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Re-thinking place in international relations : phenomenology and the geopolitics of knowledge in Latin American-U.S. relations

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

RE-THINKING PLACE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: PHENOMENOLOGY AND
THE GEOPOLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE IN LATIN AMERICAN-U.S. RELATIONS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by

Mauro J. Caraccioli

2009

To: Dean Kenneth Furton
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Mauro J. Caraccioli, and entitled Re-Thinking Place in International Relations: Phenomenology and the Geopolitics of Knowledge in Latin American-U.S. Relations, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

George Kovacs

Patricia Price

Francois Debrix, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 26, 2009

The thesis of Mauro J. Caraccioli is approved.

Dean Kenneth Furton
College of Arts and Sciences

Dean George Walker
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2009

DEDICATION

For my dad, who always taught me the meaning of home...

For my mom, who never failed to provide me a home...

For Vanessa, with whom I feel always at home...

For Juan:

Living is no laughing matter: you must live with great seriousness like a squirrel, for example - I mean without looking for something beyond and above living, I mean living must be your whole occupation...you must take it seriously, so much so and to such a degree that, for example, your hands tied behind your back, your back to the wall, or else in a laboratory you can die, in your white coat and safety glasses, you can die for people - even for people whose faces you have never seen, even though you know living is the most real, the most beautiful thing. I mean, you must take living so seriously that even at seventy, for example, you'll plant olive trees - and not for your children either, but because although you fear death you don't believe it, because living, I mean, weighs heavier...

– Nazim Hikmet, On Living

For Dr. Kovacs, Dr. Price, and Dr. Debrix:

It is in my permanent openness to life that I give myself entirely, my critical thought, my feeling, curiosity, my desire, all that I am. It is thus that I travel the road, knowing that I am learning to be who I am by relating to my opposite. And the more I give myself to the experience of living with what is different without fear and without prejudice, the more I come to know the self that I am shaping and that is being shaped as I travel the road of life...

– Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of Freedom

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The end of a journey is always a special place. It is the culmination of a long struggle, yet also the point of departure for new paths and adventures. The present voyage began in the Spring of 2006: exhausted, overworked and on the verge of graduating, I made a key decision to remain at Florida International University after my undergraduate studies in Philosophy and International Relations and was welcomed with open arms into the International Studies graduate program. My intentions from the beginning were clear: I wanted to continue to study the relationship between human consciousness and political interactions across the world, along with the development and crisis of reason present in Western philosophy and academia. The latter objective would not have been so clearly envisioned were it not for my studies in phenomenology across my undergraduate and graduate curriculum, as well as my experiences and discussions in the Philosophy Honors Society (2004-2006). Along the way, the insight and inspiration provided by amazing educators such as (to name only a few) Dr. Bruce Hauptli, Dr. Mohiaddin Mesbahi, Dr. Brian Nelson, Dr. Rebecca Friedman, Dr. Lisa Prügl, Dr. Peter Craumer, Dr. Ralph Clem and Dr. Patricia Price, not only sharpened my analytical tools in a myriad dimensions, but also significantly broadened my educational horizons in the process. Along the way, key graduate colleagues such as Dario Prepelitchi and Bryan Wright not only made the struggles while writing this work a little more bearable, but also considerably strengthened its personal significance.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

RE-THINKING PLACE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE IN LATIN AMERICAN-U.S. RELATIONS

by

Mauro J. Caraccioli

Florida International University, 2009

Miami, Florida

Professor François Debrix, Major Professor

What constitutes the meaning of a place? In what ways does place affect our ways of thought? This study seeks to explore the geopolitical relationship between place and the study of International Relations (IR). By re-conceptualizing the category of place as a situated and geo-historical marker of human identity, new spaces of inclusion and collaboration in Latin American-U.S. relations can be uncovered, linking the study of phenomenology to contemporary IR theories. With attention on the lived-experience and existential nature of geopolitics behind Latin American-U.S. Cold War relations, the study of geopolitics can be de-colonized from the monopoly of dominant centers of knowledge, displacing the historical exclusion of responses and alternatives from the marginalized developing world. The displacement of these imperial forms of thought thus gives rise to a critical pedagogy of international relations as a practice constituting everyday life, re-thinking the history of the discipline in order to broaden its horizons.

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Chapter I: Introduction: Geopolitics, Phenomenology and International Relations

The motivation for the present study lies in the ambiguous relationship between place and thought. More specifically, it is concerned with how the study of the international relations between Latin America and the United States is influenced by the phenomenon of the geopolitics of knowledge, and how its origins can be found in the ambiguity between place and forms of thought. Its objective lies in demonstrating how the geopolitical nature of knowledge, as a fundamentally global and historical phenomenon, conditions theories about international relations (as a practice and discipline) to reflect perspectives that (even in strands of critical thought) often exclude the experience of thinkers and ways of thought emerging from the developing nations. As an act of exclusion, geopolitics accomplishes the insulation of International Relations (IR) theory and thus acts a fundamental hindrance to the resolution of some of our most pressing contemporary international problems (i.e., poverty, war, imperialism, terrorism, etc.). Most of these problems are at the center of how the developed world understands and relates to developing states, and yet in the process of theorizing about them shuns their experiences, contributions and modes of understanding. The present study seeks to overcome this exclusion by adopting a phenomenological understanding of the *lived-experience* of the geopolitics of knowledge from a pedagogical perspective.

Like theory and thought in general, the geopolitics of knowledge is a phenomenon constructed vis-à-vis conceptions of space and place, and their power to determine and subvert the identity of human beings and thought. Place is key in both the process of knowing the world and ultimately of knowing oneself. To understand how we know ourselves, and thus understand how we know others and our interaction with them *in-the-*

world, it is crucial to understand the geographical and situated basis of knowledge and human existence. In this context, place determines thought by coloring and texturing how we attend to it (by naming it as familiar or foreign) and how it attends to us (as a home, a place of learning, or a place of fear or hate). As a situated and existentially rooted phenomenon, the place of thought not only determines its nature or quality, but also determines its use, ends and objectives. It is no new philosophical contribution to argue that thought and knowledge (with their political implications) are ultimately about power and the struggle for power.¹ As a political phenomenon, not only does thought function in the interests of those who wield it, but it also determines the very way those who are oppressed by it come to know themselves. The colonization of the Americas, for instance, has been historically presented as a “civilizing” endeavor that brought Christianity to a “New World,” rather than the invasion and conquest of an established indigenous civilization, alien and other to an embryonic European modernity.²

The relationship between knowing and thinking about place as an instance of power and self-understanding is crucial to what I seek to expose and analyze here; namely, if knowledge is conditioned by place, and in fact constantly seeks to give new meanings to places, then thought is in-and-of-itself a *geopolitical phenomenon*. By geopolitical, I mean both a phenomenon that gives political meaning to places and is historically conditioned by the nature and texture of the places it emerges from and acts

¹ For two influential examples, see: Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 208-27; see also: Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Relations,” in *International Organization*, (No. 59, Winter 2005), pp. 39-75.

² See Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "The Other" and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995) and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984)

upon. As a political extension of situated forms of knowledge, the geopolitical implications of thought thus make the interaction between places (as *politicized* spaces) not only a matter of the behavior of actors across geographical terrains, boundaries and borders, but also a matter of how their behavior is conditioned by ideas and thoughts: ideologies, histories, and ways of knowing that act as fundamental traces of broader geopolitical designs. To speak of a geopolitics of knowledge, therefore, is to radically approach the interaction of ideas and forms of knowledge across geographical places, as well as the political uses and implications for imperialism and marginalization that these interactions entail.³

International Relations and the Geopolitics of Knowledge

The traditional understanding of the study of geopolitics, and what makes it attractive, has soundly rested on its alleged ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of complex events, and as Gearóid Ó Tuathail suggests, “[reducing] the complexity of world politics to a simplified framework” of spatial abstractions and metaphors about the way world politics is structured.⁴ Aspiring to be a form of “prophetic discourse,” geopolitics seeks to provide a clear framework of political thought in what is an otherwise foggy and blurry international arena⁵; it provides a clear script of what is good and bad in the world (such as “rogue” or “evil” states), bringing all these factors

³ In the context of Latin America-U.S. relations, my use of imperialism and marginalization refers to how these relations are popularly represented and understood: 1) from a position of near absolute economic and political dominance (imperialism) by the U.S., and 2) from a position of little to no intellectual inclusion of the positions and perspectives of Latin American thinkers, groups and states (marginalization) that differ from agendas within the U.S.

⁴ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Thinking Critically About Geopolitics,” in Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby, and Paul Routledge (eds.), *The Geopolitics Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 2

⁵ Ó Tuathail, “Thinking Critically About Geopolitics,” p. 2.

back to an ultimately personal and existential dimension by linking them to our contingent understanding of survival and well-being (translated politically as the security of the nation, the state or even an empire).⁶ International Relations thought in the North-Atlantic has traditionally embraced this conception of geopolitics and has divided its academic structures into sub-disciplines that reflect these conceptions, particularly in the fields of area studies and strategic studies.⁷

Geopolitics is the study of how spaces, places and their identity are politically endowed and used for the purposes of power; it is essentially about the writing of space, and how this ties places to meanings and identities amenable to the interests of dominant groups and entities.⁸ The writing of space, as an extension of the human capacity to dwell in places and endow them with personal meaning, has profound existential implications for the way we live, but most importantly for the way we think. Geopolitics is a way of constructing and structuring the world and how we understand it. By claiming to act in the name of security, nationalism, humanitarian intervention, or any other kind of ideology – that is to say, by constructing ways of thinking about national and international issues – the agents of geopolitical actions seek to write a script suitable to their interests and ways of thinking. In the history of the Americas, some of these scripts

⁶ See: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)

⁷ Though there is an immense amount of literature that supports these black and white preconceptions, see the by now classic writings of Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) and Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post-Cold War*, (New York: Random House, 2000); pertaining to the geopolitics of Latin American-U.S. relations, see Jorge G. Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War* (New York: Knopf, 1993)

⁸ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 7.

have ranged from evangelization, democracy, revolution and neoliberal globalization – the underside of which has produced colonialism, plutocracy, dictatorship and exploitation. In the process of spreading what have been otherwise attractive ideas, what these geopolitical constructs have thus entailed is the obstruction and eclipsing of the ideas and thoughts of those on their receiving end.⁹

Ideas have the power to shape the interests and modes of thinking of those oppressed by them through geographically based mechanisms of exclusion and domination.¹⁰ These mechanisms work at different levels ranging from state conceptions of the economic and political (for example, domestic organisms that regulate spending and consuming behavior, along with international organizations that monitor national policies) to personal constructions of the intellectual and the cultural (such as the adoption by intellectuals and institutions from Latin America and the global South of concerns and perspectives, like modernization theories and neo-liberal economics, born out of North-Atlantic circles). For the purposes of this study, the present lack of dialogical and collaborative interaction between Northern and Southern perspectives in the study and practice of Latin American-U.S. relations is a phenomenon that is rooted and historically conditioned by the coextensive phenomenon of modernity and of colonial history. The relationship between these two moments is crucial to the way the West has imposed its vision of world history upon academic disciplines and the study of international relations, but is also the defining characteristic of the geopolitics of

⁹ See: Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, pp. 18-26

¹⁰ Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

knowledge.¹¹ What interests us here, however, is how this broad phenomenon of the geopolitics of knowledge plays itself out in the Cold War context of Latin American-U.S. relations, and how does re-thinking the experience of place acts as the first step in overcoming the epistemic exclusions of global geopolitical designs?

Geo-Phenomenology: New Considerations For A Critical Geopolitics

The geopolitics of knowledge is a phenomenon largely determined by conceptions of space, place and their ability to condition and subvert identities. These conceptions are born out of the personal and lived-experience of individuals and the geo-historical circumstances in which they occur. They are thus epistemic constructions: of ourselves, of others, and of the world we live in. Even when we claim to approach a problem from an objective perspective, or at least seek to de-center modern subjectivity in terms of our approach,¹² we are ultimately doing this from a situated (and thus personal) experience of this problem.¹³ That is to say, though primacy for the all-knowing subject of modernity may be necessarily suspended, the presence of a human self that is the *source of thinking* is never fully vanquished. In order to thus address the nature of geopolitical knowledge adequately, a method is needed that will approach the geopolitics of knowledge from its

¹¹ See Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology*, (vol. 15, no. 2, 2000) pp. 215-232; see also: Mignolo, *Local Histories / Global Designs*, pp. 17-18 and Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, pp. 27-36

¹² Contemporary IR thought has taken particular interest in strands of French philosophy characterized by the criticism and reaction against modernity's worst epistemological excesses. Too numerous to illustrate here, for recent examples see: David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.) *Moral Spaces: Re-thinking Ethics and World Politics*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), and David Campbell and Michael Dillon (eds.), *The Political Subject of Violence*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993)

¹³ Edward Casey, "Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (Vol. 91, No. 4, 2001), pp. 683-693.

own level and on its own terms, that is to say, an approach that parts from the situated nature of how we know the world and how it affects us. The method we seek must first clarify the condition of possibility that makes the geopolitics of knowledge a phenomenon of subjective constructions, and take this condition as its point of departure for a critical, unprejudiced understanding of both the problem and the world it finds itself situated in – the work of phenomenology emerges from this attempt at clarification.

Phenomenology is concerned with the relationship between human consciousness and the world around us. It seeks to interpret phenomena present before us in a *pre-reflective* manner, that is to say, in ways that try to understand their occurrence as when we first experience them, *before* any kind of judgments. As the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty contends:

Phenomenology is...a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking into account its psychological origin and causal explanation which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide.¹⁴

Phenomenology thus seeks to understand the way our knowledge comes about as part of our *being-in-the-world*,¹⁵ re-thinking the personal prejudices and embodied circumstances that it emerges from and carries with it. Phenomenology is an open-ended method that transcends the Cartesian entrapment of human thought ("I think, therefore I

¹⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. vii

¹⁵ As Eric Matthews contends, Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on perception and of existence as *being-in-the-world* (following Martin Heidegger) makes it clear that "consciousness or subjectivity is distinct from objects and essentially related to them," making our subjective (and existential) relationship to the world possible only through our bodies. See: Eric Matthews, *Twentieth Century French Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 92.

am.”) and re-situates its content to the human quality of *lived-experience* (“I am part of the world, and the world is part of me.”).

Phenomenology parts from the experience of the world by the embodied subject, but aims at deepening and broadening this experience by understanding how the subject knows and interacts with the other’s experience and interpretation of the world: it is inherently intersubjective.¹⁶ As Merleau-Ponty reminds us, by starting from our place of knowledge and overcoming its limits in the movement towards the place of the subject we are engaging with, phenomenology allows us to “[learn] to see what is ours as alien and what was alien as ours.”¹⁷ Through this process of *going beyond ourselves*, we not only understand our own situation in the world in a more rigorous way, but in this process of transcending, in looking at the other’s experience and understanding of the world as both the motivation and the focus of that which we study, we weave a tapestry of meaning and communication that lays the ground for future critical dialogue and collaboration.

Though phenomenology is itself an originally Western project, it is open-ended in its invitation to see the world as a human (not a male/female, developed/underdeveloped, Northern/Southern) enterprise and field of discovery for our mutual development and understanding – an invitation that has been embraced by the broad range of thinkers from the global North and South that I will be engaging with here. Phenomenology goes beyond *the mirror of thought* (the Cartesian legacy of taking the individual subject as the

¹⁶ See: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 154-199, 346-365, 434-456; Alfred Schutz, *Phenomenology of the Social World* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), and Nick Crossley, *The Politics of Subjectivity: Between Foucault and Merleau-Ponty* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994).

¹⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 120.

sole arbiter of reality) in order to center on lived-experience as the foundation of human thinking, a conception that is rooted in the intricate relationship between place, perception and history.¹⁸ Since the problem of the geopolitics of knowledge is one that is specifically concerned with this relationship, phenomenology is an appropriate method to question the nature of this problem and also an appropriate vehicle to present this problem to North-Atlantic academics and audiences. As I will argue below, the project of a geo-phenomenology is intimately tied with the further development of a critical geopolitics: the attempt to question and re-think the place-bound attempts at intellectual dominance (through representational discourses) by established centers of power.¹⁹ A phenomenological understanding of place, the state, economic modernization and the ways these are taught and developed in university classrooms would not only provide an access to the political motivations of geopolitical actors, but more importantly contributes a key displacement of the rationalist delusions of grandeur behind most theories of IR, establishing a connection with critical geopolitics literature that broadens its focus and strengthens its critique.

Phenomenology builds upon a history familiar to academic thinkers (Western philosophy), but moves towards a history that is unknown to them and beyond. By re-thinking the place of human consciousness in relation to the world as situated in the individual, and thus bringing geopolitical discussions and constructions back to the

¹⁸ See John O'Neill, *Perception, Expression and History: The Social Phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

¹⁹ As Ó Tuathail points out, critical attempts at the study of geopolitics are inscriptions onto the identity of geopolitical discourses, standing out as "significant moments in the writing of a truth around 'geopolitics'...important occasions for exploring how the concept of geopolitics is formed and how it functions." See: Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 142. A re-thinking of the place of these same critical attempts is thus more than implied.

people that geopolitics directly affects (positively and negatively), phenomenology is a radical understanding that takes geopolitics as a phenomenon of history and thus everyday life. A radicalized phenomenology (that is to say, a phenomenology that focuses on that which makes us human: lived-experience) can take us beyond the mirror of thought and ourselves towards the thought of others, making the study of international relations a more international (and transnational) endeavor.

Blueprint For The Study

My project seeks to understand the place and influence of ways of thinking about Latin American-U.S. relations, and how the understanding of this place affects the way we make sense of the economic, social, and political events and implications that emerge from it. These phenomena are often largely determinant not only of how we approach the thought of intellectuals from other parts of the world, but also of how their thought – as reflective of their own lived-experience of particular international situations – is given or denied political meaning and agency. The essence of what we can call a geopolitics of knowledge thus consists of the geographic basis and use of forms of knowledge in order to eclipse difference and establish policies and practices of exclusion and domination.

The focus of this project will be to analyze how the geopolitics of knowledge takes place and develops in the study of Latin American-U.S. relations as a historical phenomenon that is reflective of practices of imperialism and resistance, and as part of the worldwide phenomenon of North-South relations. The primary task will be to analyze four main issues: 1) the phenomenological understanding of the geopolitical nature of thought and how it is discerned in contemporary critical philosophies; 2) the nature and evolution of the human experience of place as a precursor to modern narratives of

national identity and international security; 3) the displacement of an epistemic imperialism through a study of Cold War modernization theories in Latin America; and 4) the movement to a position that seeks to build dialogues across disciplines, borders and the boundaries of space, place and thought.

Given the massive historical, sociological and ultimately philosophical nature of this project, the contribution to a deeper understanding of its content is only partial, at least as it concerns its relative size and weight. The analysis of the problems found in the above factors seeks to contribute to contemporary study and debate by re-thinking the concerns over space, place and the identity of thinkers and forms of thought. The present approach (phenomenological, hermeneutic) will differ from the approach used by scholars of critical geopolitics (post-structural, deconstructive) by appealing to the fundamental place phenomenology holds as part of the development and history of Western thought, that is to say, by appealing to the human qualities that a phenomenological understanding sees as making all thought possible. The following critique is not made in the spirit of discrediting the validity of the approaches and contributions of critical geopolitics literature, but rather in the spirit of allowing them to listen to the approaches, contributions and experience of thinkers from the other side of a colonial difference between North and South. A second contribution is thus sought here in the form of a philosophical de-colonization of critical geopolitics approaches and a broadening of intellectual horizons in IR theory and contemporary philosophy.

The physiognomy of this study should therefore reveal an attempt that seeks to open the doors of IR thought to studies of both its kind (as critically reflective and interdisciplinary) and commitment (as inclusive and dialogical). The work will be

developed across four chapters: Chapter One will sketch out a phenomenological understanding of the geopolitical nature of thought and how this makes geopolitics an existential phenomenon. Following the analyses of critical geographers Derek Gregory and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, along with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, the place-bound nature of human identity will be re-thought into a geo-historic and political category that demonstrates the *lived* nature of geopolitics. By re-thinking the nature of geopolitics, I will set up a framework of geographical responsibility (as seen in the work of Matthew Sparke and Enrique Dussel) to approach the study of the state and of Western modernity as a fundamentally human encounter of different perspectives and interpretations, and not merely the teleological development of predetermined international behavior.

Chapter Two presents a phenomenological genealogy of the constitutive power of place and the role it plays in the identity formation of the modern state. By developing the construction of the state as running parallel to that of the modern subject, a “logic of composition,” as seen in the work of Louiza Odysseos, can be drawn out concerning the conception and practice of security in modern international relations. Following Odysseos’ own phenomenological understanding of international relations and contemporary IR theory²⁰, along with David Campbell’s insights into the geopolitical nature of ideas concerning U.S. national security, I will show how this logic of composition has driven the practice of international relations away from a state of coexistence to one of conflict and the effacement of difference.

²⁰ Louiza Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence: Otherness in International Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Chapter Three will address the nature of modernization ideas in the Cold War context of Latin American-U.S. relations, taking as its point of departure Ricardo Salvatore's observation concerning the nature of local and imperial knowledge.²¹ According to Salvatore, U.S./Western hegemony in Latin America has been traditionally understood through the constructions and modes of understanding by centers of culture and knowledge situated in the core of the Western academic empire.²² These modes of thinking are conditioned by representations (and subsequent counter-representations) of the lived-experiences and encounters between North and South and their epistemic rationales. Following the analyses of David Blaney, Naeem Inayatullah, Fernando Coronil, Walter Mignolo and David Slater, the paradoxical nature of U.S. imperialism as a *post-colonial* phenomenon in the guise of Occidentalism²³ can be linked to the increasingly globalized (and imperial) nature of international relations and knowledge in culture, politics and especially education. By positing a post-Occidental understanding to this problem, these thinkers' contribution allows for Latin American-U.S. relations (as a microcosm of North-South relations) to be understood within the epistemic context of the geopolitical and constitutive nature of knowledge and a phenomenon I call Cold War Reason, an epistemic pathology that represents difference as a threat and vulnerability.

The failure to understand the constructed nature of these representations, and their constitutive power in the interaction of centers of knowledge, leads to a reduction of the

²¹ Ricardo D. Salvatore, "Local versus Imperial Knowledge: Reflections on Hiram Bingham and the Yale Peruvian Expedition," in *Nepantla: Views from the South*, (Vol. 4, Issue #1, 2003), pp. 67-80

²² Ibid., p. 69.

²³ David Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial: Re-Thinking North-South Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 13.

epistemic and lived nature of theory.²⁴ By reifying modern political encounters to suit the interests of world powers, these reductions form part of broader ontological systems of pre-determined causes and effects that put international perspectives and traditions in a position of conflict and exclusion, rather than in one of dialogue. The analysis of geopolitical exclusion thus opens the path to a phenomenology of silence that sees the expansion of Western thought and practices as geopolitical in nature, pushing voices and alternatives of difference to the margins of broader global designs. By enunciating these spaces of silence – that is to say, by listening to that which they have been forbidden to say – the geopolitical nature of knowledge as a totality can be ruptured and new spaces of exchange can be founded.

