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Introduction

I
In July 2001, July 2003, and July 2004, I had the chance to interact with students from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, Mongolia, and Estonia, and the experience changed my perception of the past five hundred years of Atlantic history.¹ I began to see interesting parallels between the Russian, Spanish, British, and American empires. How are we to understand the history of the formation of the Russian empire, its translation into the Soviet Union and its demise and the formation of Russian Federation today?—the history of Russian and Soviet Union “colonies,” and their independence since 1989?

Eugene Ivakhnenko answers this question by introducing the concept of “thresholds” and “dominants.” While the beginning of the Russian imperial-colonial period could be traced back to the sixteenth century, Ivakhnenko locates the first “threshold” toward the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, when the Russian Empire began to

feel the pressure of European time. “Thresholds” are periods of crisis in the articulation of Russia’s Janus-faced imperial history (as Madina Tlostanova puts it), while “dominants” are periods between thresholds when the “winning” ideology reigns. Given that Russian and Soviet histories coexist with the histories of Western and Atlantic capitalist empires, to what extent do imperial differences impinge on colonial differences? For instance, were Uzbekistan or Tajikistan for the Russian empire or for the Soviet Union what Mexico or Peru were for the Spanish empire, or India for the British, respectively? And what were and are the consequences of such complexity of imperial and colonial differences for the world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union? Or, better yet, how was the logic of coloniality restructured to maintain dependence and to erase the image of “colonies”?² I began to realize that Marxism works quite differently in Western, capitalist countries than in Russia or the USSR and their colonies. Consequently, liberal ideals in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras function as the counterpart of Marxist ideals in the West (see Joseph Dzhaldoshinsky’s essay in this issue). In the West, Marxism offered a liberating utopia, either in its nineteenth-century “proletarian international revolution” form or in the current translation from the proletariat to the multitude (Paolo Virno, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri); but in Russia, the ex-Soviet Union, and the colonies, seventy-three years of Marxism left the deep impression of a highly controlled society. The Marxist orientation of the Soviet Union seems to have been the counterpart of the neoliberal-oriented state that has dominated the Americas for the past thirty years, founded in the Chilean coup that brought Augusto Pinochet to power and reinforced during the Reagan/Thatcher era. However, the violent disruption produced by the collapse of a totalitarian communist regime by the totalitarianism of the neoliberal market (and the corruption that ensued)³ complicated the situation considerably, and not only in the Russian Federation of today but also in the ex-colonies of the Soviet Union and dependent regions (like Chechens and the rest of the Northern Caucasus). In the Russian Federation today, Marxism is returning, entrenched within a nationalist ideology confronting both the neoliberal market and Putin’s tendencies toward a strong state that is no longer communist. What does the future offer for the Russian Federation and the ex-colonies of former Russia and the Soviet Union? (Tkhagapsoev, Ivakhnenko, and Tlostanova speculate on this question and suggest various answers in their contributions.) Are there possibilities beyond Western neoliberalism, Western Marxism, or a strong state to counter those forces? Is there a possibility of fracturing

Russian/Soviet relationships and dependencies on Western political, economic, philosophical, and subject formation from Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century and Catherine and Peter the Great in the eighteenth, with all the consequences these had for the ex-colonies (e.g., Ukraine today) and thinking from the borders?

The untidiness of these parallels and interrelated histories started making sense to me when I began to think about the imperial and colonial racial differences (e.g., racial not in the sense of the color of one's skin but in the sense of how one has been located in the chain of human being by Western imperial discourses). "Cultural differences" allow for neoliberal anti-racist arguments, while maintaining the structure of power precisely on the colonial and imperial differences. Briefly, colonialism rested on the premise that there was a precise hierarchy in which European white and Christian males were at the top, and the rest were distributed according to their colors, locations, religions, and non-European languages (Greek and Latin as the source, and Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, and German as the imperial continuity and expansion of Western civilization).

In the world order that has unfolded since the sixteenth century, with the historical foundation of the Atlantic economy led by Spain and Portugal (i.e., appropriation of land, destruction of Inca and Aztec civilizations, massive slave trade and exploitation of labor) the expansion toward the North (Holland and England and France and Germany after Napoleon), Russia occupied a particular place. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Moscow was declared the Third Rome. It can be considered a marker of the historical foundation of the Russian Empire. Ivan the Terrible was, after all, a contemporary of Philip II of Spain and Elizabeth I of England.

