics. Too briefly, on his account, a liberatory ethics must involve a material principle, which lays down adequacy conditions for being alive, a formal principle, which delineates criteria for legitimate consensual norm-formation, and a feasibility principle, which specifies adequacy conditions for norm implementation. As seen in the quote I just gave, and elsewhere, Mariátegui would surely find the feasibility condition appealing. And if my foregoing account has been plausible, then Sino-Peruvian comparative praxis is one of the ways in which Mariátegui's version of East-South decoloniality meets or begins to meet Dussel's feasibility condition. See his *Twenty Theses on Politics* (Dussel 2008).
- [21] Regarding his actual encounters, see his "Prologue to *Tempest in the Andes*" (Mariátegui 1996 [1927]).
- [22] Space does not permit discussion of another area of Sino-Peruvian connections, specifically those offered in the indigenist literature review of *Seven Essays*. There, Mariátegui invoked what he thought is the Asian psychology of skepticism or pessimism to offer a comparative base for what he described as the "pious" and protesting pessimism of the indigenous.
- [23] Clearly, many Asian peoples retained significant connections with their ancient indigenous traditions, but Mariátegui underestimates the impact of colonialism in generating a complex dialectic in the modern engagement with early traditions.
- [24] In his *Seven Essays*, ch.5, "The Religious Factor," he gives an extended discussion of the history of religion in Peru (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a]).

[25] Pantheism was a matter of quite some contention during Hegel's day, which was somewhat temporally proximal to Mariátegui. Interestingly, according to Peter K. J. Park, this debate played a major role in Hegel's eviction of Asian philosophy from the ranks of philosophy proper (Park, 2013).

[26] Mariátegui seemed to endorse the thesis, now common in philosophy of emotion, that emotion is irreducible to mere beliefs (and desires). This thesis helps to explain why we can feel fear about something we believe not to be dangerous, and why belief in something being worthy of admiration is made vibrant when we actually feel reverence for that thing. For one very helpful text, see *Valuing Emotions* (Stocker with Hegeman, 1996). Thus, for Mariátegui, the sacrality embedded in the world, especially social relations, is primarily a feature of the Incan's emotional experience of the world.

[27] Relatedly, though space does not permit discussion of it, Mariátegui's racism must also be examined. His seemed to be an interesting case that acknowledged the role of racism in colonial ideology, rejected biological essentialism, accepted a sociological imagination that stressed contingent and historical social causation, and yet maintained seriously problematic views about African- and Chinese-descended peoples in Peru (Mariátegui 1971 [1928a]: 137–8 and 279–282).

[28] Frazier does not discuss Confucianism in *The Golden Bough*, which Mariátegui discusses a couple times in *Seven Essays*. Given the focus on social and affective pantheism, perhaps he received his ideas from Max Weber's *Confucianism and Taoism*, published in German in 1915 and later published in English as *The Religion of China* (Weber 1951).

[29] See *China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society* (Bell 2010) and *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy* (Angle 2012). Other important Confucian projects in social and political philosophy include: *Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China* (Hall and Ames 1999); *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Rosenlee, 2006); and *Confucian Democracy in East Asia: Theory and Practice* (Kim 2014).

## References

- Alcoff, Linda Martín. 1991. The Problem of Speaking for Others. *Cultural Critique* 20: 5-32.
- , 2005. *Visible Identities: Gender, Race, and the Self*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- , 2011. An Epistemology for the Next Revolution. *Transmodernity* 1: 67-78.
- Alcoff, Linda Martín and Eduardo Mendieta, eds. 2000. *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Amin, Samir. 1989. *Eurocentrism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Angle, Stephen. 2012. *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Becker, Marc. 1993. *Mariátegui and Latin American Marxist Theory*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Bell, Daniel. 2010. *China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Blaut, Jim. 1993. *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Carrère d'Encausse, Hélène and Stuart Schram, eds. 1969. *Marxism and Asia: An Introduction with Readings*. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Chavarría, Jesús. 1979. *José Carlos Mariátegui and the Rise of Modern Peru 1890-1930*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