I will address this last problem by re-thinking Latin American-U.S. relations within the context of what I will call a pedagogy of freedom. By using the phenomenological understanding of geopolitics and Western modernity (Chapter Two), along with the deployment of geopolitical representations found in Occidentalism (Chapter Three), Chapter Four will address the broader concern of getting beyond ourselves and our insulated modes of thought through teaching and the analysis of that which makes up everyday life. As part of an attempt to dialogically resolve the tensions in the study of Latin American-U.S. relations, this pedagogy of freedom seeks to show how difference can emerge in the ambiguity of geopolitical knowledge as contextualized in the critical experience of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. As a global phenomenon, Freire suggests, the ideologies behind geopolitics go far beyond geographic behavior in the international arena to largely influencing and localizing intellectual and social

²⁴ Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, pp. 13-14.

behavior as well.²⁵ The geopolitical nature of knowledge and Western philosophy thus imposes a series of epistemic fetters that keep philosophy and the social sciences under a rubric of coloniality that marginalizes the contributions of thinkers from the developing world. Geopolitical exclusion can nevertheless be transcended, as Dussel suggests, by decolonizing thought and transforming its interaction from being dialectical (assimilating) to being analectical (communal): where every form of thought, as personal and individual, recognizes itself in its exteriority, opening horizons of dialogue that are beyond the totality of ontological constructions.²⁶ I will argue that this perspective contributes to the geopolitical understanding of world politics by opening its attitude to the myriad loci of enunciation that exist in the world, and how the inclusion of these voices makes international relations a phenomenon defined by coexistence, rather than self-interest, and makes agency a category that transcends both the boundaries of the state and of academic disciplines.

By employing phenomenology, this work hopes to be presented as part of a broader phenomenon meant to give praxis back to those on the “underside of history.” This phenomenon can be manifested as part of a heretical ontology of the social and the post-colonial world that, in the spirit of the work of literary theorist Walter Mignolo, “[emphasizes the] densities of the colonial experience [that] are the location of emerging epistemologies,” ways of thinking that do not seek to overthrow the existing ones, “but

²⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), pp. 45-48.

²⁶ Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. by Aquilina Martínez and Christine Morkovsky (New York: Orbis, 1985), pp. 158-9.

that build on the ground of the silence of history.”²⁷ Though some may maintain that this task seems more suitable to the artist, the revolutionary, or even the politician, they forget that the philosopher embodies all these identities and more. The horizons present before us in any field of study are the result of complex human interactions in the world and the meanings they produce and project onto the world as part of everyday life. These interactions are not to be taken lightly as isolated phenomena of an otherwise meaningless puzzle, but should rather be seen as part of our inherited way of being and thus our fundamental responsibility to interpret and make sense out of. This second task is itself a heavy burden since we cannot interpret these phenomena outside of their particular and situated context if we mean to achieve anything we might call ethics, understanding or truth.

The re-thinking of issues such as space, place, identity and their intricate relationship to knowledge as a form of geopolitical action and/or resistance is fundamental to the study of contemporary international relations. The world as we know it is one that is always changing; yet these changes are not so much the result of isolated ideologies as they are the result of the interaction of places and how the thought born out of these places determines and conditions ideas and ideologies. The growing sentiment of anti-imperialism and South-South cooperation in contemporary Latin America has boiled over into a strange and difficult to assess wave of popular movements and leftist electoral victories.²⁸ For better or worse, the extent and speed of the changes these movements

²⁷ Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference,” in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, (101:1, Winter 2002), p. 67.

²⁸ For one contemporary study, see: Nikolas Kozloff, *Revolution!: South America and the Rise of the New Left* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

seek to bring about was impossible to imagine in the last five hundred years of modernity and have begun to challenge the present state of Latin American-U.S. relations. Emphasizing the exclusion with which the U.S. has traditionally approached Latin American issues and problems, these challenges reflect a profound need for articulation in times where, to paraphrase Marx's prophetic insight, the *content* has exceeded the *expression*.²⁹

The phenomenological study of these phenomena contributes to international relations thought and the study of geopolitics by resituating their representations and discourse back to the lived-experience and history of the actors who drive this drama forward. In short, phenomenology is an attempt to express the eclectic content of our modern condition. It places the burden of listening back on the intellectuals in the North-Atlantic community by giving voice to those that have been historically denied a space on the stage of world politics. By following a more fruitful and collaborative form of interaction, not only can we fulfill the most fundamental element of philosophical thought, dialogue, but we do so by keeping in memory the soil from which it blooms.

²⁹ The complete passage is written as followed: "The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot take its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped away all superstition about the past. The former revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to smother their own content. The revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead in order to arrive at its own content. There the expression went beyond the content – here the content goes beyond the expression." See: Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Eugene Kamenka (ed.), *The Portable Marx* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1981), pp. 290. My italics.

Chapter II: Space, Place and Identity in Contemporary Critical Thought

*“Far from my body’s being for me no more than a fragment of space,
there would be no space at all for me if I had no body.”¹*

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Chapter Two will attempt to re-think the relationship between space, place and human identity, and how these factors inform our experience and understanding of geopolitical phenomena. Underlying my analysis is the assumption that a broader awareness of the phenomenological underpinnings of geopolitics will reveal a geopolitical dimension to thought; that is to say, my analysis seeks to reveal the geopolitical assumptions that inform modern thinkers and their forms of thought. By re-situating the effects of this relationship on the methods and assumptions that seek to study the nature of geopolitics, two objectives are intended: the first, to know how the geopolitical is tied to our everyday practices and understanding of space and place, that is to say, how the geopolitical is an *existential* phenomenon. Second, to determine if, by understanding the phenomenological relationship between geopolitics and human identity, a sense of *geographical responsibility* can emerge that will mark our intellectual endeavors with the task of a phenomenological genealogy? The present task thus seeks to understand how our experience of the world is always already a mutual engagement: directed towards others and back to our critical methods.

Although my approach to the study of geopolitics appeals to phenomenological insights into the human experience of space and place, any reflective engagement with these categories (particularly at the level of geopolitics) requires an engagement with the

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 117

assumptions and methods of a critical geography and a critical geopolitics. Not only is it necessary to assess the contemporary methodological inroads that critical approaches to geopolitics have contributed to the study of international relations, but even before that, such an engagement would reveal affinities between phenomenology and critical geopolitics that can mutually inform and broaden their respective insights. Comprised of a range of strategies² engaging with discourse analysis, identity politics, history, environmental practices and media representations in popular culture, critical approaches to geopolitics are informed by an *ethos*³ that challenges the representational dimension of geopolitics as well as the geographic biases with which they have been traditionally informed. The ethos in question seeks to reveal the structures of power and marginalization that dominant actors strive to perpetuate, a task that pre-supposes a phenomenology of subjectivity.

Phenomenology and the Ethos of Pluralization

For all its eminent contributions to the study of international relations and to the analysis of geopolitical designs of power and oppression, I will argue that there remains a missing factor from the analyses of critical geopolitics scholars that harkens to the great debates of French philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century. The debate

² To name a few key texts, see: Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*; David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America: 1880–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Simon Dalby, *Environmental Security*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Joanne P. Sharp, *Condensing the Cold War: Reader's Digest and American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); and François Debrix, *Tabloid Terror: War, Culture, and Geopolitics* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

³ See: William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

between phenomenologists and structuralists (including their deconstruction and post-structuralist cousins – vacuous terms often reflecting the politics of academia) is a debate that, as greatly entertaining, exciting, and methodologically revealing as it may be, goes excruciatingly beyond the bounds of the present work and must thus be relegated – not for lack, but rather excess of importance – to the underside of the text.⁴ What I will retain from this debate, however, can be found in Vincent Descombes’ analysis of its central philosophical point of contention:

After 1960, the sovereign subject is not ‘overcome’...but *multiplied*. Instead of being subjected to a single *ego*, the world must now manifest itself to a mass of small *supposita* [individual beings subsisting in themselves], each tied to a *perspective*...[Post-structural philosophy in particular] claims to overcome the subject when it in fact suppresses the *object*...It declares that the text has no referent outside itself, that the historical account relates no event exterior to the account, that the interpretation has no bearing upon fact as distinguishable from interpretation, and that the different vantage points do not look out upon a world which is common to all perspectives.”⁵

It is from this world, “common to all perspectives,” that the engagement of phenomenology and critical geopolitics can begin. The different vantage points on the world that post-structuralism champions, rather than broadening our understanding of what “in ourselves and in others, precedes and exceeds reason,”⁶ have exacerbated the instabilities within all unities of thought, particularly the “unity” that allegedly makes thought possible at all: our *embodied existence*. Far from impoverishing thinking on the political, the *ethos of pluralization* that informs critical geopolitics approaches has

⁴ For a concise, yet historically and philosophically engaged analysis of this debate, see: Vincent Descombes, *Le Même et L’Autre*, trans. as *Modern French Philosophy* by L. Scott-Fox and J.M. Harding (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-89.

⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 122.

nevertheless scattered the phenomenological emphasis on the *lived-experience* of the world, focusing on *particular* experiences, a task that is not entirely divorced from phenomenology.⁷ As Descombes illustrates:

“[W]e live in one world in which we both see and say that ‘the sun rises’, and we think in another, where we know the earth revolves around the sun. Conflict exists between the lived world and the known world, between the *percipio* and the *cogito*...if the lived world lies at the origin of the *true world*, it must, in its way, be more truthful than the true one.”⁸

To reiterate, post-structural thought has opened up new horizons for thinking about the political and its representational practices, particularly as the primary intellectual force behind critical geopolitics approaches. By privileging the *strategies* of enunciation, however, post-structural thought takes for granted the *ways we know* and *experience* the world. The pluralization of representational critiques thus generates certain epistemic fetters of *dispersion* on the analyses of the *lived-experience* of geopolitics: of how geopolitics (more than a phenomenon of geographic and discursive behavior) constitutes the *everyday life* of peoples on its conquering and receiving ends. According to Anna Secor, it is this constitution that is of interest for thinkers to investigate, a condition that is best expressed as an *existential* dynamic:

⁷ Like all general characterizations, however, holes can be found at different instances of what would be a comprehensive analysis of the breadth of critical geopolitics literature. For an excellent example challenging this claim, see: Michael J. Shapiro, *Methods and Nations: Cultural Governance and the Indigenous Subject*, (New York: Routledge, 2004). Shapiro, however, might be more of an exception rather than the rule concerning a phenomenological emphasis on what makes all political experience possible to begin with: the fact that it is embodied and lived. The emphasis by most critical geopolitics scholars on the analysis of discourses of power and their representation is perhaps the main point of contention that I believe a phenomenological consideration may broaden and strengthen. An incendiary statement such as this, however, deserves much more analysis than a footnote, yet for the ironic sake of space and time, this is all that can be retained.

⁸ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, n. 11, p. 61.

“It is the eruption of language, the evocation of emotion, the expression of suffering, of political and ethical aspiration, of loss, that may offer us a glimpse of at least the tail-feathers of an idea of justice, an idea of right beyond what we have known...I cannot propose a route out [of this condition], but I can pronounce the poetry that crackles in the voices of those...who have suffered and have considered their suffering, at the threshold of [pure force].”⁹

The violence of geopolitical designs may be conceived of and understood through discourse, media, and ideology, but its effects and development are made up of real flesh and blood. The dispersion of this *existential character of geopolitics*, inadvertently generated by post-structuralism, thus prolongs the marginalization of methods and forms of expression of peoples whose historical experience (which often run counter to this *Western* ethos of pluralization) is itself in the footnotes of the Western narrative and in the underside of history. As hinted above, phenomenology then seeks to reveal *the existential dynamic of the geopolitical*.

Investigating The Roots of Knowledge: Embodied Consciousness

Phenomenology is a method of investigation that seeks to describe human existence as *embodied-consciousness*, allowing for the reflection of the social and the political as phenomena that are existentially rooted in a commonly shared world – a world that shapes and is shaped by this understanding of human consciousness. Philosophical definitions aside, phenomenology is about returning to beginnings: of things, of experience, of thoughts and ideas. Far from being a mere nostalgic endeavor, this return is motivated by what John Sallis calls “a turn back toward something from

⁹ Anna J. Secor, “An Unrecognizable Condition Has Arrived”: Law, Violence, and the State of Exception in Turkey,” in Derek Gregory and Allan Pred (eds.), *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 37-53.

which we have somehow become remote,”¹⁰ the *human experiences* that precede and inform our ideas of the world. The understanding of experience, he suggests, “is not merely to duplicate or re-inscribe it but requires reference to something from which it gets understood, something on the basis of which it comes to be interpreted.”¹¹ It is the *sensibility* of human experience that allows us to internalize phenomena and “make sense of it” according to the categories and basis of understanding we develop as a human self.

Through such a *phenomenological genealogy*, the origins and context of phenomena are brought back to consciousness in order to reveal the practices and strategies that inform and affect our understanding of reality. By re-situating the ways we interpret political realities, phenomenology problematizes contemporary literature on the subject of geopolitics by taking apart the assumptions of both mainstream and critical thinkers about *the geopolitical nature of knowledge*. By reflecting on their thought as part of their own experience, the possibilities of admitting the experiences of others into their reflections are opened. Phenomenology thus acts as a refractive mirror: it shows us what our own thought looks like, demanding we *look beyond ourselves* as part of the method, and allowing us to “[learn] to see what is ours as alien and what was alien as ours.”¹²

In order to fully understand the relationship between phenomenology and critical approaches to geopolitics, however, it is necessary to return to the beginnings of these critical strategies and highlight what we may call the foundations of a phenomenology of space and place. Through a pre-phenomenology, as a return to methodological

¹⁰ John Sallis, *Phenomenology and the Return to Beginnings* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1973), p. 9.

¹¹ Sallis, *Phenomenology and the Return to Beginnings*, p. 10.

¹² Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 120.

beginnings, I seek to draw out the webs of harmony between a geographic and a phenomenological understanding of geopolitics. By examining the notions of geographic *self-understanding* and geographical *constellations*, notions that are implicit and explicit in the work of critical geographers and critical geopolitics thinkers such as Derek Gregory and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, the ground can be cleared for an understanding of geopolitics as a condition of *embodied im-placement*: a condition concerned with *the lived-experience of the geopolitical* that forms an inextricable part of the everyday practice of geopolitics. As an existential understanding, embodiment not only precedes the strategies of critical geopolitics scholars, but also informs and underlies their analyses, curiously remaining on the margins and footnotes of their works.¹³ The uncovering of these webs will demonstrate that both phenomenology and critical geopolitics, far from being antagonistic, complement each other in ways that broaden and “de-colonize” the study of geopolitics and international relations. In clearer terms, critical approaches to geopolitics can become stronger and more inclusive if they allow a space for phenomenological analyses, just as phenomenology can find new grounds of inquiry and forms of expression by examining the approaches of critical geopolitics.

¹³ Not unlike post-structuralism and deconstruction, by speaking from the footnotes, margins and traces of existence, phenomenology highlights the qualities in human consciousness that allow for my interpretation of phenomena and events. Indeed, the point of my critique lies in the fact that most post-structuralist methods, in varying degrees and moments, fail to highlight these conditions (i.e., embodiment, perception, geo-historicity) in their own work and thus run the risk of falling into the types of practices that they are critical of. In another sense, as we will see further down with Matthew Sparke’s notion of *geographical responsibility*, post-structuralist approaches are themselves guilty of privileging certain forms of understanding that can eclipse or marginalize other approaches to understanding geopolitics, often because they run counter to “standards” of Western philosophy and academia.

Critical Geographies and the Prose of Geopolitics

*“There is no essence, no idea, that does not adhere to a domain of history and of geography.”*¹⁴

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty

The traditional study of social and political existence often presupposes and takes for granted a conception of the world that posits societies, territories and states as inevitable or logical events reflecting the development of human thought and interaction. These constructions presuppose ideas that we may have about the space around us, the places we see and inhabit, and the ways we identify these places. By thinking through these issues without reflecting on their assumptions, however, they also presuppose and *inscribe* an identity onto us. As the poet Adrienne Rich suggests, “a place on the map is also a place in history.”¹⁵ The ways we understand the world are always already rooted *in-the-world*. To uncover the webs of harmony between phenomenology and the critical study of geography (approaches that similarly question and re-think the historical assumptions of their respective traditions) we have to question the composition of the alleged waltz of universal reason that informs our traditional understanding of geography, history and philosophy. We must engage this composition on the very grounds that inform its rationale, taking on those *domains of reality* that adhere and hold fast to their ideas and constructions of humanity. A critical engagement with geography, philosophy and the history of their development is thus an engagement with the very elements of what Western modernity has claimed makes us human.

¹⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 20.

¹⁵ Adrienne Rich, “Notes Towards a Politics of Location,” in *Blood, Bread and Poetry – Selected Prose: 1979-1985*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), p. 27.

For contemporary critical geographers, such an engagement reached its most recent apogee with the end of the Cold War and the proclamation of an allegedly “new” world order. Essentially meant as a political order, certain scholars argued it reflected a new intellectual order as well.¹⁶ In 1994, Simon Dalby announced a fundamental, yet historically disregarded, reminder for the contemporary study of political geography and international relations. Challenging the epistemic fetters (historical and geographic) imposed by the Cold War hijacking of the study of geopolitics, Dalby asserted that rather than being about objectivity and generalization, “writing about politics inevitably involves taking a political stance...*political geography* cannot escape its subject matter.”¹⁷ He maintained that the categories and principles which political geography conceives are fundamentally tied to the place and politics they emerge from, turning the issue from an academic task to one concerning everyday life.¹⁸ As it concerns geography, which Hegel considered “the single most efficacious basis of history,”¹⁹ the issue for Dalby was not only of bringing geography back to a position of unfettered political criticism, but it also concerned the epistemological dilemma of designing an *ontology* for geography. Geographers needed to establish the *space* and scope of geographical analysis

¹⁶ The literature announcing the “end of history” and the rise of “new world orders” in the early 1990’s is vast and complex. For key original sources, see: Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (New York: Free Press, 1992); Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy*; Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Re-Making of World Order*; and Charles W. Kegley, Jr., “The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities,” ISA Presidential Address March 27th, 1993 (Acapulco, Mexico), in *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 37, No. 2, Jun. 1993), pp. 131-146.

¹⁷ Simon Dalby, “Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference and Dissent,” in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, (Vol. 9, No. 3, 1994), pp. 261-83, esp.: p. 262.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 267

¹⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (Amherst: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 79-80.

in order to find a *place* in the social sciences for geography to *be*. There is a certain risk of *encapsulating* geography in this way, but as Derek Gregory and Yi-Fu Tuan suggested years earlier, this disciplinary anxiety over the *space* of geographical thinking and a *place-to-be* is historically pervasive:

“The dilemma is not a new one...geography always has been and always will be ‘stretched between knowledge and existence,’ between an environmentalism where the geographer ‘seeks meaning in order and finds a largely determined, timeless and tidy world’ and an existentialism where he ‘seeks meaning in the landscape as he would in literature, because it is a repository of human striving.’”²⁰

The study of geography has therefore always been in need of a transformation that allowed it to reconcile the way it conceived of space and place, and how these two determine and are determined by the human identities that struggle in its midst. Tuan’s use of the metaphor of *landscape as text*²¹ is a valuable contribution here for the analysis of the way geography affects our lives: by reading landscape as a “repository of human striving” we can *read* the study and practices of geography and geopolitics as part of a perpetual search for a home, one that is not always simply textual. This home, as a place to call my own (both figuratively and literally), is one that I can understand and express in both words and actions. Such a home is also a world that I experience across time and history, which can also change meanings as much as I can make changes to it, ultimately

²⁰ Derek Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1978) p. 124. See also: Yi-Fu Tuan, “Geography, Phenomenology, and the Study of Human Nature,” in *Canadian Geographer* (Vol. 15, No. 3, 1971), pp. 181-92.

²¹ For an important contribution to the understanding of landscape as crucial to the formation of a body politic and national narratives, see: Kenneth Robert Olwig, *Landscape Nature and the Body Politic: From Britain’s Renaissance to America’s New World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).

amounting to a process that changes me and demands that I understand myself as well – the elements of the eternal task of *self-understanding*.

As Gregory maintains, the study of geography and self-understanding are coextensive human phenomena that inform each other in their experience of time and history. Yet the key to geographical self-understanding, he suggests, may also lie somewhere *beyond myself*:

“[T]hat the landscape somehow has the key to our understanding of it within itself...amounts to the counter-claim that the key is to be found somewhere within ourselves, so that, by extension, an authentic – Tuan would say humane – geography would not seek to impose its own (negotiated) frame of reference on the world but would instead *attempt to understand other frames of reference and to mediate between what we might think of as various ‘lay’ and ‘technical’ constructions of the world.*”²²

At the philosophical level, what Gregory suggests is crucial for understanding how places relate to each other and where geography falls in this relation as the foundation for humane geographies (and by extension, perhaps, humane thought). His analysis suggests that a geographic understanding of our experience of place should temper and filter out the “technical constructions” of the world and of the people that find themselves “inside.” In a geopolitical context, a humane geographic understanding (one that sees geography and human identity as coextensive) would have to be one that *actively* questions and challenges the “negotiated” designs of geopolitical power imposed through the geographies (and geographers) of a state, but also of critical scholars as well: self-understanding should always be self-critical.²³ Gregory’s sense of mediation thus

²² Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography*, p. 124. My italics.

²³ For a detailed study of the development of U.S. geopolitical and geo-economic designs of power through the work of geographers of state such as Isaiah Bowman, see: Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*, (Berkeley:

conceives of geographic self-understanding as a relation between landscapes and language (where we can read landscapes as texts and texts as landscapes). Such a relation is fundamental to the understanding of socio-political realities, but also to existential realities about the human condition in the modern world. Geography as a form of self-understanding, as a *prose of the world*, thus acts as a form of expression (writing) that, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, attempts to “recover for us the *life* of our thought,”²⁴ a key insight for the conception of geopolitics as the writing of space.²⁵

By illustrating this phenomenological conception of geography as self-understanding, we begin to see the potential for geography as something liberating, but also, as we will see in the following section, as something that is perpetually entrapping as well. A geography that challenges the constitutive practices of “negotiated” designs (and modes of thought) by visualizing landscape as text (as part of a primordial landscape for human expression²⁶) also seeks to reveal the meanings of *already existing* spaces of being. It seeks to exercise an agency that makes manifest the potentialities and experiences informing the landscapes of the silenced spaces of history, revealing the

University of California Press, 2003). Smith’s “critical biography” of Bowman is a powerful example and revealing portrait of the self-criticism that Bowman lacked in his geographic endeavors and of the “visualizing” power of geography.

²⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 5. My italics.

²⁵ For a definitive example of this conception, see: Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*.

²⁶ See: Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography*, p. 124 and Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 161. As noted above, geography for Gregory is always stretched between knowledge and existence, between conceptualization and the dynamic changes of human self-understanding and becoming. Ó Tuathail’s analyses look at these changes as reflections of historical, social processes that have turned geography into the service of the state. As we will see in Chapter Two, this geopolitical shift has politicized geographical reasoning and alienated its connections to human expression and the basic experiences of space and place.

webs of harmony for engaging in dialogue. Such a process attempts to rupture the totalizing rationalities through which geopolitical practices of ‘placing’ and ‘naming’ (and *place-naming*) construct alienating realities that *place us* at odds with each other (epistemically as well as geopolitically). As Gregory reminds us, “places have been deformed and made into arenas which respond to the external dictates of an abstract rationality rather than to the intentional structures of the people who live in them and invest them with their meanings.”²⁷ It should be noted, however, that these are characteristics of experience and conceptualization that are common of all geographies (geo-graphing). Through geopolitical practices, places are *politicized* – yet by already possessing certain intentional structures, even a humane geography risks a *re-politicization* that makes it part of a broader constellation of the geopolitical, a constellation that also demands a *self-critical awareness*.