Western Christianity, with its cluttered complicity in the formation of capitalism as we know it today, during the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuits, invented a discourse that founded the distinction between Western Christian empires, on the one hand, and Islamic (the Ottoman) and Orthodox (the Russian), on the other. From the civilizing and modern/colonial discourse of Western Christians to Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" there are five hundred chronological years of history but a continuous present in the frame of mind. In the map he reprinted in the well-known essay published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993, the thick line going from North to South is the line that divides Catholic and Protestant Christianity to the west and Orthodox Christianity and Islam to the east. Huntington was silent about the fact that from the fall of the

Soviet Union in 1989, the Western neoliberal economic, political, and ethical forces entered Russia. Now, according to President Bush, who visited Russia, Estonia, and Georgia in May 2005, democracy is taking over totalitarian regimes.⁴ That would indeed be good, if it were true. The contributors to this volume are all based in Russia or in the ex-colonies (Caucasus), with the exception of Manuela Boatcă, who was born and raised in Romania and now lives in Germany. All the contributors are critical of Western presence (the legacies of communism and the present neoliberalism) as well as the remnants of Eurasian ideology. Thus, the double critique that creates the conditions raise the question about the future. They are not nostalgic about the Soviet regime, and they do not seem to support President Bush's optimism. For people who experienced communism for a significant portion of their lives, Marxism today is far from offering alternatives for a better future; Marxists in Western Europe, the United States, and Latin America, though, are working to remap a legacy that, for them, still offers viable alternatives to the increasing dominance of neoliberalism.

Contributors to this issue offer a wealth of analytical concepts for rereading history, understanding the present, and breaking ground for the future. They share a view of Russia/the USSR as a Janus-faced, second-class empire in relation to the West. Ivakhnenko's "thresholds" and Tkhasapsoev's "transmuted forms" complement each other in viewing the heterogeneous structural moments of the Janus-faced empire and the "transmuted forms" as the way of dealing with adaptation of foreign models instead of building on internal history. Ivakhnenko encapsulates this idea by saying that in the West history is cumulative, while in Russia it is cyclical.

II

I am not an expert in the history of Russia/Soviet empires and their ex-colonies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Many books and articles by experts, particularly living and working in Western Europe and the United States, have been published since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Before and underneath expertise, there is experience. This SAQ collection aims at a dialogue beyond expertise and between experiences. More specifically, the lived experience that informs each contribution (including my own introductory remarks) takes precedence over expertise and disciplinarity. In a way, the issue suggests an inversion of Cartesian disembodied politics of knowledge, placing the mind before existence. The contributors of course

all have PhDs and are recognized scholars and intellectuals, but they also carry the experience of dwelling in the history of the USSR or its ex-colonies.

Thus, the project is not to master the knowledge of a geopolitical area but to initiate a dialogue beyond expertise: to pursue a sustained interest in people around the world with similar concerns; people (here, scholars, intellectuals, and activists) who are living, thinking, enjoying, and suffering at the crossroads of imperial conflicts and colonial histories. The goal of this issue is not to provide “knowledge” about a geopolitical area but, rather, to offer the experience and understanding of scholars dwelling in the history and in the present upon which they reflect, critique, despair, and hope. “Double Critique” explores the imperial difference that Russia and the Soviet Union maintained with the West, in the past five hundred years of world history; and the colonial difference that Russia and the Soviet Union established with their colonies—a mirror image of the colonial differences that Western empires established with their colonies. This issue seeks to identify kindred ethical and political thinkers whose experiences were embodied in a history that was not mine, in a language I do not know, in a religion that is alien to me.