- Diaz, Kim. 2013. Mariátegui and Myth. *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 13 (Fall): 18-22.
- Dussel, Enrique. 1996. *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*. Edited and translated by Eduardo Mendieta. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanity Press.
- , 2008. *Twenty Theses on Politics*. Translated by George Ciccarriello-Maher. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Gordy, Katherine. 2013. “No Better Way to Be Latin American: European Science and Thought, Latin American Theory?” *Postcolonial Studies* 16: 358-373.
- Gracia, Jorge J. E. and Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert, eds. 2004. *Latin American Philosophy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Human Condition, Values, and the Search for Identity*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Gutiérrez, Gustavo. 1973. *A Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Hall, David L. and Roger T. Ames. 1987. *Thinking Through Confucius*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- , 1999. *Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China*. La Salle, IL: Open Court Press.
- Hobsbawm, E.J. 1987. *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914*. New York: Random House.
- Jenco, Leigh Kathryn. 2007. “What Does Heaven Ever Say?” A Methods-centered Approach to Cross-cultural Engagement. *American Political Science Review* 101:741-755.
- Kim, David Haekwon. 2004. The Place of American Empire: Amerasian Territories and Late American Modernity. *Philosophy and Geography*, 7: 95-121.
- , 2007. What Is Asian American Philosophy? In *Philosophy in Multiple Voices*, edited by George Yancy, 219-271. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Kim, Sungmoon. 2014. *Confucian Democracy in East Asia: Theory and Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Liss, Sheldon. 1984. *Marxist Thought in Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2004. The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: Modernity, Empire, Coloniality. *City* 8: 29-56.
- , 2008. *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mariátegui, José Carlos. 1996 [1923]. Revolutionary and Socialist Agitation in the Eastern World. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Perlman, 35-39. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- , 1996 [1924]. The Chinese Revolution. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Pearlman, 42-45. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- , 1996 [1925a]. East and West. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Pearlman, 39-41. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

- , 1996 [1925b]. Gandhi. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Pearlman, 45-49. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- , 1996 [1927]. Prologue to *Tempest in the Andes*. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Pearlman, 79-84. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- , 1971 [1928a]. *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- , 1996 [1928b]. Anniversary and Balance Sheet. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Pearlman, 87-90. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- , 1996 [1928c]. Marxist Determinism. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Pearlman, 152-155. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- , 1996 [1928d]. Materialist Idealism. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Pearlman, 158-163. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- , 1996 [1929]. Anti-Imperialist Viewpoint. In *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*, edited and translated by Michael Pearlman, 130-135. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- Mignolo, Walter. 2003. Philosophy and the Colonial Difference. In *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates*, edited by Eduardo Mendieta, 80-86. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- , 2011. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- , 2012. Decolonizing Western Epistemology / Building Decolonial Epistemologies. In *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, edited by Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta, 19-43. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Mills, Charles. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Moraña, Mabel, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui, eds. 2008. *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Nucetelli, Susana. 2002. *Latin American Thought: Philosophical Problems and Arguments*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Quijano, Aníbal and Immanuel Wallerstein. 1992. Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System. *International Journal of Social Sciences* 134: 549-557.
- Quijano, Aníbal. 1993. Modernity, Identity, and Utopia in Latin America. *boundary 2* 20: 140-155.
- , 2000. Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1: 533-580.
- Park, Peter K. J. 2013. *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon, 1780-1830*. Albany: SUNY Press.

- Purcell, Sebastian. 2012. Existence and Liberation: On José Mariátegui's Postcolonial Marxism. *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* 3 (Spring): 95-110.
- Rivera, Omar. 2008. From Revolving Time to the Time of Revolution: Mariátegui's Encounter with Nietzsche. *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 8 (Fall): 22-26.
- Rosemont Jr., Henry. 2006. Two Loci of Authority. In *Confucian Cultures of Authority*, ed. Peter D. Hershock and Roger T. Ames, 1-20. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Rosenlee, Li-Hsiang Lisa. 2006. *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Schutte, Ofelia. 1993. *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Spivak, Gayatri. 1988. Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-313. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Stocker, Michael with Elizabeth Hegeman. 1996. *Valuing Emotions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vanden, Harry E. 1986. *National Marxism in Latin America: José Carlos Mariátegui's Thought and Politics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Vargas, Manuel. 2005. Eurocentrism and the Philosophy of Liberation. *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 4 (Spring): 8-17.
- , 2010. On the Value of Philosophy: The Latin American Case. *Comparative Philosophy* 1 (Issue 1): 33-52.
- Weber, Max. 1951. *The Religion of China*. Trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth. New York: The Free Press. Originally published in German in 1915 as *Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* (or *Confucianism and Taoism*).
- Yearley, Lee. 1982. Three Ways of Being Religious. *Philosophy East and West* 32: 439-451.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 1998. A Leftist Plea for 'Eurocentrism.' *Critical Inquiry*, 24: 988-1009.