Constellations of Critical Space

The critical engagement with the problems of geography and geopolitics is a process that attempts to bridge the gap between the real world and pure consciousness. As a process that is intentionally driven towards others and outside of itself, but also back into itself, a critical engagement establishes the possibility of creative, human imagination as the means through which we express our experience of the world. It achieves this by positing human activity, interaction and understanding as part of a *constellation of meanings*: a broad and intertwined web through which motives and intentions are existentially engendered and *mutual meanings* are made possible. In clearer terms, a critical understanding of geography and geopolitics is informed by a

²⁷ Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography*, p. 124

phenomenological drive to express our experience of the world and its places, a desire for a kind of self-understanding that is simultaneously a geographic understanding, that is to say, as *being-in-the-world*.²⁸ Though there is an allegedly emancipating spirit to the description of this geographic self-understanding, there remains something to be said about the constellation of meanings that inform our particular experiences of the geopolitics of space and place, or rather of the geopolitical in our understanding of these. The metaphor of constellation thus allows us to briefly discuss what informs the approaches of critical geopolitics scholars as an element of this constellation, in particular their relation to phenomenology and their conceptions of the constitutive powers of space and place.

The nature of a critical geopolitics can hardly be defined by one single principle or method. In fact, as Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó Tuathail suggest, “[t]hat which has come to be known as ‘critical geopolitics’ can be understood as one constellation within this larger universe of research...a situation that resists mastery by a single principle or final reconciliation around a revealed core.”²⁹ Such a sense of a constellation, put briefly aside from any of the previous phenomenological implications, emerges from what Richard Bernstein calls “the ethical-political horizons of modernity,”³⁰ a condition that

²⁸ Louiza Odysseos’s masterful work on Heideggerian phenomenology as a way to challenge the logic of composition that informs traditional approaches to international relations and geography reveals in detail the way that understanding ourselves as *Da-Sein* (there-being), as always already fundamentally tied to others and the world, allows us to displace and overcome the epistemic fetters of the Hobbesian, self-interested understanding of world politics. See Louiza Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)

²⁹ Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Editorial Introduction: The Critical Geopolitics Constellation: Problematizing Fusions of Geographical Knowledge and Power,” in *Political Geography*, (Vol. 15, No. 6/7, 1996), pp. 451-52.

asks all forms of human understanding to “test and risk [their] convictions and prejudgments in and through an encounter with what is radically ‘other’ and alien.”³¹ As Bernstein develops in greater detail, this constellation throws into doubt any rationalized basis or justification for our affirmations or even critiques, scattering and displacing the once incomparable dialectical power of the subject of modernity:

“There are always unexpected contingent ruptures that dis-rupt the project of reconciliation. The changing elements of the new constellation resist such reduction. What is ‘new’ about this constellation is the growing awareness of the depth of radical instabilities. We have to learn to think and act in the ‘in-between’ interstices of forced reconciliations and radical dispersion.”³²

There are two elements that I want to focus on with Bernstein’s image: the first concerns the dark corners of thought that this *new constellation* seeks to explore and put into dialogue, and the second concerns the very nature of this dialogue as a “space-in-between,”³³ as a critical project that seeks to reveal personal, existential strategies that challenge the geopolitical.

A critical understanding of geopolitics not only seeks to undress the geopolitical designs of power that inform the narratives and behavior of states and individuals, but is also ultimately an attempt to shine light on the social and political alternatives that these designs eclipse. As Ó Tuathail reminds us, geopolitics is a concept that *shrouds and*

³⁰ Richard Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992).

³¹ Bernstein, *The New Constellation*, p. 4

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9

³³ This is a difficult term that is used by both Brazilian philosopher Silviano Santiago (see p. 35) and by North American geographer Matthew Sparke (see p. 50), in distinct, yet complementary contexts. Its significance for the present work will be developed in the rest of this chapter.

overshadows meaning, even its own meanings, the result of an allegedly universal project proposing an end to all uncertainties:

“Geopolitics is not a concept that is immanently meaningful and fully present to itself but a discursive ‘event’ that poses questions to us whenever it is evoked and rhetorically deployed. It is a problematic best approached *historically and contextually*, a problematic concerning the writing of the global that requires an antiglobal(izing) method of inquiry that avoids treating ‘it’ as a stable and singular ‘it’, a linear and smooth historical surface for theoretical work.”³⁴

The existential flux of geopolitics, its “essential” instability which is also its greatest challenge, is to constantly present itself as a stable and universal alternative, a *landscaping* of human reality that reveals only one word, one possible way of reading existence. Whereas Ó Tuathail is concerned with the discursive *con-text* that address the writing and disciplining of geopolitical practices and their structures of power,³⁵ my concern is with the *experiential* and phenomenological context from which geopolitics emerges from and embarks upon. Such a context is always already informed by drives for “stability” and “self-referentiality,” an environment that presents itself, in Ó Tuathail’s words, as “a linear and smooth historical surface for theoretical work,” but which is hardly the case. As I began to address above, these drives form part of geography’s disciplinary search for a home, making geopolitics the self-excessive expression of the desire for a *geographic ontology*: a design attributing politicized ends and purposes to geography and the places it seeks to know.

Ó Tuathail’s approach, like that of most critical geopolitics scholars, is post-structural and deconstructive, mine is phenomenological: both part from the impetus to express certain experiences of the world and its places – they are *localized*

³⁴ Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 17. My italics.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 65

phenomenologies of geopolitics (or as Ó Tuathail suggests, “*antiglobal-[izing]* methods of inquiry”). Whereas the critical geopolitics project (broadly characterized) is part of a constellation of what I call *genealogical phenomenologies*: investigations into the diverse manifestations of the geopolitical; my project, however, seeks a geographic understanding that is *simultaneously* a self-understanding, a method that seeks to reveal both the place-bounded character of the geopolitical and its place-bounded origins in the human individual. Far from antagonistic to each other, they share a similar drive particularly when Dalby writes that to practice critical geopolitics is:

“nothing less than a recognition of the importance of studying *the political operation of forms of geographical understanding*, recognizing that geographers are *specifications of political reality* that have political effects. To construct critical political geographies is to argue that we must not limit our attention to a study of the geography of politics within pre-given, taken-for-granted spaces, commonsense spaces, but *investigate the politics of the geographical specification of politics*.”³⁶

Geopolitics is always internal and external: it parts from an understanding of self and other as always situated before it proposes an understanding of the nation and the state as politicized manifestations of this original condition. Crucial in Dalby’s explanation of critical geopolitics is his emphasis on *geographical understanding* as something *already politicized* (already about power) and the need to investigate the *politics of the geographical specification of politics*. These two themes have significant phenomenological ties and implications concerning space and place that highlight the existential (self-understanding) impetus behind geographic understanding, and the *localized* and *place-bound* dimension (geographical specification) of geopolitical forms of understanding. In a methodological sense, these themes invoke links to areas of study

³⁶ Simon Dalby, “Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference and Dissent,” p. 274.

and philosophical approaches that are part of a broad challenge to the socio-political designs of modernity and the West³⁷ – in simpler terms, they are *constellations-at-work*.

The Space-In-Between: Bridging Geopolitics and Critical Thought

The present section (demonstrating a concern that coincides with the second element in Bernstein’s characterization of “the new constellation”) turns now towards the character of the critical geopolitics approach as a “space-in-between”: a critical endeavor that aims at disrupting the domination of old modes of thinking geopolitics, while at once putting the diverse elements of the new constellation in a dialogue of a different kind. As the Brazilian philosopher Silviano Santiago maintains, the critical impetus that precedes this dialogue is always intentional (directed against) and creative of new situations. For the Latin American thinker in particular, he writes, “To speak, to write, means to speak against, to write against.”³⁸ Invoking a spirit that runs parallel to Roland Barthes’ distinction of *readerly* and *writerly* texts,³⁹ Santiago maintains that *critical space* is always part of a digression from what is already written (*le déjà-écrit*), but a digression that must always *run through* its object: it is an act of “[learning] first the language of the

³⁷ Of significant importance in the investigation of “the geographical specification of politics” are the contributions of Enrique Dussel and Walter D Mignolo and their studies of the *geopolitics of knowledge*, a theme underlying the entirety of this work and to treated in Chapters Two and Three. Of particular importance, see: Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. by Aquilina Martínez and Christine Morkovsky, (New York: Orbis, 1985); Walter D Mignolo, *Local Histories / Global Designs*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Walter D Mignolo (ed.), *Capitalismo y geopolítica del conocimiento*, (Buenos Aires: Duke University, Ediciones del signo, 2001)

³⁸ Silviano Santiago, “Latin American Discourse: The Space In-Between,” in *The Space In-Between: Essays on Latin American Culture*, trans. by Tom Burns, Ana Lúcia Gazzola (ed.), and Gareth Williams, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001) p. 31

³⁹ Roland Barthes, *S/Z: An Essay*, trans. by Richard Miller, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974)

metropolis in order to then combat it more effectively.”⁴⁰ Critical thought is thus an act that appropriates “the rising star” of Western modernity, “the pure and unattainable star that contaminates without ever sullying itself,” in order to effect a *critical imaginary* (geographic and epistemic) that “should affirm itself as a writing *upon* another writing.”⁴¹ For Santiago, this interplay of words and resistance is reflective of the most existential experiences and drives:

“The Latin American writer plays with the signs of another writer and of another work. The words of the other present themselves as objects that fascinate his eyes, his fingers, and the writing of the second text becomes partially the story of *a sensual experience with foreign signs*...the work of the writer becomes a kind of global translation, a pastiche, a parody or a digression rather than a literal translation.”⁴²

A phenomenological reading of this new critical space reveals that *the critical* is a site, a *geo-graphy*, of listening and learning before ever becoming a site from which a challenge may arise; it is a space of historical experience and of self-understanding (historically violent and destructive) before ever becoming a space for “prophetic criticism” and testimony.⁴³ Yet even before the formal construction of a “space-in-between” – a space

⁴⁰ Santiago, “Latin American Discourse: The Space In-Between,” p. 33

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 34

⁴² Ibid. My italics.

⁴³ I use very particular meanings for these two terms that challenge conventional use and are intimately close to their use in the works of Martin Buber, Karl Marx, Primo Levi and Enrique Dussel. Though my use of these will be developed in much greater detail in Chapter Three, I take the prophetic to refer to its biblical context, where to be prophetic is to be involved in the constant call and exhortation for justice; see: Martin Buber, “The Demand of the Spirit and Historical Reality,” in *Pointing the Way*, trans. by Maurice Friedman (ed.) (New York: Schocken, 1957), pp. 177-91 and Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, trans. by Robert Barr, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988). By testimony, I mean the responsibility that those of us who continue to live *in* history have, in spite of disaster and tragedy the world over, to invoke those who have been *forgotten* by history. For a comprehensive collection dealing on opposite sides of this issue, see: Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, (eds.), *Thinking From the Underside of History*:

from which critical analysis can emerge and challenge the authoritarian constructions of a *geopolitics of knowledge* – the interplay of signs, writers and works is informed by an existential character that lies somewhere *between geography and philosophy*, between landscape and thought, and ultimately between self and other. Such a *space-in-between* is thus a bridge that links thoughts, as well as particular places and peoples, together to form a *place-in-between*: a second site through which, as Santiago infers, one “fully [understands] the implications of the movement towards the star [of modernity]...in order to inscribe his project on the horizons of Western culture.”⁴⁴ It is an act that challenges the imposition of foreign concepts by appropriating and “re-contaminating” them, a *mestizaje* or hybridity that speaks back to the star of its origins as a place that is *radically other* yet somehow *always shared*, constituting the identities of both the conquered and the conqueror. I will return to this project from the horizons in much greater detail in Chapter Four.

For present concerns, however, Santiago’s contribution reveals how the idea of critical space, as part of the experience of the *univocality* of geopolitical designs, attempts to bridge thoughts, peoples and places. The present work may itself be seen as reflective of that critical space, as one that attempts to understand the place-bound origins of both classical and critical geopolitical thought.⁴⁵ Given our present concerns, however, that possibility will be explored towards the end, only after I have investigated the other

Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000); see also: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

⁴⁴ Santiago, “Latin American Discourse: The Space In-Between,” p. 32.

⁴⁵ Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 142.

factors that inform this analysis. It is now necessary to move on to a phenomenological genealogy of this *place-in-between*, and how our understanding and experience of place gives an *existential character* to geopolitics, as a phenomenon that is both *constituted-by* and *constitutive-of* our practices of everyday life. Following the analyses of Patricia Price, places only attain meaning through a common and embodied co-presence:

“there is no such thing as place knowledge, or having a sense of place, that can exist outside of *being* in a particular place: there is no such thing as a general experience of place...We are ineluctably, inescapably emplaced beings. Our grasp of place is thoroughly, specifically experiential, and this is mutual.”⁴⁶

The experience of place, as one of “inescapably emplaced” beings, is one that we come into contact with through our bodies. Place, more than the Kantian understanding of space and time, is the very ground that makes understanding possible as a result of our lived-experience of the world. The lived-experience of place, however, has the potential to degenerate our understanding of place from one that sees it as the origin of human thought, to an understanding that posits and imagines place as being empty, docile containers to human thought’s ends – repositories for the constructed inventions of an allegedly modern, sovereign subject. This potential is what I will refer to from now on as *the geopolitical nature of thought*, a condition that will be further clarified in Chapter Three, after first elaborating the existential character of both space and geopolitics and how they fundamentally affect our experience of place.

By investigating the existential relationship between space and human thought, as informed by the phenomenological project of Merleau-Ponty, I seek to reveal the epistemic foundations for the human experience of place. As elements that allow for a

⁴⁶ Patricia Price, *Dry Place: Landscapes of Belonging and Exclusion* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. 11.

sense of continuity in our general experience of the world, these foundations also inform the *geographical inventions* of geopolitics, reflecting what Ó Tuathail describes as “the power struggle between different societies over the right to speak sovereignly about geography, space, and territory.”⁴⁷ Such a power struggle is not only constitutive of human identities, but is reflective of the power of place to constitute these identities, a power that is eclipsed by the inventions of geopolitics. Why does a power struggle occur? What is it about human existence that informs the notions of territory and sovereignty that drive international politics? What allows for human beings to fight amongst themselves and establish lines of demarcation within the expansive horizon of existence called the life-world? The answer to these questions not only lies somewhere between geography and philosophy, between phenomenology and critical geopolitics, but ultimately lies between the self, the other and the world, as central elements of human existence in need of re-thinking.

Lived-Space and the Existential Character of Geopolitics

*“[Perception] is not a question of reducing knowledge to sensation, but of assisting at the birth of this knowledge, to make it as sensible as the sensible, to recover the consciousness of rationality.”*⁴⁸

– Edward Said

Geopolitics concerns all of us: it shapes both the politico-spatial manifestations of the world in which we live (creating borders and boundaries), and also the ways (epistemologies) with which we come to understand that world and our place in it. In producing discourses about world politics, geopolitics not only seeks to understand and

⁴⁷ Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 11.

⁴⁸ Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 8

describe the place of political power in the world, but also attempts to make spaces for that power.⁴⁹ As a global phenomenon, however, geopolitics goes beyond a *geographic understanding* in the international system to largely influencing and localizing intellectual behavior as well.⁵⁰ Understood in this light, geopolitics is a fundamentally existential phenomenon of the contemporary international system: it has the power to constitute personal, human meaning, since existence is not only determined by our social, economic and geographic being, but by our intellectual life as well.⁵¹ Thought and self-understanding are *bounded-to* and *bounded-by* space and place, just as space and place, in Gregory's language, respond to "the intentional structures of the people who live in them and invest them with their meanings."⁵²

The existential character of geopolitics is thus rooted in the conception that space (as a human and political phenomenon) is, as Merleau-Ponty maintains, "not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the *means* whereby the positing of things becomes possible."⁵³ Space allows for meaning to take root in the world only as *lived-space*, as the soil for human perception, orientation, and action to play out a web of stories and meanings on its stage.⁵⁴ The meaning of the things that are posited here is

⁴⁹ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "Thinking Critically About Geopolitics," p. 1.

⁵⁰ Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, p. 3.

⁵¹ Walter Mignolo (ed.), in *Capitalismo y geopolítica del conocimiento* (Buenos Aires: Duke University, Ediciones del signo, 2001), p. 13.

⁵² Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography*, p. 124.

⁵³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 218.

⁵⁴ John F. Bannan, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967) p. 95

determined by *who* is writing the narratives of the story, their identities also constituted by place. In a geopolitical context, ideas of space and place (and how their meanings are determined) have the power to condition the interests of groups, states, nations, and individual people, through the writing of similar narratives (cartographic and ideological).⁵⁵ For political purposes, these narratives are constitutive of a *political space*; they replicate the existential and human desire to create a *place-to-be*, but as part of political and ideological objectives of power. In many instances, these narratives are dressed in the language of shared impulses towards idealized forms of being, that is to say, in the language of collective interests and practical ways of life.⁵⁶

Just as human actions are determined by the material, ideational and historical conditions that they are rooted in, geopolitical actions are contingent on the material possibilities and epistemic structures from which they emerge. As we will see further down, discourses such as modernization attempt to imbue space and particular places with meanings that facilitate the establishment of certain material and intellectual

⁵⁵ For analysis on the cartographic nature of ideology, see: Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*; Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America*; and Michael J. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

⁵⁶ The spread of Christianity, Capitalism, Socialism, and today “Globalization,” are all historical instances and manifestations of these collective drives and their transformation into global representations. Modernization and human rights discourses, for example, are two similar representational instances of U.S.-based geopolitical designs that will receive much more detailed treatment in Chapter Three. Briefly, however, as Tzvetan Todorov suggests in his critical re-reading of the “discovery” of the Americas: colonization has been historically represented as a “civilizing” endeavor that brought Christianity to a “New World,” rather than as a process of invasion and conquest, culminating in the savage decimation of an indigenous civilization that was alien and other to an embryonic European modernity; see: Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984). Enrique Dussel also highlights the events of 1492 as the origins of “the myth of modernity,” the practical foundations of the West’s intellectual drive for primacy and domination; see: Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “The Other” and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. by Michael D. Barber (New York: Continuum, 1995).

structures of power. By speaking of geopolitical constructions as being contingent on *geo-historical* circumstances, and how these circumstances condition (and are conditioned by) the epistemic horizons that express their objectives, we begin to question the foundations on which all forms of knowing take place and dig out the geopolitical nature of knowledge and its effects on our understanding and practice of international relations.

Geopolitics is thus reflective of a basic existential desire for place and the expansion of place.⁵⁷ The categories which inform this desire – our embodied experience of space, the constitutive power of place on human identity, and the social desire to inhabit places – need to be fleshed out from the totalizing narratives of geopolitics. Not only will we thus reveal the conquering impetus behind geopolitical narratives, but also what contemporary critical geopolitics approaches take for granted in their analyses: the very experience of space as prompted by place. As Edward Casey suggests, by engaging in a phenomenological genealogy of these experiences, and how they inform our desire and practices of habitation and gathering, we can trace how our bodies and actions “reflect the kind of places we inhabit.”⁵⁸ Through the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, we can re-construct the categories that inform geopolitical practices as instances of *embodied*

⁵⁷ As Neil Smith points out, the power of empires cannot be read as “total, spaceless, devoid of any significant geography,” but rather as “always [residing] in place...disproportionately wielded by a ruling class that remains tied to [national interests].” See: Smith, *American Empire*, pp. xix.

⁵⁸ Edward S. Casey, “How To Get From Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” in Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place*, (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 1996), p. 19

im-placement, allowing us to then uncover a sense of *geographical responsibility* for our analysis of geopolitics, a sense rooted in the very experience of geopolitics.⁵⁹

The Spatial Structure of Consciousness

Existence as embodied consciousness lies at the center of the phenomenological understanding of space and place, an understanding that finds its strongest description in the phenomenology of perception expressed by Merleau-Ponty. Rather than following the Kantian understanding of space as an *a priori* intuition of human reason, Merleau-Ponty sees the human subject as the origin of space.⁶⁰ He does not suggest that we follow a Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, or of the self as the constitutive agent of *all* reality, but rather that we see human existence as *embodied existence*, consciousness as always already *situated-in-the-world*, and space as always already *lived-space*. His phenomenology is central to understanding the place that human beings hold in space (existentially and geopolitically) since it describes our relation to the world, prior to our understanding, as *pre-reflective*.⁶¹

⁵⁹ This re-construction shares many connections with critical approaches to geopolitics: self-understanding, difference, identity and power are all categories that are perpetuated through geographical and popular representations; along with the analysis and disruption of these strategies through genealogies of language, geography and forms of understanding, they are all informed (at least implicitly) by the phenomenological re-construction of the fundamentally spatial character of human existence.

⁶⁰ As John Bannan writes: “Just as I am not an object because I am the condition for there being objects, so also I am not *in* space because I am the source of space [as the embodied subject already *living* space]...It is by its actions and its very movement of existence that the [human] body enters the figure-background structure [the spatial unity of the body] or addresses any of its tasks, and hence it is in action that its peculiar spatiality is accomplished.” See: Bannan, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, pp. 69-70

⁶¹ As Laurie Spurling writes, there is an alleged “original unity of human existence” underlying the analyses of phenomenology that not only understands consciousness as embodied and *in-the-world*, but which demands that in order to achieve “a unified and coherent perspective on man in the world,” we need “an investigation of man’s naïve experience” of the pre-reflective, a task that

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, as a phenomenology of lived-experience, is a form of understanding this pre-reflective condition that is actively engaged with the geo-historical circumstances of human existence, critically investigating the foundations on which all human sociality is based.⁶² For Merleau-Ponty, the inherent intentionality of the human body, as the vehicle through which we constitute and receive meaning in the world (always directed towards the world and back to itself), entails a *corporeal presence in space* that allows for the constitution of meanings. It is in this sense that Merleau-Ponty understands space as "the means whereby the positing of things becomes possible,"⁶³ a pre-reflective moment that is crucial for both the "production of space" and the constitution of *human existence as spatial*.⁶⁴ Such a "co-constitution" (being-in-the-world) occurs for Merleau-Ponty through what he sees as the dialectical relationship between the embodied nature of existence and the inherent constitutive quality of space through which the human self expresses its being:

involves a return to the beginnings of intentionality as central to the human self. See: Laurie Spurling, *Phenomenology and the Social World*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) p. ix.

⁶² As John O'Neill suggests, Merleau-Ponty's study "is no retreat from the world because his thought is an inexhaustible digging at the roots of our inherence in the world, nature and history." See: John O'Neill, *Perception, Expression, and History: The Social Phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) p. xi. In a critical sense, his philosophy is itself reflective of a phenomenology of geopolitics, as he was actively engaged in questioning the changing intellectual and material circumstances of the nascent Cold War as he lived through them. This *personal inherence* is best captured in his work *Adventures of the Dialectic* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), a critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's defense of Soviet expansionism in the early 1950s, *The Communists and Peace*, (New York: George Braziller, 1968).

⁶³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 243

⁶⁴ As Bannan reiterates, "Reflection on the experience of the spatial dimensions of perceived objects leads back to the fundamental spatial character of human existence." See: Bannan, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, p. 99

“We have said that space is existential...that existence is spatial, that is, that through an inner necessity it opens on to an ‘outside’, so that one can speak of a mental space and a ‘world of meanings and objects of thought which are constituted in terms of those meanings’. Human spaces present themselves as built on the basis of natural space.”⁶⁵

Merleau-Ponty suggests here that the spaces that we give meaning to are inherently rooted in the “mental space...of meanings and objects of thought” *resting* inside of us, themselves a result of our embodied experience. There is thus an inner necessity to this spatiality that seeks to “open onto an outside” that is the foundation for the desire to *know the outside world* and inhabit other spaces and places. A dialectical co-constitution of this kind will pose a problem for Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, however, that is reflective of a problem in human thought about place in general and will open the doors to our analysis of the experience of place.

In light of the above suggestions, the embodied experience of space can be read as a precursor to our experience of geopolitics, as an extension of the self’s experience of the world. The very process through which we can appropriate spaces (the result of our interaction with others in a shared life-world) is rooted in an act of *intentional consciousness* that objectifies the autonomy of these spaces, making them *shadows* of our lived-experiences. By shadows I mean the traces of meanings that arise when we ascribe identities to particular spaces and places as we *live through them*, investing in them the meanings we read in their horizons and landscapes. These shadows cling to our memories of the world, constituting our identities and conceptions of reality, just as a veil falls over a particular surface, or over the eyes of a stranger. In simpler terms, the spatial character of human existence (embodied and directed towards the world), seeks to objectify and

⁶⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 294

appropriate the invested meanings of lived-space (*intentionality*) and project them onto the world as shadows of *all* lived-experiences – as *concrete* spaces, places of *my own*. To say that human existence occurs in space is nothing new, but to suggest that there is a quality to space that makes it the fundamental site of all creative endeavors (intellectual, practical, and perhaps even geopolitical) reveals the radical potential of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological thesis. A key connection to the critical geopolitics constellation is thus uncovered here by seeing the spatiality of the body as an instance of *spatial self-understanding*, an understanding that paves the way for any form of *geographic self-understanding*.

As *intentionally conscious*, however, what allows for the self to internalize the spatial characteristics of objects in the world as part of its own experience of (*being-in*) the world? That is to say, phenomenologically, what is it about the self that objectifies and appropriates space and its objects, turning our experience of space and place into a drive of domination? Merleau-Ponty suggests, by investigating our direct (intentional) experience of *being-in-the-world*, that the features and qualities of sense experience (the different ways we interpret and *feel* the “outside” world in which we are always embedded) are never isolated phenomena that *impress* our consciousness, as traditional empiricism would suggest. These experiences, as corporeal, are themselves “inserted into a certain form of behavior,”⁶⁶ suggesting that allegedly “external” phenomena, as stimuli that are “integrated into a comprehensive situation,”⁶⁷ are already anticipated and even amplified by the body's experience of them. As a distinct experience, my typing these

⁶⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 208-09.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

lines is far from being an isolated exercise in academic hair-splitting, but is itself internalized into a particular lived-experience and set of objectives. Phenomena do not simply occur *onto* the body of a person; this person is intimately involved in every aspect of the phenomenon – not as passively facing it, but as Merleau-Ponty suggests, in *communion* with it:

“The subject of sensation is neither a thinker who takes note of a quality, nor an inert setting which is affected or changed by it, it is a power which is born into, and simultaneously with, a certain existential environment, or is synchronized with it...[It] is nothing other than *a certain way of being in the world suggested to us from some point in space*, and seized and acted upon my body...so that sensation is literally a form of communion.”⁶⁸

The phenomenological understanding of the sense of space challenges the modern conceptions of mind and thought as self-standing, and of objects in the world as isolated and impressive qualities, the very conceptions on which the modern subject is founded. The self’s immersion into lived-experience not only reveals that our understanding of the world is one that is always situated in “a certain existential environment,” but also that this is a characteristic common to *all* lived-experience, common to all human beings and their ways of understanding. The *impersonal self* (*moi naturel*), is one that “[finds] itself already in a given situation, its powers already at work,”⁶⁹ thus understands perception and experience as ambiguous and as *happening inside itself*: “*on perçoit en moi*,” or rather, “perception takes place in me.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 211-12.

⁶⁹ Bannan, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, p. 89.

⁷⁰ Merleau-Ponty writes: “My perception, even when seen from the inside, expresses a given situation: I can see blue because I am *sensitive* to colors, whereas personal acts create a situation: I am a mathematician because I have decided to be one. So, if I wanted to render precisely the perceptual experience, I ought to say that *one* perceives in me (*on perçoit en moi*), and not that I

The notion of experience as *happening inside of myself* has crucial implications for the analysis in Chapter Three of place as something *embedded in us*. As Merleau-Ponty suggests, to conceive of what we sense as heralding “a certain way of being in the world suggested to us from some point in space,” is to conceive of experience and actions as always *lived* and situated in a given place and time. As something that “happens in us,” this not only suggests a *philosophical* connection of fundamental importance, but also a *geographical* and *historical* connection for our study of the geopolitical as a phenomenon motivated by the sensation of a *loss of place*. These connections and constellations thus begin to situate the understanding of the geopolitical as something existential and of central relevance to the self; more importantly, I would suggest, they situate the geopolitical as something that takes place *inside the modern self*. Such a phenomenological genealogy is thus reflective of a set of complications for the traditional understanding of geopolitics and of the need for a renewed sense of responsibility to place. The sense of responsibility to place, which informs the thought of both critical geographers and phenomenologists, is rooted in a broader critique of the foundations of modern subjectivity and its traditional intellectual disciplines. To demonstrate how the geopolitical nature of thought informs both designs of power and attempts at resistance, however, we must highlight what in our embodied experience of the world informs this *sense of responsibility*. By demonstrating how our lived-experience of the world (as geo-historical) allows us to enact a *critical awareness* of the interstices of geopolitics, we must now highlight a *place-in-between*: a sense of responsibility that begins to “de-

perceive.” See: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 215 and Bannan, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, p. 89.

colonize” the Western project of Reason and attempts to make the study of geopolitics and international relations *transnational*.

Lived-Experience and Geographical Responsibility

“...it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home.”⁷¹

– Theodor Adorno

When Aristotle calls the human being a *zoon politikon* – a conception arising from his understanding of the social unity between thought, place and language⁷² – he is also thinking of the human in a particular place and the power of that place.⁷³ For Aristotle, place is prior to all things, “for place does not perish when the things in it cease to be.”⁷⁴ The primacy of Athens in his time, as the intellectual and political center of the “civilized” world, was and remains for many, the first geo-historical manifestation of the West’s (first Greece, then Europe’s) ultimate possibilities. The Athenian potential for greatness was determined not only by Athens’ place amongst the other Greek city-states, but was in fact largely determined by its geo-economic (and intellectual) place and dominance in the “Mediterranean” world at that *particular* historical moment. The constitutive relationship between place, history and thought is at the center of what we have been investigating, and is indicative of the existential dynamic of embodied

⁷¹ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections From Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1984), p. 39.

⁷² F.M. Cornford, *Before and After Socrates* (Westford: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 89

⁷³ Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. ix

⁷⁴ Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 14; see also: Aristotle, *Physics*, Sect. #208b, lines 35-209a, 2.

existence. For Aristotle, Casey tells us, “*where something is constitutes a basic metaphysical category.*”⁷⁵ In light of the above analysis, the ability to point to things on a map is reflective of an almost ontological capacity for determining and understanding reality. Maps, unlike existence, are never ambiguous (or at least are never meant to be so), they are manifestations of a certain understanding of history and space. As Rich highlights above, maps are in fact reflective of a particular time and place, “a place in history.”⁷⁶ Thus understood, conceptions and representations of space often act as a layering of historical narratives, a geopolitical mapping of our own historical understanding. As Susan Schulten points out, geography (both as a discipline and real-world practice) is *historically constitutive*:

“This power of geography to shape history is difficult to apprehend, and even more difficult to document systematically. But the elusive and reciprocal nature of this interplay should not deter us from investigating its implications for the historical enterprise...We can never...reach ‘beyond geography’, for it is impossible to imagine the world outside of its interpretive conventions. But we can ask *how* geography has mediated the world for us, and how it has concretized the abstract.”⁷⁷

Human existence is always already situated and (as embodied) it is always already involved in the ways we understand and experience the world and its places: the self is always already *a geographical self*. The experience and reflection of place (the existential basis of *geographic self-understanding*) not only demands that we continually re-enact the spatiality of human existence (as intentional towards place), but also that we trace the origins of that enactment, or as Schulten suggests, “*how we have concretized the*

⁷⁵ Casey, *The Fate of Place*, p. 50. See also: Aristotle, *Categories*, Sect. #2a1, lines 5a9-14. My italics.

⁷⁶ Adrienne Rich, “Notes Towards a Politics of Location,” in *Blood, Bread and Poetry*, p. 27.

⁷⁷ Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America*, p. 241.

abstract.” Geopolitics, as an extension of the human desire to *be* in place, to inhabit and know many places, “understands” itself as a *geography-at-work*, perpetually re-enacting a way of being and way of knowing that inform its internal logic, simultaneously writing its path onto the landscapes from which it attains “self-understanding.” Geopolitics writes space, as it *lives* space; it makes its own actions and mappings (as material and situated) eternally susceptible to new readings and thus new ways of writing – *geopolitics is always in excess of itself*.

Spatial constructions like maps, as means of containment and marginalization, create before us a world where there is no “state-to-state” conflict as such, but rather an interaction that is reflective of historical legacies and narratives of ontological manipulation. Because they are historical, these constructions have a situated and communal effect on reality; because they are manipulations of places (active engagements) they exhort us to respond. As Matthew Sparke suggests, ingrained in the very nature of geography – as a personal dimension (constituted-by and constitutive-of human identity) and as an academic discipline concerned with interpreting the “negotiated frames of references” of socio-cultural and political space – there exists representational “feedback loops”: constructed representations that are geo-historically informed by the way people think, understand and posit geographies *of* and *in* the international system.⁷⁸ Sparke suggests that our imagination not only feeds our approaches towards spaces and places (echoing Santiago’s understanding of *critical*

⁷⁸ Matthew Sparke, “*The World is Not Flat: From Bad Geographies of Globalization to the Mountains Beyond Mountains*,” Broad Educational Series lecture given at Florida International University on March 14th, 2007.

space), but also that, in producing the ideas that color our view of the world, our imagination tries to, as Tuan suggests above, “[seek] meaning in order,” and “[seek] meaning in the landscape.”⁷⁹

In both academic approaches and practices of everyday life, Sparke suggests that there exists a particular *geography of vocalization*, a prose of the world: a type of enunciation that rises from a particular *geo-historical* context that provides the façade of an allegedly given stability (even as visibly unstable!) to the order of geographic and geopolitical designs.⁸⁰ The construction of places is thus ultimately defined by the embodied and lived-experiences we as individuals go through, by how we affect place and how place affects us. Given the complexities of modernity, however, the perception of space and place is of a much different nature than the understanding of the pre-reflective we have outlined so far. Sparke suggests that the narratives and veils that define the international order (or disorder) we live in are built on the particular experiences and histories of established world powers. Not only is the enunciation that arises from this order one that is geopolitically totalizing, it is also a type of enunciation that seeks to silence (intellectually, as well as materially) other rival voices of dissent or resistance: geopolitics is always *a geopolitics of knowledge*.

Like geography, geopolitics writes space in order to become self-referential, self-sufficient, and thus self-understanding. Since reality may often reflect otherwise, geopolitical desires can never be fully satisfied and are thus *always-at-work*. The point for Sparke about a critical understanding of geography begins with seeing geography as a

⁷⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan, “Geography, Phenomenology and the Study of Human Nature,” p. 184.

⁸⁰ Sparke, “*The World is Not Flat...*”

form of *earth-writing*, where we are exhorted to think beyond the writerly concern with “the ways in which books, travel guides, poetry and the like, evoke and contribute to the construction of particular landscapes,” to a more fundamental criticism:

“The more radical and far-reaching implication of the argument that the ‘geo’ is constantly being ‘graphed’ is that any assumption about geography either as a result of or as a basis or container for other social relations always risks fetishizing a particular spatial arrangement and ignoring ongoing processes of spatial production, negotiation, or contestation.”⁸¹

Just as embodied existence is always dynamic and ambiguous to itself, geography and geopolitics must constantly renew themselves and their representations of durability in order to remain effective. The material “concreteness” of the world (along with the fallacy of self-sufficiency that it invests into the human subject) not only gives geopolitical designs an existential character that informs our everyday practices, but also reveals within the geopolitical an existential ambiguity that simultaneously affects critical and anti-geopolitical endeavors. This ambiguity about geography and the geopolitical, which is reflective of the ambiguity of the human self, risks turning critical spaces into the reproduction of foundationally-fixed ideas about the nature of places.⁸² Such a “metaphysics of geo-presence,” by privileging certain spatial patterns, “simultaneously [downplays] the geographic diversity of the constitutive processes that produced it.”⁸³ In clearer terms, Sparke suggests that the geopolitical nature of thought is dangerously unstable to be treated under traditional approaches, even of the most critical kind, thus engaging in a deconstruction of the critical that leads to the interstices of thought itself.

⁸¹ Matthew Sparke, *In The Space of Theory: Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. xiv.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. xv.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

By drawing on Gayatri Spivak's anti-colonial reading of Jacques Derrida,⁸⁴ Sparke's deconstructive geography seeks to read the "shadows of geographical patterns" that lie dormant and implicit in thinking about the geographical and the geopolitical. He suggests that only a *responsible* reading that lies somewhere *in the space of theory* (but whose space: Bernstein's, Santiago's, Merleau-Ponty's or Sparke's?), "a spur to respond ethically to the erasures represented by any particular geography...a call to *map persistently* without totalization or finalization,"⁸⁵ can adequately acknowledge the limits of geographical thinking and address the geopolitical nature of thought, subjecting both to a critique that begins at the margins of thought:

"Every geography...every mapping, picturing, visualization, landscaping, theorization, and metaphorization of space becomes re-readable in this sense not just for what it includes, but also for what it overwrites and covers up in the moment of representing spatially the always already unfinished historical-geographical process and power relations of its spatial production."⁸⁶

The notion of *geographical responsibility* thus seeks to uncover the "anemic geographies" that lie dormant in all of geography; similar to the present study, Sparke wants to reveal what is geopolitical in all thinking as part of a reminder of responsibility towards all theorizing.⁸⁷ What remains fundamental in his analysis is the critical *place-in-between* from which responsibility emerges and casts forth its critique: as existentially situated, it is historically dynamic; as historically and genealogically intentioned, it is never-ending – it is a part of the phenomenological project *par excellence*. The sense of

⁸⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by G.C. Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) pp. ix-lxxxviii

⁸⁵ Sparke, *In The Space of Theory*, p. xvi.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

an *ethical geography*, he therefore suggests, “is not therefore a humanist position that assumes the geographer’s or anti-essentialist philosopher’s ability to ‘choose’ responsibility individualistically, nor is it a religious responsibility of moral duty.”⁸⁸ Rather, it leaves us only with what Spivak calls the “freedom to *acknowledge insertion* into responsibility,”⁸⁹ the *embodied im-placement* of the human self.

For Spivak, the acknowledgement of insertion is indicative of both the intentional nature of embodied existence and of the ambiguous “freedom” of the phenomenologically understood self: it is a concern with the lived-coexistence and injustice that forms our everyday lives. Its more radical implications, the concern with those people in history that “*are no longer here*,” makes several connections with post-colonial and liberation strands of thought emerging from the developing world and the concerns of those on *the underside of history*. Yet Spivak’s and Sparke’s analyses do not go far enough, remaining nevertheless within the confines of a geographical self that has already had the opportunity to speak her voice, a self that is activating her own critical space and enacting a geopolitical awareness of the world. In many ways, which they would be quick to acknowledge, and which my project itself is guilty of, this is reflective of the problem of all thought in general: understanding is always doomed to exclusivity and failure; total comprehension and inclusion are never possible from our situated ways of understanding and being. Yet Spivak and Sparke hint at several key notions that propose to broaden and enact this ethical responsibility. Without the hubris of founding

⁸⁸ Sparke, *In The Space of Theory*, p. xxxi.

⁸⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Postcoloniality* (Cape Town: University of Cape Tow Press, 1992), p. 7.

new, all-encompassing theoretical systems, and driven instead by the impetus to de-colonize discussion of these concerns, they invoke what philosopher Enrique Dussel considers the geopolitical origins of philosophy:

“Philosophy ponders the non-philosophical: the reality. But because it involves reflection on its own reality, it sets out from what already is, from its own world, its own system, its own space. The philosophy that has emerged from a periphery has always done so in response to a need to situate itself with regard to a center – *in total exteriority*.”⁹⁰

Philosophy is always existentially embodied in philosophers: those situated in a particular place, with a particular experience and understanding of space and place. Philosophical thinking is only real in expression; it is through expression that it seeks to write out a space for itself in the world, manifesting its place on the horizon of thought. To take geopolitical space seriously, Dussel suggests, a critical *geo-historical awareness* is thus necessary that not only seeks to forge a *critical space* where, “The slave, in revolt, uses the master’s language,”⁹¹ but must also first recognize that it has always done so on the *fringes* of philosophy:

“Distant thinkers, those who had a perspective of the center from the periphery, those who had to define themselves in the presence of an already established image of the human person and in the presence of uncivilized fellow humans, the newcomers, the ones *who hope because they are always outside*, these are the ones who have a clear mind for pondering reality...Philosophical intelligence is never so truthful, clean, and precise as when it starts from oppression and does not have to defend any privileges, because it has none.”⁹²

For Dussel (like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sparke), philosophical thinking and study always take place on the horizons of a certain pre-reflective experience of the world

⁹⁰ Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, p. 3.

⁹¹ Ibid., “Preface”.

⁹² Ibid., p. 4. My italics.

that varies from place to place. The fact that “places are *in me*” (embodied im-placement) clearly affects how I engage the world: places can limit or broaden the horizons of my experience. My brief invocation of Dussel thus acts as a prelude to the following chapter where the geopolitical nature of thought will be discussed in the context of the West’s geopolitical origins and the development of the modern subject’s understanding of place. “Thought that takes refuge in the center,” Dussel writes, “ends by thinking it to be the only reality.”⁹³ Thought, as inherently geopolitical, becomes self-referential and absolute when it thinks its context as *concrete* and *unchanging*, when it assumes its power as total and thus the only alternative. Just as for Sparke and Spivak, Dussel’s task of an “ethical philosophy,” of an *ethical hermeneutics*, is “to describe the ethical structure that the human being lives in its historical, common, and unreflected situation.”⁹⁴ As Michael Barber reminds us, and Dussel maintains, “humanity does not arbitrarily construct this [situation] and its demands, but, rather, finds being with its accompanying prescriptions imposed.”⁹⁵ In light of the self’s ethical implacement, to understand geopolitics is thus to understand it from the outside and from within: it is to already *be living the geopolitical* on the inside (as part of our thought) as well as on the outside (of its designing core). Such a geo-historical awareness is one that critical approaches to geopolitics are implicitly informed by, but which curiously remains on the margins of their writings.

⁹³ Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, p. 4

⁹⁴ See: Enrique Dussel, *Para una ética de la liberación Latinoamericana*, 5 vols., (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Argentina Editores, 1973), Vol. 1, p. 38, 56; Vol. 2, pp. 135-38, 143-45, 151, and 182.

⁹⁵ Michael Barber, *Ethical Hermeneutics: Rationality in Enrique Dussel’s Philosophy of Liberation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), p. 33.

As I will discuss in Chapter Three, the central difficulty of Western designs of national identity is that they assume of places to be empty recipients (containers) of constructions foreign to their experiences and ultimate realities. What these discourses and designs frequently encourage is the often-violent rejection and disavowal of imposed structures and practices – actions that conversely eclipse the possibility of fruitful, “analogical” engagement from all actors. The eclipsing of places, bodies and ways of thinking that energize these geopolitical designs thus attempts to weaken and silence the identities and power of particular places. The traces that these practices leave are not only harmful to the realities and development of those places and people that receive them, but are ultimately limiting the ways these places may be formative to individuals outside of them and the ways states can “learn” from each other. It takes a peculiar “in-between” strategy to overcome and re-think these imposed designs, a strategy that both translates the inadequacies of geopolitical discourse and emancipates the voices inside.

Sparke’s analysis of geographical responsibility reveals a set of critiques that tie to the broader constellation of critical thought in Dussel’s own calls for *geo-historical awareness*. As I have shown, his deconstructive analysis in fact elucidates the geopolitical basis that underlies Dussel’s call for Latin American liberation: geographical responsibility is always already on the fringes of mainstream thought and must never seek to finalize its intentions. It is thus necessary at this point to describe the nature of the geopolitical *place-in-between* from which Dussel is writing, a place, he suggests, that lies on the margins of geopolitics and modernity. In Chapter Three, I will explore the phenomenological origins of the West’s understanding of place and how its historical development has transformed ideas of national identity into a strategic *geopolitics of*

security. By elaborating the phenomenological understanding of embodied consciousness and the human experience of place as found in the writings of Edward Casey and his understanding of *habitus*, I will show how the re-enactment of the experience of place is a fundamental part of the modern subject's sense of reality and continuity. Such a sense of self is implicit in the writing and practice of U.S. foreign policy and in turn leads to a *politicized* understanding of the human body, the body of the state, and the body of history in the attempt at constructing a *securitized* identity.

Chapter III: Self and Place in the Geopolitics of Security

“Power bears a halo about it, and its curse...is to fail to see the image of itself it shows to others.”¹

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty

I have up to this point taken great liberties in my general definition and understanding of geopolitics. In many ways, I have perhaps said things that certain geopolitical discourses (classical as well as contemporary) would object to as legitimate factors in the study and understanding of geopolitics. Rather than being an obstacle, displacing the general understanding of geopolitics is an objective of my work: the insistence of discourses (mainstream or critical) to understand the geopolitical solely at the representational level reveals the potential of these designs to be seen merely as *political* responses to certain material conditions of the international system. By failing to recognize the rooted and situated (*existential*) nature of geopolitical designs and thought, we fail to recognize the prolonged psychological and epistemic effects of these designs on everyday life, affecting both our intellectual identity and understanding of the world. To be clear, a reading of geopolitics at the level of its manifest, material representations (even when critical of its designs and structures of power) must first recognize that it is fundamentally already part of these designs, that is to say, as a product (by association, origins, or response) of their historical development. The self-conscious recognition on the part of critical approaches to philosophy and geopolitics towards the totalizing practices of geopolitical designs is in fact part of a much broader debate concerning our ideas of modern thought and history.

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 216.

As Louiza Odysseos argues, modern political thought rests on a *logic of composition* that has read its political and historical development as distinct from the materiality of the places it has occurred in. Intertwined with the spread of a solipsistic understanding of the human self, this logic of composition has led us to forget how the idea of a self is at all possible:

“Based on modern subjectivity, with its key features of self-sufficiency and mastery prescribing a relation of mere copresence, the logic of composition suggests that units or entities are nonrelational in their constitution until ‘composed.’ This determination of coexistence, however, does not arise from the phenomena, the facticity of entities; rather, it is based on an interpretive preconception...the nonrelational subject, whose ontological attributes render coexistence as a secondary and fragile condition [the state? the social contract?], as an act of composing previously unrelated and preformed subjects.”²

Through a logic of composition, both the heterogeneous and social nature of the human self as based on *coexistence*, as well as the connection to place that makes all philosophical expression possible, have been eclipsed and distorted by the presence and weight of an omniscient and universal subject. Rather than reading history as the dynamic development and interaction of a broader body of peoples, ideas and experiences, modern philosophy has traditionally subsumed history to the development of this allegedly sovereign, self-sufficient, and universal *ego*. Yet the reified conception of the subject did not arise from the confines of Descartes’ stove-heated room, but rather from the experiences of European exchange, conflict and “discovery” that informed modern philosophical and political thought from the end of the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment. Such a conception of reality – this *ontology of world history* – is at the center of the Eurocentric conception of place, thought and international relations that we seek to understand and displace. As Enrique Dussel suggests:

² Louiza Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence*, p. xxvii.

“That ontology did not come from nowhere. It arose from a previous experience of domination over other persons, of cultural oppression over other worlds. Before the *ego cogito* there is an *ego conquiro*; ‘I conquer’ is the practical foundation of ‘I think.’”³

We thus find that the development of modern history, as understood by the Eurocentrism of modern philosophy, has first rested on the *material* expansion and appropriation of other peoples and places (*ego conquiro*), before the *philosophical* appropriation of reality (*ego cogito*).⁴ More than solely expansion, however, the alleged grandeur of European thought and politics has rested on the self-understanding of its endeavors as representative of the history of humanity and of “truly modern” thinking. By resting on the principles of discovery and rationality in order to explain and justify its expansion into “new” worlds, the understanding of modern philosophy allows us to see, in living color, what Schulten calls, “the power of geography to shape history.”⁵ Yet how did we get to this place and moment of history? What is it about the European experience of itself, of the world, and ultimately of place, that leads to conceiving of thought as necessarily resting on territorial expansion? How is this conception at the very root and origin of what is formally called today national security and geopolitics? The answer to these questions, as we will explore in this chapter, rests on a certain experience and understanding of place that is common to everyday human thought before ever becoming policy and state design.

³ Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, p. 3.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 3-4. For a similar perspective on this facet of history, see also: Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 142 and 150.

⁵ Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America*, p. 241

According to the phenomenology of place found in the work of Edward Casey, modern forms of thought act as the manifestation of the *expansion of place* through the human practice of habitation. Such practices make place not only the site where the geopolitical plays out, but indeed the very means through which the geopolitical is possible. By exploring the human experience of place, we will find in Casey's analyses the tools to understand the role of place in the formation of what we can call a *geographical self*, but also in the formation of epistemic boundaries that form the embryos of our modern boundaries of territorial and national security. These boundaries, I will argue, lie somewhere between the condition of *habitus* and its expansion into geopolitics, and are at the center of the phenomenological understanding of geopolitics as an extension of the philosophical subject of modernity.

Between Geography and Philosophy: The Ethos of Place

Edward Casey's phenomenology attempts to understand our relation to place as a necessary component of our lived-experience and a category of the understanding. Both how we experience places and how they affect us, he maintains, have been forgotten and eclipsed from the collective experience of human existence by the disarray of philosophical abstraction.⁶ Such a condition is reflective of what contemporary philosophers have ambiguously called the *post-modern condition*.⁷ More concretely, this

⁶ See: Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place*.

⁷ We should not read the term post-modern merely in a temporal sense, but more in a hybrid one. Post-modernity, according to just one of its many observers, is the present condition where social and existential knowledge has lost its traditional stability and monolithic standing in Western society and thought. In relation to the technological and material developments of capitalism and the modern world, knowledge has lost its place at the center of contemporary social discourses, taking a backseat to the mass construction, distribution and consumption of prefabricated forms of being. In short, knowledge in post-modernity has become a commodity to be sold and imposed

kind of condition is a correlate of the dispersion and instability that the social phenomena of modernity have historically and presently leveled onto our self-understanding and experience of place.⁸ To understand such a dispersion, Casey maintains we need to “*re-find place*” and reaffirm it as a “clearing” where philosophy and geography can meet.⁹

By calling for a phenomenological genealogy of place, Casey focuses on how our understanding of place has changed and become displaced across history – in many ways, he suggests, place is something “we have already always been losing.”¹⁰ He maintains that in order to return to place, to re-affirm its central character in human experience, “we may need to return, if not in actual fact then in *memory* or *imagination*, to the very earliest places we have known.”¹¹ For our intents and purposes, to speak of *returning to place* not only means, to paraphrase Gramsci, to make an inventory of history’s “infinity of traces”¹² in us, but also to redefine our place in the world as human beings in general. The return to place is ultimately a re-thinking of human experience. Casey’s exhortation is one that asks us not only to reflect on our practices in space and place, but also on the ways we remember and imagine these as well, suggesting a critical awareness of the

on a public by dominant structures of power. See: Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁸ Edward S. Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does it Mean to Be in the Place-World,” in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (vol. 91, no. 4, December, 2001), p. 683

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, p. x

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 324.

everyday “negotiated frames of reference” that critical geographers such as Gregory and Ó Tuathail have informed us about, as well as a sense of geographical responsibility similar to that proposed by Sparke and Dussel.

The critical awareness of place not only builds off of Merleau-Ponty’s own conception of the body and of *lived-space*, but is also an understanding that presents us with a more comprehensive description of the dynamics of place and *embodied existence*, a conception that sees the existence of human beings and place *in communion*:

“Your immediate placement [in the world] – or “implacement,” as I prefer to call it – counts for much more than is usually imagined. More, for instance, than serving as a mere backdrop for concrete actions or thoughts. Place itself is concrete and at one with action and thought.”¹³

Casey attempts here to reveal an anthropological dimension to our situated understanding of place that he calls “the geographical self,” where “place is regarded as constitutive of one’s sense of identity.”¹⁴ As the formal construction of an insight that geographers have been previously aware of, Casey’s insight had only been dealt with at the level of *geographic understanding* and not of the human self’s constitutive *experience* of this relation. As geographer Robert Sack reminds us, “place and self help construct and activate each other...the formation of personality [is] directly connected to the formation of place.”¹⁵

¹³ See: Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, p. xiii. This description suggests a fundamental praxis at work in our experience of place: “The *im-* of *implacement* stresses the action of getting in or *into*, and it carries connotations of *immanence* that are appropriate to the inhabitation of places.” See: Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 315, n. 9.

¹⁴ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 684.

¹⁵ R.D. Sack, *Homo Geographicus: A Framework for Action, Awareness and Moral Concern*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 88.

Following a long line of phenomenological and geographical thinking concerning the intimate relation between human beings and the places they inhabit, Casey attempts to conceive of a critical *space-in-between* that reveals how existential, social and political meanings are constituted and interpreted by means of the embodied self's exposure and appropriation of space. In clearer terms, by positing place as a "concrete" component of action and thought, as a fundamental characteristic of the embodied human self, Casey highlights in human beings a *geo-historical* dimension that makes their encounter with place central to their existence. It is now the *concreteness* of place, much more than the existential possibilities of *lived-space*, that lies at the core of the human experience of the world. Such a critical space, as an understanding *between geography and philosophy*, in addition to making connections with critical methods of thought mentioned in Chapter Two, also has profound implications for the existential appropriation of geopolitics that I have been seeking to uncover. The sense of this appropriation can be described as an *epistemic veiling*: the psychological appropriation of a residue of geometrical space as a latent, spatial landscaping or writing; more clearly, it concerns the layering and structuring of natural spaces with the veil of subjective understanding.¹⁶

In part, an existential appropriation is a central element in the "constitution" and pre-reflective understanding of place¹⁷; that is to say, appropriating *a place of my own* is

¹⁶ A description more akin to what I call *film-phenomenology*, veiling refers to the processes by which objects acquire meaning for us according to how they have affected us; that is to say, it is concerned with the intentional character (the uses and objectives) of forms of representation, particularly film, through which cultural, political and ideological meanings are "transmitted," taking shape in my eyes through the affects they have laid over me. See: Mauro J. Caraccioli, "Film-Phenomenology and the Veiling of Knowledge," (Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, in Pittsburgh, PA on October 16th-18th, 2008.)

key to forming a geographical self.¹⁸ By capturing a *residue*, however, I also mean that this is only the *partial* appropriation of that quality of space (as *lived-space*) that makes up all possible horizons of human existence for me.¹⁹ As a quality that remains anonymous and available to all, I can appropriate only small parts of space to *name* and *call* places of my own, always in an ontologically limited fashion. Like a sea around and inside us, space and place coincide in the pre-reflective through our embodied experience of them; they are fundamentally linked to us in an intricate tapestry of embodied consciousness and signification, a communal structuring and laying out of the world (*Auslegung*²⁰) and also of ourselves. We ascribe meaning to space and place, just as they inscribe meaning *in us*. As Casey suggests, “By *being in place*, we find ourselves in what is subsistent and enveloping,”²¹ reaffirming the intentional character of human experience

¹⁷ It is important to remember that for Merleau-Ponty and Casey, places and the objects “within” them can never be fully appropriated and grasped. As Bannan reminds us, “The perceptual consciousness from which [the subject] emerges is both *anonymous* [commonly-shared]...and *partial*: the object I perceive is *never* all that there is to perceive, nor is the sense by means of which I perceive it, all of myself, the perceiver. Each particular sense is a sort of specialized self, an explicit involvement in a particular object standing out against the background of my general involvement in the world that animates...[its] general context.” See: Bannan, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁸ It is fair to note here that the experience of place comes prior to, or remains outside, the formal cartography of the state. Indeed, the argument will be made further down that once a person or group of peoples has been corralled in (or out) of the territorial categories and processes of the state, their experience of place has become ontologically usurped and / or negated – this marks the thinning-out of life itself. For a key source, see: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)

¹⁹ See: Bannan, p. 89; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 87; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, compiled by Dominique Séglaard and trans. by Robert Vallier, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003).

²⁰ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 137-41.

as occurring in space and place, but also *taking place inside me* (sedimentation). As an attitude towards the world, such an appropriation not only affects our sense of self, but it also affects our sense of others. What is there to say then about the appropriation of the intentional qualities of space and place for geopolitical practices? What is it about the existential appropriation of geopolitics that remains fundamental to the geographical self's experience of the world and its places?

Habitudes of the Self and the Experience of Place

The limits of intentional consciousness on our appropriation of the world (of objects, others, places) are only limits in the *ways* that we understand our phenomenological relation to place; that is to say, they are only limits when we understand the limits of thought and of the human self as *embodied* and *coexisting* with others. Geopolitical thinking seeks to constantly rupture these limits on its own *being* by acts “perceived” and intended as essential to its *becoming*. In a phenomenological sense, geopolitics (like existence) is always in excess of itself. Geopolitics inverts the primacy of perception with the primacy of reason; where perception limits our awareness of the world to a state of mutuality, modern reason broadens it into a state of comprehension and totality. The ambiguity that Merleau-Ponty ascribes to both our experience of the world and of others (the ambiguity between being subject and object), is an ontological limit on our experience and understanding of the world that conceives the very nature of existence as indeterminate.²² Such a limit does not mean that existence is non-sense, but

²¹ Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, p. xvii

²² As Merleau-Ponty writes, “Existence is indeterminate in itself, by reason of its fundamental structure, and in so far as it is the very process whereby the hitherto meaningless takes on meaning...in so far as it is the taking up of a *de facto* situation. We shall give the name

rather that it is never stable: it possesses a dynamic that allows us to understand that we have the possibility of many meanings, all of which are necessarily rooted in “certain bases of coherence, such as involvement in a single world or *the sedimentation of experience*.”²³

Geopolitical thinking, however, displaces these core “bases of coherence” by conflating the possibilities of lived-space with the appropriation (sedimentation) of the residues of place. Geopolitics, as Paul Virilio would suggest, “inflates the present,”²⁴ giving primacy to an absolute, self-sufficient and panoptic *ego*, isolating the self from its existential involvement in the world.²⁵ The *politicization* of places and of the self, the mind-frame of classic European colonialism, thus eclipses and scatters the *poésis* (the communal creation) of existence, hijacking its ontological potential into an instance and function of individual power. Places, therefore, no longer contain, or *hold* any meanings – they become increasingly porous and easily reshaped, so long as we *conceive* of them as such. Such a process does not merely go without saying, but is rather part of the dispersion of the narratives that have historically given places a sense of community, that it is to say, it unsettles the very premises of modernity that have allowed groups of peoples to establish a sense of identity into nations and states, differentiating these from the unfamiliarity of “the international.”²⁶

transcendence to this act in which existence takes up, for its own purposes, and transforms such a situation.” See: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 169

²³ Bannan, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, p. 80. My italics.

²⁴ Paul Virilio, *Open Sky*, trans. by J. Rose (London: Verso, 1997), p. 135.

²⁵ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 684.

The dispersion of the geo-historical sense of identity, part and parcel of the condition of *post-modernity* we mentioned above, not only empties places of historical meaning through a gospel of competition, speed, and consumption, but also empties human beings of the capacity to recognize the very qualities that allow them to come together in the first place.²⁷ For Casey, this “thinning-out” of place eliminates the “enmeshed infrastructures” between place and self that determine the intentional character (towards-which, for-which) of our experience of the world and others.²⁸ In other words, the collapse of place correlates “with a self of infinite distractibility whose own surface is continually complicated by new pleasures,”²⁹ perhaps even a desire for *new places*. Following Casey, a conception of a geopolitics of knowledge would therefore be one where a certain understanding of place and history, itself geo-historically situated, tempts us to see its history and myths as our own, developing as a structure of dominance which acts as a veil over our experience and understanding. As Sack suggests, “thinned-out places work well when they do not intrude on our consciousness and thus allow us to attend to the things that should take place in the world,” making a routine out

²⁶ This sense of inside and outside is central to the study of international relations, and its exclusionary power is a key element of contemporary, critical perspectives. See: R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

²⁷ In contrast to Hardt and Negri’s assertion that post-modern dispersion and fragmentation are key elements for a renewed mobilization of people, Casey’s phenomenology maintains that “where we are,” and perhaps more importantly “who we are,” are not only co-extensive with the durability of place, but as I will argue in Chapter Three, are a privilege that has been historically denied and frustrated to the peoples of the developing world through the Euro-American (colonial) assertion of place-bound identity. See: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2005) pp. 208-11 and Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xiii.

²⁸ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 684

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 685

of complex life.³⁰ The character of this “*should*,” however, is left unquestioned by Sack, even as he suggests in an earlier passage that, “thinned-out places with permeable boundaries help us *see through* the veils of culture.”³¹ How is this “should” enacted? In what ways is this “should” politicized by particular actors and interests?

According to Casey, the intentional character of place tests the self and its ways of (self) understanding. The more leveled places are, he argues, the more the self seeks thickness and thus enrichment, intensifying a desire for the real, a desire for *habitus*.³² The term *habitus* is borrowed from the work of Pierre Bourdieu³³ and is used as a mediating term between place and self. *Habitus* (the bodily character and disposition of *habitation*) is an improvisational and innovative quality of human existence that (through embodied consciousness) remains open to the material and intellectual potentialities of existence.³⁴ *Habitus* is “always enacted in a particular place and incorporates the features inherent in previous such places,”³⁵ indicating a *sedimentation* of places in the self. As a *habitude*, a relational attitude towards the world and others, *habitus* is the embodied basis of action in any sphere and any place, lying somewhere between lived-space and the geographical self. *Habitudes*, Casey goes on, “incorporate and continue...what one has

³⁰ Sack, *Homo Geographicus*, p. 138

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 685

³³ See: Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by R. Nice, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)

³⁴ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 686

³⁵ *Ibid.*

experienced in particular places,”³⁶ creating a sense of home-place,³⁷ a place of “ready-to-hand” involvement, always intentional to others and the world (towards-which, for-which). Habitudes are already there when we are inculcated into the world, instructing us, as Bourdieu says, with “the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment.”³⁸

If we follow this line of reasoning carefully – if habitus is a condition that allows us to connect identity and place, to connect history and geography as geo-historicity – we find that the thinning-out of places that is characteristic of post-modernity is the thinning-out of habitus itself. It is, in Casey’s words, “the replacement of one set of habitudes [engaging with dense places] with another set,” focused on flattened or perhaps even *flattening* places.³⁹ Paying close attention to the phenomenological genealogy we have been drawing out, it is clear to see here that geopolitical actions are thus based on a disintegration of the phenomenological understanding of knowledge and existence, a distortion that relapses thought back to the modern Hobbesian, Cartesian, and Lockean subject of Western modernity – sovereign, self-sufficient, and universal. In modern international thought, this action replaces the desire for a place of my own, with a desire for more places – it is an action reflective of a drive for security and *spatial sovereignty*.

³⁶ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 686.

³⁷ This is a similar account to Heidegger’s description of the work-place. See: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row), p. 100.

³⁸ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 72.

³⁹ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 686.

Of Habitus and Security: Re-Situating the Geopolitical

“Danger bears no essential, necessary, or unproblematic relation to the action or event from which it is said to derive.”⁴⁰

– David Campbell

The connection between place and security can be found by addressing the intentional effects of habitus on the psychological dispositions of embodied human existence. “Human beings,” Casey writes, “act on the basis of habitus,”⁴¹ maintaining that the value and essence of habitus lies in its *actuality*, on the enactment of a present expressing an intentional *commitment* to a place-world. In its performance, habitus “*reaches out to place*, a being or becoming in place.”⁴² The intentional character of habitus needs human selves in order to reenact its habitual bonds, investing in the geographical self the intentional desire for more places in order to reenact the habitudes informing its everyday practices. It is this *reaching out* that is of interest for us, both at the individual and state level: does not a place “understand” the fulfillment of its being (fulfill its *becoming*) in its geopolitical designs? Habitation thus understood (along with a subsequent process of social and historical habituation) is the means through which the geographical self “realizes its active commitment to place,”⁴³ and through which states in the international system articulate their spatial sovereignty as part of a national identity narrative.

⁴⁰ David Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 2.

⁴¹ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 687.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ As Casey reminds us, habitation is enacted through our bodies and the schemes they activate, dwelling in a particular place and concretizing our habitudes, investing in us (as the Latin root *habere* shows), a desire “to have [and] to hold.” See: Ibid.

The question of identity takes us from the realm of material circumstances to the epistemic and ideational structures that emerge from this condition. By reflecting the habitudes that are a result of our embodied experience of place, ideas also “inhabit” places, “having” these in our *epistemic grasp* (veiling). To inhabit occurs through both my body (perception, action) and mind (memory, understanding), and as Casey reminds us, these modes express the *durability* of habitus.⁴⁴ As both performative and transitive, however, to *inhabit* a place can weaken the crucial awareness of the engagement between place and self. The phenomenological nature of geopolitics (particularly of a geopolitics of knowledge) thus reveals the desire of human beings in place to express power and dominance as an extension of the rational desire to expand *habitus* and perpetuate a *situated* mode of seeing and understanding the world. Geopolitics is existential in that it reflects (and affects) the basic human desire to have and hold a place, conflating habitus with the idea of spatial sovereignty.

The desire to replicate and prolong my experience of place (in fact, the desire to keep this experience sovereign from usurpation) informs the collective drives to carve out a “common place” in the world according to my habitual understanding of reality. This is the desire that lies at the center of identity narratives that invest in groups of people a sense of a “common place” for their collective experiences and practices⁴⁵ – the “activity in passivity” of habitus⁴⁶:

⁴⁴ As Casey writes, habitus expands “so as to prolong what I experience beyond the present moment.” See: Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 687

⁴⁵ For a study on the relationship between literacy and the representation of national identity, see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 1991)

⁴⁶ Casey, “How To Get From Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time,” p. 25.

“If habitus represents a movement from the externality of established customs and norms to the internality of durable dispositions, *habitation is a matter of re-externalization* – of taking the habitus that has been acquired and continually re-enacting it in the place-world.”⁴⁷

Only as expanding and *re-externalized* can a geopolitical vision express its discursive commitment to the writing of space and place. This only occurs, however, after these designs, practices and beliefs have been *internalized*.⁴⁸ The sedimentation of experience and of places thus becomes a process of “writing” that is inscribed on human individuals as part of habitation’s social tenacity. In the context of communities and states, the process of sedimentation reaches its apogee through the nationalist (or even internationalist) expressions found in maps, film, and popular culture, reenacting the movement of habitus and the tenacity of spatial sovereignty through the internalization of the writing of space. We have been taught to believe that place and self are *existentially divorced* from each other, a veil that has nevertheless given primacy to the interests of states and the subject of Western modernity. By highlighting these characteristics, Casey’s conception of place and habitus posits a critical *space-in-between* understanding of geopolitics⁴⁹ that leaves us with a sense of the interaction (inter-subjectivity) of place-

⁴⁷ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 687. My italics.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Halford Mackinder’s infamous 1907 lecture, “On Thinking Imperially,” where he maintains that the principal problem of renewing the British Empire lay in “the difficulty of *picturing* the idea of the Empire.” As Ó Tuathail suggests, this was more than an intellectual goal, but a bureaucratic one intended for the whole of society: “Our aim must be to make our whole people think Imperially – think that is to say in spaces that are world wide – and to this end our geographical teaching should be addressed.” See: Halford Mackinder, “On Thinking Imperially,” in *Lectures on Empire*, ed. M.E. Sadler, (London: Privately printed, 1907), pp. 32, 38; cited in: Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, pp. 88-9.

⁴⁹ Edward Soja poses a similar conception of geographical existence that makes the interaction of place and thought “a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined life-world of experiences, emotions, events and political choices that is existentially shaped by...the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power.” See:

worlds. Such an interaction also highlights a *place-in-between*: an understanding of the geopolitical that transcends the inscription of domination and resistance, seeking instead a geo-historical engagement that liberates our understanding from invasive and exclusionary strategies.

Casey's understanding of habitus, despite its insights into the tenacity of place and the malleability of habitus, only hints at the effects that "expanding places" may have on human beings and the ways that geopolitical practices and actions condition (and are conditioned by) the body's interaction in a given place or set of places.⁵⁰ At the epistemic level, the tenacity of place and of geopolitical designs comes to mark individuals in ways that discursively change both the recipient and author of imposed forms of understanding, increasingly making our lives the eclectic product of foreign discourses and intervention. As we will see in Chapter Four when we discuss Cold War Latin America, the struggle for development or democracy has been represented through ideas of modernization alien to the local histories of the region, often imposed through dictatorship and/or bureaucratic collusion. The language used by these alleged avenues for change was not only driven by moral justifications following the enlightened path of Western modernity, but also

Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) p. 31; cited by Casey, "Between Geography and Philosophy," p. 692, n. 25.

⁵⁰ It is ultimately the *body-in-habitus* that is the vehicle for a place-in-between, mediating place and self, actively (materially) and passively (epistemically). To conceive of the body as "a practico-sensory totality" is to de-center the source of knowledge and "re-center it," phenomenologically speaking, to a more ambiguous and dynamic foundation. As Lefebvre says, which Merleau-Ponty intimated much earlier, "the whole of (social) space proceeds from the body." See: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by D. Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 405. Moreover, as Casey would agree, places are *in* us, and in fact *are* us; we are subjects "*as an expression of the way a place is.*" See: Casey, "Between Geography and Philosophy," p. 688. Emphasis in the original.

preached a pathology of the “national body” intent on “curing” Latin American societies of their “vulnerability” to social and political revolution, itself a source of modernizing resistance.⁵¹

As just one contemporary account on Latin American-U.S. relations demonstrates, however, there is a profound lack of acknowledgment of the existential dissonance that the effects of these strategies have had on the social fabric of Latin American societies:

“As history has repeatedly shown, one can morally justify virtually anything, making it extraordinarily difficult to dissect any particular policy to determine its moral pathology. Because of this, no study dealing with international geopolitical realities can put much stock in declarative policies such as those aimed at instituting or restoring democracy in a particular country...Such rhetorical policies may serve as fig leaves for otherwise questionable decisions; they do no as a rule significantly influence them.”⁵²

In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks and the devastating effects of the Bush Doctrine, it is with a bitter irony that a contemporary study of geopolitics can wash its hands from the power of language to justify intervention and create material realities. Not only do discourses and representations “linger in a thousand ways”⁵³ – from subtle, private discussions, to explicit and extensive political power networks – but through their popular manifestations it becomes evident how our everyday lives fall prey to foreign places.⁵⁴ The geopolitical power of modernity does not lie in what we call reason,

⁵¹ For the pathology of language in the Argentine junta’s (1976-1983) justifications for repression and persecution, see: Patricia Weiss Fagen, “Repression and State Security,” in *Fear At The Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 39-71.

⁵² Martin Sicker, *The Geopolitics of Security in the Americas: Hemispheric Denial from Monroe to Clinton* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), p. 4.

⁵³ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 688

progress, or modernization, but in our active participation in a set of myths that we conceive as our own and which are *embedded* into our very ideas of human life. The separation of place and self thus rests on a tradition of thought that has defined our world as one in need of sovereignty and security, an epistemic condition that is achieved by the exacerbation of difference through the veils of a territorial (and psychological) sense of identity.

Writing Security and the Tenacity of Exclusion

By discussing the complex and intricate web of meanings and harmonies between critical geopolitics and phenomenology, I have been attempting to reveal an element of thought that is characteristic of what is *geopolitical in us*. The desire to inhabit more places, as a result of the habitudinal bond that I desire to share with *all* places, is thus reflective of the basic intentional character of embodied human existence (*habitus*). The spatial character of existence carries within it many ontological possibilities; however, it is ambiguous and can get distracted in its experience of the world. This distraction alters self-understanding from a *geographical self* (constituted by a communal being-in-the-world), to a sovereign, self-sufficient subject of ontological primacy that conceives its own activity as one of metaphysical primacy. In clearer terms, the spatial character of human existence, by engaging in the *politicized* practice of expanding its own sense of place, understands its activity as *constitutive of reality*. Geopolitics, as the international reflection of state activity, is rooted in the modern subject's sense of identity.

⁵⁴ As François Debrix shows in *Tabloid Terror*, the politics of everyday fear continue to be alive and well in the U.S. in the aftermath of September 11th. Primarily through media strategies representing the need for a war on terror, a state of abjection has been imposed on the American public resulting in the propagation and normalization of violence, both internationally and (if need be) domestically as well. See: Debrix, *Tabloid Terror*, pp. 69-89.

From the Monroe Doctrine to the Free Trade Area of the Americas, U.S. geopolitical projects and designs have historically presented a view of the Western hemisphere that has failed to include the experience and participation of Latin American thinkers and states (in heterogeneous terms) based primarily on their difference to the ideals of the “Western” (Euro-American) experience.⁵⁵ Such marginalization has been part of a process that has situated the North Atlantic as the arbiter of the world, the light that guides the march of Reason and Progress, teaching others the gospel of modernity that ensures survival and enlightenment. Geopolitical cultures have thus traditionally presented an understanding of place that sees their origin as structured and hardened by experience and maturity (the tenacity of spatial sovereignty), while their objects remain porous and in need of lessons for salvation (the thinning-out of place).

As Dussel suggests, modernity’s sense of place rests on the foundations of a singular ontology of security, a sense of subjectivity and identity that begins from the inside. To speak of the underside of modernity, as he suggests, is to speak of the underside of the West’s geopolitical culture of self-foundation, of the totality that represents Latin American countries as children that must listen to a father’s advice, counting on his charity to survive.⁵⁶ “The logic of totality,” Dussel writes, “pursues its discourse from identity (or foundation) to difference. It is a logic of nature or of

⁵⁵ Slater provides a detailed account on the differences between Eurocentrism and Euro-Americanism, a set of distinctions that situates the study of the geopolitics of knowledge as most visibly occurring in the history of the Americas. See: Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, pp. 10-17.

⁵⁶ See: Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. and ed. by Eduardo Mendieta (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), pp. 51-53.

totalitarianism. It is the logic of the alienation of exteriority...of the other person.”⁵⁷ Recognition of this condition, however, does not merely rely on the unmasking of multinational corporations or the dissolution of an old political order, but instead requires an epistemic strategy with a self-critical and geo-historical scope that recognizes its place(ment) in modernity in order to overcome it, an approach to be fleshed out in Chapter Four.

Following Dussel’s insight on the geopolitical logic of Western philosophy, it is specifically in the idea of the state (the central concept of political modernity and the traditional understanding of international relations) that we see the attempt at a territorial communion with the human self most visibly at work. The state is not a universal given, but rather a construction whose “health” and stability (particularly since Machiavelli, but more so since Hobbes) has been increasingly equated with the health and stability of society and the human being. The nature of its construction constitutes a significant change in the history of Western political thought from the communion of ethics, sociality, and Being via Thomism, to the humanism and radical secularity of the nation-state associated with Machiavelli and the rise of the Reformation.⁵⁸ The rise of the state thus marked the end of an arduous, epistemic synthesis that, according to E.H. Carr, quickly dissolved as “the divergence between political theory and political practice became acute and challenging,”⁵⁹ and the structure and ethos of the medieval world

⁵⁷ Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, p. 42; see also: Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*, pp. 53-54.

⁵⁸ Brian R. Nelson, *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982), pp. 96-102.

changed and collapsed. From the emergence of “modern” thought onwards, the stability of the state (and of the human self) has rested on the moral (and discursive) normalization and expansion of geographical categories and thus *territorial boundaries* – as David Campbell aptly points out:

“The construction of social space that emerges from practices associated with the paradigm of sovereignty...exceed a simple geographical partitioning: it results in a conception of divergent moral spaces. In other words, the social space of inside / outside is both made possible by and helps constitute a moral space of superior / inferior, which can be animated in terms of any number of figurations of higher / lower.”⁶⁰

The existential ambiguity of embodied consciousness is thus usurped by a geographical determinism, the result of historical narratives of territorial and psychological stability veiling political and military clashes of interests and power (the drive of habitus for spatial sovereignty). The subtlety of this geographical determinism has been perpetuated through terms like “First World” and “Third World” that continue to have an axiological effect on our understanding and interpretation of international relations. Even a phrase like “the developing world” reflects a certain sociological bias (though often unconscious and unintentional) that not only facilitates a certain discourse of “maturity” that is prevalent in the North-Atlantic, but also distorts and eclipses the transnational dialogues that time and again have been attempted by thinkers on all sides of the world, particularly from Latin America and Africa.⁶¹ Geopolitics becomes a material reality affecting human

⁵⁹ E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1964 [1939, 1946]), p. 63.

⁶⁰ Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 73

⁶¹ For just one example detailing how transnational attempts at dialogue in international relations have been frustrated by academic biases and exclusions, see: Naeem Inayatullah and David L.

identity by establishing a pattern of identity that regulates (and is regulated by) the *bordering* of language: by “placing” language and forms of expression on a geographical hierarchy of social exclusion that makes the foreign a threat to the familiar.

Campbell’s insights into the constitution of identity in the practice of foreign policy allows us to see this appropriation of place and language at work in the geo-historical experience of the U.S. By enabling (North) American geopolitical discourses to manifest a certain reliance on the production of *fear-based* and *threat-based* constructions⁶², we see how these constructions are tied to the domestic, territorial struggles that were central to the formation of U.S. national identity: the internalization of an epistemic contrast between civilization and barbarism.⁶³ As Campbell maintains, “with no ontological status apart from the many and varied practices that constitute their reality, states are (and have to be) always in a process of becoming.”⁶⁴ Danger provides the scenario for the evolution of U.S. identity that has allowed certain notions of freedom and security to become the emblems through which its geopolitical projects are carried out.⁶⁵

Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-17

⁶² As he elaborates in much more detail: “Foreign policy is one part of a multifaceted process of inscription that disciplines by framing man in the spatial and temporal organization of the inside and outside, self and other, i.e., in the ‘state’. These practices do not operate in terms of a domestic society that is pre-given, nor do they signify an absolute and pre-existing space from which the threats to domestic society emerge. Their very operation frames the domestic society in whose name they claim to be operating through their claim to know the source of threats to domestic society and ‘man.’” See: Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 62.

⁶³ Campbell, *Writing Security*, pp. 107-16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶⁵ This double synthesis of exclusion and inclusion is what makes the U.S. a “post-colonial empire.” For further discussion on this term, see: Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, pp. 13-17.

By relying on a moral differentiation that makes the U.S. the inheritor of modernity's "civilizing" mission, the idea of security found in U.S. foreign policy rests on two assumptions: first, the communion of geographical expansion (and imperialism) with the West's historical mission of civilization and becoming (*the habitude of modernity*); and second, the localizing of this mission within the boundaries, violence and identity of the United States itself (*the habitus of U.S. national identity*). Modernity thus literally plays itself out in the habitudes and geopolitical actions of the United States, where the writing of space (as the drive for spatial sovereignty) becomes the new national and international language of modernity:

"The effectiveness of foreign policy as one political practice among many that serves to discipline ambiguity and construct identity is made possible because it is one instance of a series of cultural practices central to modernity operating within its one specific domain...The paradigm of sovereignty operates on the basis of a simple dichotomy: sovereignty versus anarchy."⁶⁶

Through the inscription of foreignness (the *writing* of foreign policy) – an act that is pivotal to the articulation of danger to territorial sovereignty⁶⁷ – the boundaries of national (and human!) identity are ideationally and geographically defined within the hierarchy of the state as "foreign policy helps produce and reproduce the political identity of the doer supposedly behind the deed."⁶⁸ Such a reproduction occurs through the need to make the state's identity (along with the people inside) a fixed process of rational becoming, achieving the singularity of reason and civilization that modernity's gospel of

⁶⁶ Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 65.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. x.

progress rests upon.⁶⁹ Just as “man” had become the central object and subject of reason at the turn of the Renaissance, so too the state, through the identity of its territory with the mission of its people, has become reason itself: its geopolitical activity becomes the discourse of a new reality.⁷⁰ The world, however, clearly remains in language through the situated and historical modes of interpretation that are sanctioned or outlawed by the state (in particular through its cartographical determinism). Such a condition not only acknowledges the performative constitution of language in relation to human identity and praxis⁷¹, but also reveals how performativity is, from modernity’s very beginning, “the condition of possibility by which we have historically been able to perceive the state and its practices.”⁷²

Particularly in the deployment of what I call *Cold War Reason* – the mobilization of discourses equating popular and liberation movements with anachronistic and cancerous ways of being⁷³ – we find that foreign policy practices of intervention, subversion, and international exclusion have been historically unleashed as a geopolitical praxis of liberation and modernization. What these strategies reflect, as Campbell suggests, is a geopolitics of knowledge justifying violence and slander on the basis of rendering as dangerous that which is unfamiliar:

⁶⁹ Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 66.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷² Ibid., p. 79.

⁷³ As Campbell and others have noted, “one of the central functions [in the representation of the social] has been to permit and commission the representation of danger to the social body in terms associated to the representation of danger to the physiological body.” See: Ibid., p. 80.

“The mere existence of an alternative mode of being, the presence of which exemplifies that different identities are possible and thus de-naturalizes the claim of a particular identity to be *the* true identity, is sometimes enough to produce the understanding of a threat...that objectifies events, disciplines relations, and sequesters an ideal of the identity of the people said to be at risk.”⁷⁴

The threat of de-naturalization during the Cold War in Latin America has allowed U.S. policies to be more effectively enacted through *internalized* practices and ways of thinking. Outright military intervention was not deemed necessary so long as a domestic group or class perceived U.S. foreign policy interests as the “correct” strategies of social and political organization, and more importantly, perceived themselves to be part of these strategies from the very beginning. The analysis of the use of representational discourses to include non-Western peoples into the narrative of modernity – a practice known as *Occidentalism* – is crucial to my argument here and will be the subject of Chapter Four. The critique of this practice – coming primarily from Latin American circles, but actively engaged in by certain critical geographers – seeks to open for us a dialogical place-in-between that further assesses the geopolitics of knowledge and questions the possibilities for a geopolitics of liberation. Such an assessment nevertheless requires a preliminary re-thinking of the possibilities of language and dissent, a re-envisioning that does not see language as the source of sovereignty, but rather as the condition of possibility for international relations as coexistence and the anticipation of new horizons.

Dissent and the Anticipation of Language

The discursive emphasis on the practice of geopolitics and international relations would not be complete without a reflection on the powers, pitfalls, and *poésis* of language. As Campbell reminds us, interpretation is almost always guilty of recreating

⁷⁴ Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 3.

dichotomies of power and meaning that influence the way we perceive, and indeed talk about, geopolitical constructions:

“[T]he imposition of an interpretation on the ambiguity and contingency of social life always results in an other being marginalized. Meaning and identity are, therefore, always the consequence of a relationship between the self and the other that emerges through the imposition of an interpretation, rather than being the product of uncovering an exclusive domain with its own pre-established identity.”⁷⁵

A critical approach to both geopolitics and international relations thus demands that we reconnect the dots of interpretation back to the multiple instances of history that make their interaction an act of *poésis*: the communal inclusion of perspectives that have been eclipsed from view, but which are central to the geo-historical formation of identity. In a language that is perhaps more akin to our phenomenological critique, Merleau-Ponty suggests the following insight: “In so far as we live with others, no judgment we make on them is possible which leaves us out, and which places them at a distance.”⁷⁶ Language “bridges” the distance between people, even if it is a language that distorts and excludes the participation of others: the fact that I represent the other as a threat to my way of being, does not *erase* the fact the she too exists, that she too has her own history and way of being; in spite of its attempts to do so, the testimony of injustice remains “written” on the wall if you will, making exclusion all the more evident. To think of this interaction in terms of *poésis* is to imaginatively rediscover the facets and dimensions of language shared by all communities, rooted in the interaction between human consciousness and the world, that is to say, to engage in the phenomenological project.

⁷⁵ Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 23.

⁷⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), p. 41.

The language of critique and dissent thus also possesses a performative quality, not only in its recreation of a “geo-graph” of responsibility as Sparke highlighted in Chapter Two, but primarily through its effects on everyday human practices. The discursive and ideational run parallel to each other and their segregation (the ontological privileging of one over the other) is the result of a *academic exclusion* that recreates the perception of threat, a condition of possibility for the establishment of primordality. There is a certain temptation for otherness in the establishment of the primordial, one that implicitly recognizes the other as the structure of my subjectivity, as Levinas would say, but also as part of the modern ego’s desire to find and eliminate difference. By reflecting a desire to “border” alternative epistemologies and experiences (by becoming *self-referential*), modern identity makes that which is other a problem for its being and re-affirms its primordality. Modern existence is thus conditioned (perhaps even condemned) by the writing of space, making critical thought the enunciation and reinterpretation of the locations from which this writing occurs.

How do we avoid Campbell’s warning, however, and suspend resistance from becoming a new process of *geopolitical writing* that undermines the ethical spirit of revolt? Dissent must not only be self-reflective of the performative power that language possesses, but as Merleau-Ponty suggests, it must also *anticipate* change in its challenge to primordality:

“[W]e should define the very function of speech as its power to say as a whole more than it says word by word, to precede itself, whether in throwing the other toward what I know which he has not yet understood, or in carrying oneself toward what one is going to understand.”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*, p. 131.

Thus the exercise of dissent (as inherently intersubjective) must be an opening of spaces that seeks emancipation in a process that re-writes and re-constitutes geographies of power; not for the *inversion* of power structures, but in order to become the *embodiment* of a new praxis and the response to a geopolitical *culture of competition* that unravels and overcomes the tenacity of exclusion. To re-think place in international relations is not to dissolve the links that place has for the myriad human selves in the world, but rather to re-emphasize these places so as to anticipate a new form of relating and practicing the everyday in existential coexistence.

Writing on Paul Klee's "Angel of History," Walter Benjamin notes how the past is "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage,"⁷⁸ an image of ethical reflection, moving forward with its back turned towards the obscurity of the future. It is this image of *being* in the *place* of the present, *anticipating* the future and limping along our fragmented way, that opens the possibility to not only find that which is permanent about the world, but also what defines our human condition as being-in-the-world. It is with this in mind that we have traced the phenomenological conception and understanding of place, but also, though more subtly, the grounds of modernity on which conflict over these conceptions is born, revealing the geopolitical connection to modern social and political existence that we will continue to address and develop.

The above connection is a key and instrumental conceptualization that generates what I call "Cold War Reason": a geo-historical understanding that represents "territorial others," such as Latin America, as places in perpetual need of "protection" and

⁷⁸ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955), p. 259.

“salvation.” In Chapter Four, the local histories in the development of a more inclusive understanding of place will be given a first-hand look as we move now to critique the strategy of Occidentalism in U.S. practices of modernization. By developing the understanding of the geopolitics of knowledge as seen in U.S. academic circles, I will highlight a *political economy of resistance* in the work of critical geographers and Latin American social scientists and philosophers. Through this tactic of critical anticipation, I will outline a strategy of liberation for the practice of international relations that does not ground the possibilities for dialogue in the primacy of the modern subject and the wreckage of the Cold War, but rather in the heterogeneous condition of coexistence that understands international relations as a communal history and a practice of everyday life.

Chapter IV: Local Knowledge and the Geopolitics of Liberation

“The Northern narratives that accompanied...encounters with various regions of the South are imbued with unquestioned presumptions regarding freedom, democracy, and self-determination, as well as the identities of the subjects who are entitled to enjoy these things. These narratives serve as windows onto more global systems of representation.”¹

– Roxanne Lynn Doty

The ancient Mayan city of Copan, located in Western Honduras, was known during its Classical period to engage in a curious spatial practice. Every other generation, the ascending king would begin his reign by having the city before him literally buried, rebuilding on top of the various mounds of earth. Since the city he was born into reflected the reign and legacy of a previous ruler, the new ruler’s burial practice set about “writing” his own legacy and, in fact, the empire’s own history.² As a writing of the earth, today’s visitors are exposed to the ruins’ different layers of architecture and memory that remain underground and “covered” by stucco and clay – dormant walls lying underneath with expectation. Mayan architecture in particular was renowned for its intricate patterns, designs, and histories, all written on the walls of its chambers, tunnels, and social centers. The above image provides an apt metaphor for the creative exchange of embodied consciousness and the lived-experience of place in the world that was described in the previous chapter. Even outside the reach of the West’s tenacity of exclusion (the logic of composition that posits difference as an outside threat to identity) we can find across world history a peculiar desire to cover and eclipse those parts of the

¹ Roxanne Lynn-Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 3

² See: David Webster, “The Archaeology of Copan, Honduras,” *Journal of Archaeological Research* (Vol. 7, No. 1, 1999), pp. 1-53.

past that might be perceived as a threat to a group's possibilities and act as an anchor on the horizons of social and individual becoming.

My point here is not to address the local significance of Mayan indigenous practices, but rather to re-emphasize the relationship between the writing of space and human identity that lies at the center of our human experience of place and the world. Such an insight not only attempts to reveal the epistemic structures that the experience of place (Western and otherwise) engenders in human consciousness, but in the process seeks to reveal how the writing of these structures has been historically attributed a Western (Euro-American) privilege. Similarly, phenomenology finds itself to be a product of Western philosophy and modernity, yet it remains on the fringes of modern subjectivity's drive for sovereignty by re-thinking the epistemic foundations that Western thought has taken for granted, allowing us to interpret the meaningful practices of other peoples of the world, along with their lived-experience of place and history. By focusing on the intersubjective and intentional interaction of the material and the ideational, phenomenology provides us with a mirror that mediates the local and the distant, that challenges the self-referential assumptions underlying modern notions of identity and difference, displacing their epistemic monopoly. Through the phenomenological lens, the relations between Mayan city-states may not be fit under the same analytic rubric as those of Italy in Machiavelli's time, but they instead reflect a connection between a sense of self and an experience of place that amounts to a kind of *spatial ontology*: the writing of space that affirms an experience as primordial (constitutive) and is given an epistemic primacy.

It would seem for a moment that all phenomenology is then able to offer us is the manifestation of a shared conceit for power across history and geography. However, as Sparke and Casey reminded us in Chapters Two and Three, phenomenology also reveals that the writing of space remains fundamentally embroiled in the idea of difference in relation to the multiple experiences there are of place and the founding of a geographical self. More clearly, phenomenology is rooted in the experience of multiple subjects, both inside (the self) and outside (in the world). Without the fact that there is a concrete reality outside of “my” sense of place, no sense of appropriation would be at all possible. The experiences of place – both as a geographical self and the universal subject of modernity found in geopolitical designs – are rooted in the sedimentation of perception and expression that makes human identity unequivocally geo-historical and open to the indeterminacy of experience, thought and language. *I am in the world, only as much as I recognize that the world is also in me*; the world is defined by difference, only as much as I recognize that I too am defined by that very difference.

My initial reflection thus turns the present concerns with geopolitics into an interrogation of the past and to the role of representation in the structures of everyday thought: first, in terms of the modern notion of sovereign identity, as we saw in Chapter Three; and second, as we will argue here, as a means of resistance and liberation from the totalizing effects of modern reason. By highlighting a phenomenology of “counter-veiling”³ (how one subject’s ideas and concepts overlap, intersect and are challenged by the geo-historical realities of another subject), our study of place takes us now into the relationship between memory and the logic of writing in the geopolitics of knowledge. As

³ David Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, p. 85.

a more insidious form of geopolitics, the geopolitics of knowledge reflects a synthesis that finds its strongest manifestation today in the power of academic centers of knowledge and their practices of exclusion concerning perspectives that challenge their hegemony. As the Argentine historian Ricardo Salvatore points out:

“Research projects are inserted into distinct political projects and are comprehensible within a certain geographical and cultural location. Hence, the history of their achievements and failures should be read in relation to...“global designs” – large projects of geopolitical expansion that correspond to certain moments in the development of global capitalism.”⁴

By highlighting the place-bound nature of all exercises of knowledge (as *embodied* discourses) Salvatore hints at the way that “the enterprise of knowledge” has been historically a means of expanding hegemonic power through “the production and circulation of truthful representations about the regions that fall under its gaze and influence.”⁵ These representations, the products of broader discourses of geographical and philosophical determinism, “embody the [geopolitical] center’s will to know and, at the same time, reveal fragments of a larger project of incorporating the other (the peripheral region) into the dominant field of visibility.”⁶ The production of knowledge is never free from the history and context that give birth to it and (as we have seen in the case of foreign policy) its intentions are tied to the controlled reproduction of its own objects of representation: knowledge is imperial in its very attempts to describe the local. Yet locality persists, as Casey and others reminds us, through the processes of adaptation

⁴ Ricardo D. Salvatore, “Local versus Imperial Knowledge: Reflections on Hiram Bingham and the Yale Peruvian Expedition,” in *Nepantla: Views from the South* (Vol. 4, Issue 1, 2003), p. 69.

⁵ Salvatore, “Local versus Imperial Knowledge,” p. 67.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

that peoples caught in the middle of geopolitical competition inaugurate upon being conquered.⁷

Imperial Knowledge and the Culture of Competition

As the work of Campbell and others⁸ have shown, the marginalization of difference as a strategy of identity and dominance reveals how the development and practice of U.S. foreign policy remains one of the most representative examples of a geopolitics of place and knowledge. Whether it is territorially or academically driven, the desire for omniscience over the local (for the designing of salvation and progress in relation to a threatening outside) always emerges from an equally situated position, but one that lies within an established hierarchy of privilege and power.⁹ Such a hierarchy is then naturalized into expansionist narratives that give priority to the universal (History, Reason) in opposition to the particular (place, local knowledge). As Casey reminds us, however, the mindful absorption *into* the local – as the awareness that place (particularly those places that have been eclipsed by geopolitical designs and agendas) always has a life and history of its own that we take part in when we engage it, aware of this or not – helps us “to grasp the particular place we are in as the particular person who we are.”¹⁰ In

⁷ See: Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, pp. 50-52 and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, pp. 202-06.

⁸ For works on the geopolitics of knowledge in U.S. political identity formation, see: Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); for an account on the geopolitics of geography and map production, see: Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination* and Michael J. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies*; for an account on the geopolitics of cultural representation, see: Joanne P. Sharp, *Condensing The Cold War*.

⁹ For a similar account of this condition from a post-structural perspective, see Ó Tuathail's notion of the geopolitical gaze in: Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, pp. 69-74.

a local sense, the phenomenological perspective on place is self-critical by beginning from the experience of a self that is outside *in-the-world* (in place and with others), and not in an epistemically privileged position of absolute knowledge, demonstrating that geopolitics begins with the effacement of the outside through the privileging of what is inside.

For our present concerns – the use of modernization theories¹¹ in the geopolitical objectives of the U.S. in Latin America – the distinction between local and imperial knowledge takes us into an appropriate reflection on how modernization designs privilege local U.S. experience (as the universal inheritor of Western modernity) over the local knowledge and experience of Latin American states and peoples. In the context of the Cold War, modernization was not based on the mere development of technology through the systematic application of knowledge and specialization¹², but rather on the “total transformation of traditional and pre-modern societies into the types of technology and associated social organization that characterized the politically stable nations of the

¹⁰ Edward Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” p. 684.

¹¹ Though the body of modernization theory in U.S. social science circles is too broad to enumerate here, for a key study concerning the mobilization and differentiation of Western, social ideals in the post-WWII environment, see: Karl W. Deutsch, “Social Mobilization and Political Development,” in *American Political Science Review* (Vol. 55, Issue 3, Sept. 1961), pp. 493-514; for a study concerning the shift from the distribution of positive ideals to a focus on maintaining political order and institutional stability, see: Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); and for ideas concerning the place and responsibility of the U.S. in both mobilizing and maintaining (to the point of intervention) international development, stability and security, see: W.W. Rostow, *Politics and the Stages of Growth*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

¹² Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, p. 59.

Western world.”¹³ No longer reflecting a project of engagement and situated development, modernization (in order to be effective, according to U.S. decision-makers, statesmen, intellectuals and their counterparts in the Latin American elite¹⁴) needed to deploy a hierarchy of cultures that rests on the assumed dependency of subaltern knowledge on the projects and designs of Western (Euro-American) thought and the centrality of capitalist competition in their development.

The end of the Second World War had provided the capitalist economies of the Western world with a renewed impetus in the international system as, according to Eric Hobsbawm, a period of “extraordinary economic growth and social transformation” began, “which probably changed human society more profoundly than any other period of comparable brevity.”¹⁵ The focus of modernization during this period shifted from the reconstruction of war-torn societies to meeting the demands of a veritable post-war Golden Age.¹⁶ The marriage between modernization and free-market capitalism was thus set to the tune of competing against the “other winner” of the war, the centralized model of the Soviet Union. Rather than acknowledging the ironic and unique role of the Soviet experience¹⁷ in its own historical development, however, capitalist modernization quickly

¹³ Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, p. 60.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 59 and 77.

¹⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; see esp.: pp. 257-86.

¹⁷ As Hobsbawm and others have noted, the Soviet Union was – militarily, economically and ideologically – the driving force behind the Allied victory against Nazi Germany. Its struggle with the U.S. for worldwide influence during the early and middle stages of the Cold War (1947-1981) not only gave fruit to a technological and cultural Golden Age, but also set the stage for a

sought to burn its ideological challenger out. Competition, after all, is the driving force of capitalism; without it, individuals cannot be guided the Invisible Hand of the Market that regulates inefficient behavior. Harmony and peace are achieved, according to this gospel, when states “learn” the right and rational economic behavior, which by all classical accounts since Smith and Ricardo entailed the liberalization of commerce and trade. By no means does this idea find its origins in the Cold War. As E.H. Carr suggests, it is rooted in the very inception of the idea of a harmony between capital and the modern nation-state:

“Once industrial capitalism and the class system had become the recognized structure of society, the doctrine of the harmony of interests acquired a new significance, and became...the ideology of a dominant group concerned to maintain its predominance by asserting the identity of its interests with those of the community as a whole.”¹⁸

Though Carr was writing about Western Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, his insights can be translated to reflect the struggle between the Cold War superpowers that turned Latin America (and the targeted “developing” world) into a field of battle for their own geopolitical interests. Following this background we find that from the very beginning of modernization strategies in the neo-colonial period, the question of development and change in Latin America increasingly became a question of *Americanization*¹⁹: the adoption (at times imposed, at times welcomed) of a *culture of*

re-thinking of modernization (as it was promoted abroad) along the lines of free-market capitalism. For an extended account of the changes in economic policy towards the developing world, see: Ibid., pp. 344-71. For a critical, revisionist account of Soviet representations in U.S. academic and policy circles, see: Stephen F. Cohen, *Re-Thinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁸ E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, p. 44.

competition into the social fabric of peoples that had not lived through a parallel history and development, and who because of this were already assumed to be inferior.²⁰

There are two important points to this dimension of modernization: the first, is the assumed superiority of Western states as opposed to Latin American states; the second, which will be addressed in the following section, is the unforeseen rise of popular and nationalist movements that the gospel of modernization would inadvertently promote in the region. As Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney suggest in their analyses of international political economy (IPE), the geo-historical dimension behind modernization's geopolitical objectives is often eclipsed by the representation of poorer and less competitive countries (the "third world" or the "developing world") as "tangential [sites] for theoretical application,"²¹ and thus is hardly presented as a source of insight or collaboration for the global economy. Such a *pedagogical* conception of rich-poor state relations (as a practice that conceptually frames the terms of the relation to be studied) stems from the modern understanding of the state as a rational and sovereign unit seeking self-interested gains and security.

Modernization, along with IPE, posits competition within the broader understanding of capitalism as the maximization of productivity and wealth by economic

¹⁹ For work on the inadequate strategies of U.S. corporations in Latin American economies, see: Celso Furtado, "U.S. Hegemony and the Future of Latin America," in I.L. Horowitz, J. de Castro, and J. Gerassi (eds.), *Latin American Radicalism: A Documentary Report on Left and Nationalist Movements*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 61-74. For work on U.S. practices of profit repatriation, see: J. de Castro, "Introduction: Not One Latin America," in *Ibid.*, pp. 235-48.

²⁰ See: Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*

²¹ *Ibid.* p. vii.

actors.²² Competition in the world economy is thus conceptualized as natural in a capitalist system and (through the experiences of its most efficient producers) it develops parameters of behavior that allegedly lead to the creation of more wealth and better standards of life. By treating competition as a given of international life, however, mainstream IPE scholars and narratives (of the Realist and Neo-Liberal variety²³) ignore the intersubjective and geo-historical dimension of competition as a social practice and a set of parameters that:

“[Juxtapose] certain values and principles while centering a certain type of self and framing its relations with others...betraying an uneasy tension expressing both the equality of actors and...the substantive denial of the equality.”²⁴

Inayatullah and Blaney’s insight suggests that the constitution of parameters, identities and values through the practice of competition creates an epistemic dichotomy – “a division of knowledge”²⁵ – between perceiving myself as a self-sufficient state (the modern subject), but also as a state that needs to follow a certain set of established, “universal” rules of economic behavior (particularly for those states that are not at the top

²² See: Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by Edwin Cannan, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976 [1776]), p. 15; see also: Friedrich A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty: Volume 1 – Rules and Order*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 13-14.

²³ For an overview of these mainstream assumptions, see: Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) and Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁴ Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, p. 130

²⁵ For Hayek, this division is a source of “discovery” and not necessarily antagonism; see: Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 29; 44-45. For a critical analysis of the shift from Smith’s “division of labor” to Hayek’s “division of knowledge,” and the implications it carries for both a hierarchy of values and the geopolitics of knowledge, see: Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, pp. 139-145.

of the economic order). Competition is thus not a fact of nature, but a social practice, a construction that has come to espouse “common” meanings and values that promote a certain way of life through the geo-economic writing of space practiced by international financial institutions (mostly located in the developed world), leading to the eclipsing of place and its local specificities.²⁶

By mobilizing a notion of the state as the rational structure behind a set of social practices²⁷, modernization privileges imperial knowledge over local knowledge through the expansion of habitus (as I explained in Chapter Three) and the “policing of subjectivity.”²⁸ The state as an agent of competition and security, in the words of Venezuelan anthropologist Fernando Coronil, “[seizes] its subjects by inducing a condition or state of being receptive to its illusions.”²⁹ Coronil suggests that the magical (veiling) power of the state rests on the representation of its activity, within the scheme of competition, as the ultimate force behind the drawing and bounding of place and identity (spatial sovereignty). Such an act of creation, however, is only possible after having

²⁶ See: Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, pp. 132, and 155-56; see also: Smith, *American Empire*.

²⁷ In economic modernization, it is perhaps Hegemonic Stability Theory that is most representative of this state-centric prejudice, though its theoretical groundwork is clearly based on Realist-oriented principles of IPE and IR theory in general. See: Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression: 1929-39*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Robert Gilpin, *U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation*, (New York: Basic Books, 1975); and Stephen Krasner, “State Power and the Structure of International Trade,” in *World Politics*, (Vol. XXVIII, No. 3, 1976), pp. 317-47. For an account of the variations between Kindleberger’s “collective goods” theory and Gilpin and Krasner’s “leadership theory,” see: David A. Lake, “Leadership, Hegemony and the International Economy,” in *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, 1993, pp. 459-89.

²⁸ Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, p. 68.

²⁹ Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 5.

internalized a set of designs and values into its domestic practices of everyday life and establishing a sense of habitus. The hierarchy of values that emerges within international competition (the rational parameters of economic behavior) is mirrored in the domestic hierarchy of values in a state's identity.³⁰ With this in mind, "knowledge of the other, inflected by the equation of difference or inferiority, becomes a means for the physical destruction, enslavement, or crucial exploitation of the other."³¹

Values and identities spread across local and international communities by being represented as standards of being that are to be followed by "rational" and "self-interested" actors. Such a *pathology of competition* works, Inayatullah and Blaney write, "to partly erase the very difference that it claims to value,"³² by flattening difference into material and intellectual divisions ("resources" in the language of competition) that are only mobilized as part of experiments to legitimate an existing order or to paint dissent as a threat or aberration. The *tenacity* of competition thus reduces coexistence and the experience of place to experimentation: the rationally calculable behavior of self-interested, competitive actors, scattered across the chessboard of geopolitical designs. Read in light of this culture of competition, the assumptions of mainstream

³⁰ For the most popular conceptualization of this view of the state, see: Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World-Economy: The States, the Movements, and the Civilizations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Wallerstein, however, only begins to tackle the problems behind the complex levels of domination and exploitation found in international economic behavior. For further discussion of the epistemic boundaries created by economic imperialism, see: V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, (New York: International Publishers, 1939), pp. 27-8; Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," pp. 218-222; and José Martí, *Nuestra América*, (La Habana: Casa de las Americas, 1974).

³¹ Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, p. 11.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

modernization and IPE approaches thus become manifestations of *Occidentalism*: the representational practice that effaces differences in order to posit a “universal” and “coherent” understanding of history and reality, as seen from Western rationality. By re-assessing the colonial and neocolonial legacies of Western political economy, however, the histories behind these strategies can be brought into relief through a critical engagement (a space-in-between) with modernization theory and the larger assumptions of Western philosophy and international political thought that questions their alleged univocality. Far from discrediting the insights of these traditions, this reading radicalizes their naturalized ideas by revealing how mainstream approaches in the study of international relations have justified these acts of representation, eclipsing the geo-historical markers of difference that have informed their own identity.

Latin America and the Pathologies of Modernization

“Our fear of understanding a point of view belies a deeper fear that we shall be taken up by it, find it contagious, become infected in a morally perilous way by the thinking of the presumed enemy.”³³

– Judith Butler

Modernization designs during the Cold War rested on a set of phenomenological precepts underlying ideas of national security and economic prosperity. By “modernizing” the developing world, a practice of spatial habitation was reenacted that justified (if not outright supported) the violent suppression and eclipsing of ways of life and expression that were different and counter to U.S. foreign policy and geo-economic objectives. It is important to note here that the geo-historical characteristics of Latin America make it perhaps the most exemplary case from which to outline the geopolitics

³³ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, (London: Verso, 2004), p. 8

of knowledge in the twentieth century, but also the most difficult to examine and express in simple terms.³⁴ Since its very conception, the term Latin America has been used to denote a *place-in-between*, a utopia of sorts (“neither Indian nor European,”³⁵ as Bolivar had said) that finds itself lost in a labyrinth of paths and alternatives: perpetually subject to the designs and ideas emerging from the “high road” of modernity, yet stubbornly resilient to assume an uncritical and subservient role. It is this unique appropriation of geopolitical ideas and the establishment of methods to counter hegemony that makes the Latin American experience a central moment in the development and study of international relations, geopolitics, and IR theory: a tragic, yet hopeful translation of the fragmented *idea of Latin America*.³⁶

The appropriation and translation of modern discourses of power reflects an attitude (or perhaps *habitude*) of emancipating and participatory engagement that not only takes up the challenge of these discourses, but also overcomes their conceptual and existential limitations. By re-thinking the premises of modernization, critical Latin American approaches to U.S. designs of power challenge the geopolitics of security and knowledge through a *geopolitics of liberation*: an *epistemic de-colonization* of the gospel of modernity through the phenomenological re-thinking of subjectivity, reason, and

³⁴ On the geo-historical context of the Latin American experience, see: Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, pp. 127-44; Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, pp. 73-78; see especially: Enrique Dussel, *Hipótesis para el estudio de Latinoamérica en historia universal*, (Unpublished Manuscript, 1965; Website: <http://168.96.200.17/ar/libros/dussel/histouniv/historia.html>)

³⁵ Simón Bolívar, “Reply of a South American to a Gentleman of [Jamaica],” Sept. 6th, 1815, in Simón Bolívar (trans. by Lewis Bertrand, Harold Bierck, ed., comp. by Vicente Lecuna), *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, (2 Vols., New York: Colonial Press, 1952), Vol. I: pp. 104-05.

³⁶ For a post-Occidental understanding of this experience, see: Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

revolution, all seeking to overcome the Western pathology of salvation.³⁷ In short, this kind of geopolitics of liberation inverts the mirror of Western thought by revealing the geopolitical foundations of power and marginalization that have informed the Western myths of reason, progress and freedom, thus displacing the *telos* of geopolitical reason by forging a *place-in-between* for all critical modes of thought. Particularly on Latin America's place in the Cold War, there is no single way to express the varied instances of domination and resistance that color its tragic history.³⁸ One can nevertheless begin by highlighting a strategy that was key for modernization, not only for the deployment of its power through what I call Cold War Reason, but primarily for the representation of difference as a threat and vulnerability.

Occidentalism and the Representation of Political Space

Political economy has been historically fueled by the discovery of new lands and the possibility of new products and exchanges, providing groundbreaking insights into the human, social and political nature of production, exchange and consumption across the ideological spectrum. Yet its insights and categories rest on the historical and place-bound experience of North-Atlantic (Euro-American) modernity. As Doty reminds us, in their discursive ontology, imperial encounters with allegedly new worlds "become missions of deliverance and salvation rather than conquests and exploitations."³⁹ Unflinching in its proclamation of objectivity and universality, the political economy of

³⁷ For just a few examples of this epistemic de-colonization at work, see: José Carlos Mariátegui, *7 Ensayos de Interpretación de la Realidad Peruana*, (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1963); Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*; and Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*.

³⁸ For one contemporary account, see: Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)

³⁹ Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 11.

modernization (as a by-product of the historical, economic and political experience of the West⁴⁰) assumes from its very inception that the global South is epistemically rooted in the same conception of capital and production as the roots of human progress, that is to say, that their economic behavior should necessarily reflect the “realities” of the global system around them. The nature of these allegations, however, has been traditionally approached without questioning many of their assumptions about the social nature of political economy, let alone about the origins and development of the modern world system.⁴¹ These assumptions have interpreted the experience of developing countries as deviations from what is otherwise the “smooth” development of Western capitalist practices. The difficulties in the development of these countries, moreover, are to be understood as a result of their alleged backwardness, lack of accountability, and unwillingness to accept the “necessary” changes to achieve a stable, economic order. Poverty is the result of a lack of “vision” by these countries and the failure to understand their place in the world economy and world history.

These are familiar discourses in modernization and IPE literature on Latin America⁴² and are reflective of a broader bias in the Western social sciences that epistemically assumes that the “recipients” of international political theories (the

⁴⁰ See: Quijano, “Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America”.

⁴¹ For an account of these assumptions, see: Fernando Coronil, “Beyond Occidentalism: Towards Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories,” in *Cultural Anthropology*, (Vol. 11, No. 1, Feb., 1996), pp. 51-87

⁴² See: Luigi Manzetti, “Political Manipulations and Market Reforms Failures,” in *World Politics* (Issue 55, April 2003), pp. 315-60; Kurt Weyland, “Neoliberal Populism in Latin America and Eastern Europe,” in *Comparative Politics* (Vol. 31, No. 4, July 1999), pp. 379-401; and more recently, Kurt Weyland, “Neoliberalism and Democracy in Latin America: A Mixed Record,” in *Latin American Politics and Society*, (Vol. 46, No. 1, Spring 2004), pp. 135-157

developing world) are an inherent part of the (Western) process of self-understanding: the Occidentalist ontology that posits its own experience of reality as the only legitimate interpretation, representing the expressions of non-Western peoples as the other of the Western experience, as passive subjects of the West's march of progress.⁴³ According to Coronil, the assumptions of Occidentalism reveal that deceptive terms such as "the West," the "third world," "development," etc., are terms that "are used as if there existed a distinct external reality to which they corresponded, or at least they have the effect of creating such an illusion."⁴⁴ These terms, moreover, posit a distinct materiality that subjects local histories to a particularly dangerous ideology (and pedagogy) of violence and domination. Occidentalism is therefore not the *a posteriori* classification of the world and its history, but is rather the agglomeration of certain hierarchical assumptions: a cluster of localized experiences and discourses that mobilize a particular way of understanding the world so as to perpetuate a set of power structures, meanings, and values. The description of this strategy not only ties us back to Campbell's concerns in Chapter Three with the deterministic nature of all interpretation. But it also brings back the metaphysics of geo-presence (as a manifestation of the geopolitics of knowledge) that Sparke and Dussel are intent on displacing. As Coronil suggests:

"What is unique about Occidentalism...is not that it mobilizes stereotypical representations of non-Western societies, for the ethnocentric hierarchization of cultural difference is certainly not a Western privilege, but that this privilege is intimately connected to the deployment of global power."⁴⁵

⁴³ Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism," p. 52

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 56-7.

Occidental representations seek to justify a particular ordering and understanding of the world in order to prolong its everyday practice and reenactment. In phenomenological terms, they seek to perpetuate the habitus of spatial sovereignty in the form of a universal (and unquestionable) ontology. A brief taxonomy of the logic of Occidentalism reveals the following strategies: (1) the separation of the world's parts into bounded and unchanging units (the "nation-state," the "West," the "third world," and even traditionally critical terms such as "core" and "periphery," all suffer from this representational logic); (2) the disconnecting of relational histories (disconnecting colonialism from neocolonialist and contemporary strategies of socio-economic dominance and dependence); (3) the transformation of ethnological differences into a hierarchy of values (backward, immature Latin Americans versus modern Euro-Americans); (4) the naturalization of these representations as inherently ontological and constitutive of some "revealed" reality (the alleged "end of history" achieved by capitalism's "victory" at the end of the Cold War); and finally, (5) the intervention, "however unwittingly," writes Coronil, "in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations,"⁴⁶ often by the aspirations of cosmopolite nationals and economic elites⁴⁷ who promote Occidentalism as a means of allegedly leading their peoples to a brighter future. The last point about "unwitting reproduction," however, is tenuous considering the phenomenological genealogy of the modern subject we have drawn out and the epistemic traces (coloniality) that the geopolitics of knowledge veils over human subjects. The national and economic

⁴⁶ Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism," p. 57

⁴⁷ For a classic, critical perspective on the role of economic elites and the formation of "national" policies, see: Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Vol. I – Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, (New York: Academic Press, 1974); see also: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

elites that subscribe to Western designs of power are already influenced by the assumptions of rationality, freedom and progress inherent to Occidental thought.⁴⁸

The Political Economy of Cold War Reason

We then find that at the end of World War II, modernization theory emerged in Latin America from the ruins of European collapse in order to bring the underdeveloped world into a new international economic order.⁴⁹ Deployed under the banner of a more sober U.S. internationalism, modernization was a strategy that usurped the place and possibilities of local (geo-historical) forms of understanding and living, in order to allegedly “establish the means of spatially integrating the traditional zones of the developing countries into the national and international circuits of the modernizing world.”⁵⁰ Just as Halford Mackinder had sought to make the British people “think imperially,”⁵¹ so the elites in U.S. and Latin American governments sought to make the “rising peoples”⁵² of the developing world “think globally.” Yet in the immediate aftermath of the war, it had been the Latin American Left that was empowered by the

⁴⁸ See: Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, pp. 51-60

⁴⁹ For a sympathetic account of this claim, see: Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945-1993* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994); for a critical account, see: Frederick B. Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995)

⁵⁰ Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-colonial*, p. 63

⁵¹ See: Chapter Two, p. 63, n. 48

⁵² In a speech before Congress on May 25th, 1961, John F. Kennedy maintained that the “land of the rising peoples,” namely the developing world, was the site of “The great battleground for the defense and expansion of freedom today.” See: John F. Kennedy, “Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs,” delivered before a joint session of Congress on May 25, 1961. Website:
<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03NationalNeeds05251961.htm>

promises of modernization, bringing about a greater degree of liberalization in Latin American societies, in particular Guatemala (1944-54), the Dominican Republic (1963-65), and Brazil (1956-64).⁵³ As historian Greg Grandin notes, however, “after World War II, those opposed to a more equitable distribution of political and economic power had more access to US military aid and beefed up their ability to repress domestic dissent. The already cramped space for political negotiation became even more restricted.”⁵⁴

The increased polarization of Latin American societies brought about a change of priorities for both the U.S. and Latin American governments, highlighting what Slater calls the “shadow” of modernization, “the danger that through the process of social mobilization, and as an inevitable component of the revolution of ‘rising expectations,’ new strata or groupings would emerge that would be hostile to the Western-led process of modern transformation.”⁵⁵ The triumph of the Cuban Revolution (1959) was precisely a kind of hostility without precedent in Latin America, an effort at “counter-modernization” that gave new meaning to revolution and seemingly dispelled the notion of its futility against standing armies.⁵⁶ Attempting to break the encirclement of U.S. geopolitical power, Cuba’s foreign policy of counter-modernization placed it at the head of an international struggle for economic and social reform, as well as made it a staunch

⁵³ See: Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, pp. 47-71.

⁵⁴ Interview with Greg Grandin, “The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War,” by University of Chicago Press, Website: <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/305724in.html>

⁵⁵ Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, p. 77.

⁵⁶ Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. xi

beacon for Latin American and developing countries' concerns worldwide.⁵⁷ As the veil of stability in the region began to unravel in the face of its own contradictions, and foreign (U.S.) capital influence⁵⁸ became more insidious, the Cuban Revolution developed into a highly symbolic bulwark to U.S. threats and interventions. Cuba's example became, "the driving force of political destabilization throughout Latin America,"⁵⁹ turning somewhat optimistic relations between the elites of Latin American governments and Cuba into a *de facto* state of war.⁶⁰ With these developments, new cards had been drawn for Latin America's geopolitical arena, and the socio-political ferment that the region experienced within the first few years of the Cuban Revolution (through guerrilla groups and new patterns of political dissent) spread on an immense scale as "the very economic and social foundations of Latin America were at issue."⁶¹

Following the Cuban Revolution we find that "most of the civilian governments [in Latin America] were endangered by the surge in demands for reform, the political awakening of previously inert groups and the attempts to overthrow them by the Cuban

⁵⁷ Jorge I. Dominguez, "Cuban Foreign Policy and the International System," in Joseph S. Tulchin and Ralph H. Espach (eds.), *Latin America in the New International System* (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2001), p. 184.

⁵⁸ Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, p. 128; see also: Furtado, "U.S. Hegemony and the Future of Latin America," p. 72.

⁵⁹ Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, p. 42.

⁶⁰ The 2nd Declaration of Havana in 1962 acted as the Cuban government's formal declaration of "irregular warfare" towards the conservative civilian and military governments across the region, warning that "popular vindication" was coming across the continent. See: Fidel Castro, "Second Declaration of Havana," delivered before a joint session of the Cuban National Assembly on February 4th, 1962. Website in Spanish at: <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1962/esp/f040262e.html>

⁶¹ Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, p. 47.

guerilla method.”⁶² The popular stimulus brought on by the Cuban Revolution prompted several crises in the region and breached a long-held token of U.S. spatial hegemony. Cuba had not only humiliated the U.S. but, in spite of its subsequent political isolation, had prompted a massive campaign of social and intellectual subversion, fueled by a popular stimulus and a hemisphere-wide re-conceptualization of Latin America’s history of international relations. As Thomas C. Wright pointedly suggests:

“While the disruption of contact between Cuba and the rest of Latin America succeeded in impeding [Cuba’s] intervention in those countries, it did little to reduce the most important influence that the Cuban revolution exercised in the hemisphere: the power of its example.”⁶³

The violence encouraged by Havana to radicalize Latin America’s political order, however, was soon countered by national security military regimes “accustomed to intervening when crises created disorder and weakened the civilians’ ability to govern.”⁶⁴ The various military governments saw internal social strife as a microcosm of the geopolitical conflict between the superpowers and a continuation of the fight between Western and Eastern civilization. As Chalmers Johnson notes, “Recognizing that there was no way it could rely on democratic forces in Latin America...the United States therefore turned to the armies of Latin America for its allies and preferred political leaders.”⁶⁵ Claiming to preserve and protect Western ideals from Marxism, the military espoused the mantra of universal reason and freedom against a doctrine they believed

⁶² Fagen, “Repression and State Security,” p. 44.

⁶³ Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, p. 65.

⁶⁴ Patricia Weiss Fagen, “Repression and State Security,” p. 42.

⁶⁵ Chalmers Johnson, “The Three Cold Wars,” in Ellen Schrecker (ed.), *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism* (New York: The New Press, 2004) p. 257.

was, “intrinsically depraved...that everything that stems from it, however healthy its appearance, has been eaten away by the poison that corrodes its roots.”⁶⁶ In an environment of increasing social tension and political re-organization, dissent was not only perceived as a challenge to the internal logic of modernization and U.S. “good will,” but became increasingly represented as part of “a permanent aggression which today is at the service of the Soviet imperialism.”⁶⁷ “The body of the country,” one Argentine general held, “is contaminated by an illness that corrodes its entrails,”⁶⁸ thus playing on the trope that the health and stability of the state meant the health and stability of society, targeting “disease” through the invasive surgery of persecution and repression.⁶⁹

In spite of the later successes of civilian-led Leftist movements, like Chile’s Salvador Allende (1970-73), the rise of conservative insecurities and the geopolitical alignment with the U.S. quickly stamped out the possibility, as John Lamperti observes, of achieving “revolutionary social change...through peaceful, democratic means.”⁷⁰ The involvement of the U.S. in the Nicaraguan civil war (1981-89), along with its

⁶⁶ Fagen, “Repression and State Security,” p. 45

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

⁶⁹ Argentina’s military junta, in particular, perpetrated an immense amount of human rights violations that had no parallel in the Southern Cone region. For a detailed account of these violation and their evolution across the 1970’s and 1980’s see: Donald C. Hodges, *Argentina’s Dirty War*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991) and Mauro J. Caraccioli, “Change and Continuity in U.S. Human Rights Policy Towards South America,” Paper delivered at the *War Crimes and International Responsibility: Human Rights, Law and Governance* conference at Florida International University, Miami, FL on February 24th, 2006.

⁷⁰ John Lamperti, *What Are We Afraid Of?: An Assessment of the “Communist Threat” in Central America*, (Boston: South End Press, 1988), p. 20. For a study on U.S. subversion in Chile, see: Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York: New Press, 2003).

questionable stance on human rights violations in the Southern Cone, only confirmed the intensified character of its geopolitical objectives.⁷¹ The conflict was quickly taken by the Reagan administration (as well as influential academics) to represent the latest front in the geopolitical struggle against the Soviet Union and another example of Latin America's ideological naiveté.⁷² We thus find, at the end of the Cold War, that by privileging the violent imposition of a universal brand of modernization over the democratic and geo-historical creation of indigenous forms of change, U.S. geopolitical tactics shifted the optimism of post-War reconstruction (itself a form of spatial sovereignty) to increasing social and political polarization, instability, and violence. In the words of historian Greg Grandin:

“Cold War terror – either executed, patronized, or excused by the United States – fortified illiberal forces, militarized societies, and broke the link between freedom and equality, thus greatly weakening the likelihood of such a fulfillment and making possible the reversal of the gains that had been achieved.”⁷³

Modernization strategies had shifted from encouraging and developing the allegedly positive ideals of Western social values, to purportedly curing the terror of subversion through a geopolitics of social and military intervention.⁷⁴ These strategies espoused a dogma that proclaimed the equality of actors in a system that has been historically

⁷¹ For a detailed study on the change and continuity of U.S. human rights policy towards Latin America during the Cold War, see: Susan Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁷² Lamperti, *What Are We Afraid Of?*, p. 39; see also: Jorge G. Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed*, pp. 51-89

⁷³ Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, p. xiv

⁷⁴ See: W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960); see also: Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, p. 64

defined by material and structural inequalities, further reproducing and intensifying these through discourses of political salvation.⁷⁵ It seems that one of modernization's greater paradoxes was to give developing countries the rationale to strive for self-determination and thus "endanger the stability of societies undergoing process of social, economic and political transformation."⁷⁶ As Slater notes, "Movements for radical change were...frequently interpreted as the effect of outside penetration rather than the authentic expressions of independent internal social forces,"⁷⁷ justifying a geopolitics of intervention in the name of a systemic correction, laying the groundwork for a tenacity (if not pathology) of ideological domination and intellectual exclusion.

The epistemic boundaries created by this tenacity of intellectual and territorial exclusion, as deployed through an Occidentalist culture of competition, are the key elements that comprise what I call Cold War Reason. As an extension of the drive for spatial sovereignty, Cold War Reason is the practice of a logic of composition that is informed by the modern understanding of place, the role of the state, and their deployment in practices of economic modernization and academic (and thus political) exclusion. Its distinctive feature lies in the *pathological* dimension of salvation that is added to the traditional logic of modern subjectivity, attributing a messianic veil to what is allegedly a universal and objective world of rational, competitive actors. Cold War

⁷⁵ Particularly relevant here are Rostow's remarks in the mid-1970s concerning the exigency of international partnerships of research, development and "new patterns of investment," as part of a "minimum condition for the survival of modern industrial civilization." See: W.W. Rostow, "The Developing World in the Fifth Kondratieff Upswing," in *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Science* (Vol. 420, July 1975), pp. 111-124.

⁷⁶ Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-colonial*, p. 79.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Reason creates the geopolitical conditions that are favorable to its predictions by positing difference as a source of existential threat and ideational instability. In a methodological sense, the (super)naturalizing strategies of Occidentalism work here in the form of an active “silencing of the past” that transforms the violent histories and geographies of the developing world into magical moments that allow for the apparent appropriation of the Western ethos.⁷⁸ By tying Cold War Reason back to the project of modernization through its emphasis on capitalist development and social stability, Occidentalism turns the neocolonial and modern histories of Latin America into instances of the West’s historical movement of progress, ignoring the fundamental role these episodes have played in making that development possible.⁷⁹

As an example of the geopolitics of knowledge, the critique of Cold War Reason ties back to our phenomenological critique by revealing how the capitalist system of production relies on modern subjectivity’s tenacity of territorial and intellectual exclusion. By manipulating both bodies and ideas, Cold War Reason informs the behavior of states in the international system and the ways that behavior is conceptualized by intellectuals. As an instance of the modern drive for spatial sovereignty, Cold War Reason denies a space for the voices it has historically excluded and limits the intersubjective nature of international relations, effacing a set of differences that are much broader than those we find in the twentieth century. As Doty suggests, “one structure of exclusion creates niches for others,”⁸⁰ and we find that the

⁷⁸ Coronil, *The Magical State*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ See: Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, pp. 51-94; see also: Frederick B. Pike, *FDR’s Good Neighbor Policy*, pp. 165-66; 211-214.

silencing effects of modernization and Cold War Reason reveal three major conclusions for the critical study of geopolitics: first, by making Cold War Latin America an example of the destabilizing and destructive effects of imperial logic, we see that geopolitical actions in the face of perceived international crises are based more on wars of abstract concepts (ideological) that prompt division and dehumanization, instead of inclusive collaboration and coexistence; second, as an instance of intellectual domination, the Cold War stands as one of Latin America's most significant periods of political and philosophical exile that remains thoroughly understudied, intellectually reproducing a territorial tenacity of exclusion⁸¹; third, as the above historical vignette has shown, the method needed in the social sciences in order to overcome intellectual marginalization requires the displacement of a much longer history of ideologies, making our phenomenological method part of broader effort in displacing the geopolitical nature of all knowledge.

Phenomenology and the Geopolitics of Liberation

To speak of a geopolitics of knowledge is to speak of how knowledge is geopolitically determined and used for the sake of political goals. A study of this kind, having sought to explain how geopolitics is rooted in the embodied experience of space and place, also seeks to elaborate how forms of knowledge are used to perpetuate myths and representations of how knowledge comes about and how it should (and should not)

⁸⁰ Lynn-Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 155; for a detailed account the effects of practices of exclusion see also: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), pp. 3-38.

⁸¹ For a recently published study on this phenomenon, see: Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger, "Political Exile in Latin America," in *Latin American Perspectives* (Issue 155, Vol. 34, No. 4, July 2007), pp. 7-30.

be used for socio-political programs and academic study. In its broadest and clearest manifestation, the geopolitics of knowledge needs to be analyzed not only as a geographical manipulation, but also as a phenomenon of intellectual and ideological exclusion. Such a critical analysis thus requires that we understand the geopolitical as a condition that seeks (through the writing of space) to write the nature of the human self and of collective identities. In this process, geopolitics also seeks to write the ways we understand human history, making the geopolitics of knowledge not only a phenomenon of modernity, but also a phenomenon of coloniality.⁸² Rather than understanding coloniality as a result of modernity's expansion into worlds "outside" of the Euro-American experience, we should understand it as the constitutive element of modernity and its established ways of thought and life.⁸³

The relationship between colonialism and modernity is highly complex and one that needs to be re-thought in order to understand the way coloniality constitutes modernity. As Walter Mignolo tells us, the traditional understanding of colonialism functions as "a concept that inscribes coloniality as a derivative of modernity."⁸⁴ Coloniality, however, is part of the very makeup of the modern because it works from the position of establishing the structures and institutions that implement the ideas and forms

⁸² Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano refers to coloniality as the condition where patterns of world power and order are based on ideas of ethnic distribution, making constructed geo-cultural identities the central tenets on which resources, capital and social relations are controlled. See: Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America".

⁸³ See: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp. 48-55; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-92; J.A. Mbembé, *On The Postcolony*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 237-41; and Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965)

⁸⁴ Walter D. Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, (Vol. 101, Issue 1, Winter 2002), p. 82.

of thought that modernity champions (the Eurocentric principles of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment). In a post-colonial sense, the places from which Western thought has found its highest pulpits (the North-Atlantic centers of knowledge) have revealed themselves to be historically and pervasively totalizing and imperialistic, especially at the epistemological level. North-Atlantic circles of academic and intellectual prominence, for example, have traditionally determined (by “consensus”) the appropriate areas and methods of study for philosophy, international relations, and the social sciences as a whole, painting many of the approaches coming from the developing world as either a mimesis of Euro-American efforts (and thus not worthy of exploration), or simply not philosophy or science at all. In addressing the outside world, these circles speak down rather than listen to the subjects of their analysis, further marginalizing their perspectives as immature and thus, as Hegel famously asserted, remaining outside of World History.⁸⁵

An epistemic imperialism is thus legitimized through the claim to a personal heritage of the Western project, a claim that predominantly makes Euro-American perspectives the representatives of that project, along with a responsibility to guard it from any kind of “alien” appropriation.⁸⁶ What such a conception of Western thought ignores and eclipses is the fact that the so-called Western project is in fact a *shared* inheritance of coexistence: the victims of its story form a fundamental part of its development as its underside and condition of possibility. The existential state of these victims is one of a *lived-geopolitics*: a position of being forced to receive and not to

⁸⁵ See: Enrique Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity,” in *boundary 2* (Vol. 20, Issue 3, 1993), p. 70, and Enrique Dussel, “Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism,” in *Nepantla: Views from the South* (Vol. 1, Issue 3, 2000), pp. 465-78; see also: G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1991), pp. 80-7.

⁸⁶ Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, pp. 19-26.

contribute to the debate about geopolitics, remaining subjects to the discourses and designs of economic, political, and academic centers of knowledge and power. Though instances of resistance by those who are oppressed by geopolitics have been classified by critical scholars as that of “anti-geopolitics,”⁸⁷ this is nevertheless a conception that arises from the dominant (North-Atlantic) perception of events, a position that fails to illustrate the lived testimonies and understanding of these very modes of resistance as part of a state of coexistence. By connecting these geopolitical experiences to the broader web of modern human life (particularly, the experience of space and place), I am attempting a new form of dialogue and understanding about the geopolitical nature of knowledge that seeks to engage both the critical and mainstream understanding of difference.

To paraphrase Mignolo, the Latin American colonial experience in particular is a key local history of the colonial difference,⁸⁸ making the study of this experience and history a fundamental part of studying the broader phenomenon of the geopolitics of knowledge. By looking at the way modernization theory was deployed during the Cold War, we not only described the way the expansion of a local experience and sense of place (the Euro-American experience of development) attempts to “re-externalize” its habitus as a mode of spatial sovereignty, but we also saw how this re-externalization is reinforced by the pathologies of modern subjectivity and its strategies of political and intellectual exclusion. Just as a place can express its desire for primordality through the geopolitical writing of boundaries and perspectives, a counter question should be given

⁸⁷ See: *The Geopolitics Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 231-84; see also Paul Routledge, “Critical Geopolitics and Terrains of Resistance,” in *Political Geography*, (Vol. 15, No. 6/7, 1996) pp. 509-31.

⁸⁸ Walter D. Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference,” p. 57.

equal consideration: does not a place assert its own desire for being by becoming resistant and critical?

The phenomenological critique of modernization focuses on the heterogeneous make-up of societies in the developing world, maintaining that “modernization was not just an externally diffused phenomenon, tied to Western capital and innovations; it had its internal history and dynamic.”⁸⁹ Modernization theory stands as a key example in the geopolitics of knowledge in two ways: first, modernization was equally espoused by both North-Atlantic actors as well as Southern actors, from both Right and Left perspectives, making its deployment (and imposition) a key example of how global power influences and marginalizes knowledge by establishing hierarchies of existential values; second, as mentioned above, modernization theory in the North and South shared a fundamental concern with the role of the state (in this case, a hegemonic state) as a mediator of social existence. As Slater notes, “Far from being an innocent or neutral or objective discourse of a how a society might become modern, modernization theory was part of the conceptual architecture of a diffusing imperial logic.”⁹⁰ The nature of this architecture is key to the analysis of the geopolitics of liberation.

The metaphor of a “conceptual architecture” presents two key problems for the study of the geopolitics of knowledge: first, that of a division of labor, the loci of enunciation from which knowledge of the international system is produced; and second, the motives of actors behind the building of a conceptual project. Within the initial division of labor, each worker holds a different status in a process of carpentry: one

⁸⁹ Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, p. 83.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

designs, one cuts, one hammers, one paints, etc. In the context of the international system, the workers are not only states, but social groups and thinkers as well, that equally provide resources as they provide philosophical and political critiques and alternatives. The “successful” achievement of the project’s stated goals (peace, stability, development, etc., for all the actors involved) requires that a virtual logic of coexistence be implemented in order to ensure the participation of each laborer, carrying no necessarily preconceived notions of independence, hierarchy or primordality that makes one actor or mode of thought more important than any of the others. The first image, the division of labor, lies strictly in a phenomenological context, that is to say, in the ready-to-hand working environment where embodied consciousness meets others and all form part of a mutual project. The second image, the motives behind participation, runs the risk of being the more idealistic of the two problems due to its necessary involvement with some kind of a social analysis and diagnosis.

As we discussed above, modern subjectivity already establishes a context for states to engage in carpentry (their sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and universal freedom) and thus mobilizes their efforts according to individual interests and objectives, along with those of some of kind of solicitor (the source of capital, resources, and/or compensation for the project, in many cases, national identity and security). According to this logic of composition, all actors already possess a particular set of interests and goals in mind (their own geo-historicity, if you will) that determines the choices they make and the attitudes they take towards each other and the project. The solution to solving this problem lies in displacing the desire to impose one set of objectives over those of any other, recognizing each actor’s intentions as part of a logic of coexistence that informs

their identity and makes completing the project possible. The key to solving modernity's discontents (if only in part) thus lies in recognizing colonialism's place in this history, listening to the voices of difference that remain hidden in our structures and practices of everyday life, a practice that will be the subject of the next and final chapter.

By establishing the grounds for a phenomenological critique of the geopolitics of modernization, the present discussion turns to the possibility of a pedagogy of freedom in the study and practice of international relations. Such a pedagogy, however, is not possible through the epistemic lens that modern philosophy and traditional approaches to the study of international relations provide us with. To advance a new form of learning and thinking, a displacement of the structures of power that centers of knowledge perpetuate is necessary and it begins with the acknowledgement of the colonial difference. As described above, the colonial difference is, in Mignolo's words, "[an epistemic] connector that...refers to the changing faces of colonial differences throughout the history of the modern/colonial world-system and brings to the foreground the planetary dimension of human history silenced by discourses centering on modernity, postmodernity, and Western civilization."⁹¹ As a radical reflection on the history and nature of the relationship between the West and the developing world, Chapter Four has sought to point out the mechanisms of exclusion and domination that modernization has used to perpetuate a geo-economic and intellectual imperialism. To address how these mechanisms occur (i.e., through literature, philosophy, culture, academic disciplines, political ideologies, etc.), Mignolo suggests that an *epistemic displacement* of our

⁹¹ Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," pp. 61-2.

analytical perspectives needs to be provoked,⁹² a “relocation of [our] thinking and a critical awareness of the geopolitics of knowledge.”⁹³

As suggested in the Introduction to the present study, an epistemic displacement demands that we look *beyond ourselves* as part of our method, dislocating our thoughts and work from what has been the privileged perch of Western philosophy to a position on the underside of history and modernity. The act of looking beyond is not only the recognition of difference in the history and development of thought, but the *de-colonization* of this history and the liberation of the thought it has suppressed. Liberation here not only entails direct political implications for the treatment of the countries on the underside of the colonial difference, but it also entails the deepening and radicalization of the methods intellectuals use to study these international realities by introducing the ideas of *lived-experience* and of a *living-history* into the academic community’s dialogues and modes of thinking. Such an endeavor sees geopolitics as a fundamental example and confirmation of these phenomena, thus making its experience a matter of existential concern and a crucial and legitimate inquiry to question and study through the phenomenological method. The implications of using phenomenology in the study and practice of international relations will reveal that consciousness is not only a phenomenon of place and history, but also one shared by all of humanity through the condition of embodied consciousness. A pedagogy of freedom thus not only invites questions and dialogue across academic and geographic boundaries, but also seeks to attain a more inclusive *inter-national* perspective that breaks the tenacity of those boundaries.

⁹² Walter D. Mignolo, *Capitalismo y geopolítica del conocimiento*, p. 13.

⁹³ Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference,” p. 67.

Chapter V: Pedagogies of Freedom:

Lessons in the Practice of International Relations

“...while all development is modernization, not all modernization is development.”¹

– Paulo Freire

The analysis of lived-experience and local history is a key contribution to the contemporary study of geopolitics, particularly in its grounding of critical analysis from the heavens of Western political philosophy to the depths and labyrinths of situated political practices. By mobilizing the idea of embodied consciousness (as rooted in the social tenacity of place and local history), the study of international relations becomes more than an academic discipline but rather a practice of everyday life. By internalizing ideas, customs, and ways of thinking, this practice is most clearly visible in the pedagogical reproduction of global designs of power found primarily in North-Atlantic intellectual communities and universities.² When modern thought is considered to rest on the necessity to seek new grounds for understanding and expression, such a requirement amounts to both a territorial and ideational expansion. The drive for sovereignty has thus been the foundation of many historical designs (i.e., Christendom, Capitalism, Communism, Western Civilization, Globalization, etc.) that have set up different structures of power (governmental, economic, ideological) and which reproduce themselves primarily through the representational apparatus of academia and a growing culture of competition.

¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (Hagerstown: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 130.

² Walter D. Mignolo, “The Role of the Humanities in the Corporate University,” in *PMLA*, (Vol. 115, No. 5, Oct. 2000), pp. 1238-1245.

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