A shift is taking place in the politics of knowledge. The shift shall be understood, historically, by a look at the responses different regions of the world had to invent (different languages, religions, beliefs, family and political systems, economies and memories) when forced to be confronted with Western expansion. The shift is calling for an epistemology of the borders at the level of both the geopolitical and body-political distribution of epistemic power. The imperial and colonial differences upon which several contributors elaborate their analysis and their proposals are, above all, epistemic. It is around knowledge that economic and political systems are organized and that subjectivities are formed, de-formed, and controlled. Khapaeva’s narrative on the paradigm of translation speaks loud and clear, in the epistemic domain, to a trend that Ivakhnenko underlined in the historical sphere, with his observation on the West’s cumulative history versus Russia’s repetitive or cyclical history. Khapaeva suggests that we abandon the disincorporated models that are “translated” into Russian scholarship (often several decades after they have emerged in the United States or in Europe) and return to the live experience of the author as a writer. From Khapaeva’s proposal, we should retain the need for an epistemic shift that brings geo-historical locations and body-graphic configurations to the forefront of the production of knowledge and understanding. The same claim is advanced

by the other contributors. Although each claim is articulated through different proposals, the contributors agree on the crisis of the social sciences and the humanities in Russia and their inability to understand the unfolding of the present. And they agree that one reason for the crisis was that Russia and the Soviet Union fell prey to Eurocentrism's magic and its belief in the myth of scientific knowledge over subjective (in the precise sense of bodies con-formed at the crossroads of colonial and imperial histories, color lines and sexual preferences, gender divides and class interests). If disciplinary formations from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and from the Enlightenment to the Cold War were embedded in the imperial/colonial matrix of power and in the colonization of knowledge, the epistemic shift described here, as Tkhapsoev, Boatcă, and Tlostanova suggest, is a decolonial shift.

At stake here are the borders between experiences and expertise. Borders are dwelling places, geohistorical as well as physical locations. Experiences of the borders have one thing in common: in Uzbekistan and Russia, China and India, Bolivia and Barbados, we all share the common experience of Western expansion (economic, political, intellectual, scholarly, racial, religious, etc.); we all share categories of thought coming from Greek to Latin and articulated in imperial and modern European languages (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and English). But obviously these thought categories are filtered through one's own experiences, and the experiences of an Aymara intellectual in Bolivia or a Chinese intellectual in Beijing are not the same as those of a French intellectual in Paris, or an Anglo-American scholar at Harvard, or a philosopher and activist in Kabardino-Balkaria. If the geopolitics and body politics of knowledge are not taken into account, many knowledges and scholars/intellectuals are put at risk. It doesn't matter whether we were born and grew up in South Africa, South America, or South Asia. I would suggest that all the essays in this volume are related to the experiences of the borders (geographic as well as epistemic) either indirectly or thematized as in the contributions by Boatcă and Tlostanova. The experience of the borders is the *experience* that connects me to the concerns and interests articulated in every single essay in this issue.

I am stressing here and confronting *experience* and *expertise*. Expertise (by first-world standards) has been the mantra of corporate values for decades and is now invading institutions of higher education. It is assumed to be the necessary element that would allow human beings to build a better

world (i.e., one with higher production, more things to buy and consume, more technological gadgets, more scientific discoveries at the disposal of those who can afford them; more pharmaceuticals, which will increase the capital accumulation of pharmaceutical companies, who will pay more experts to make further discoveries that will allow them to produce more pharmaceuticals).

Production of knowledge and transformation of understanding could have either a liberating force or a regulating function. Today the liberating function shall be related to the decolonization of knowledge. And by this I mean that the “diverse totality” that in Western thought is dominated by Christian theology and secular science and philosophy has been, since the Renaissance, a totality that developed hand in hand with imperial expansion and colonial subjection. Thus, merely changing the contents of the totality will not do. What is needed is a decolonization of knowledge. But the decolonization of knowledge and being could be risky, since it will confront Right, Center, and Left in their struggle for world domination. It will also confront totalitarian projects antithetic to Western dominance. Decolonization of knowledge as a project requires border thinking as a method. Scholars and knowledges are at risk, many times, not only because they contest the content of dominant knowledge but because they are eroding the very epistemic foundations of imperial modernity. Imperialism is not just economic, political, and “cultural”; it is, *above all*, epistemic. Imperial reason works in two directions at once: on the one hand, it destroys existing and rival epistemologies and justifies violence and exploitation in the name of salvation for the society at large, for the future “and for the future of our children.” The traditional notion of a scholar-intellectual, and the notion of organic intellectual, are being redefined. A new social agent has been emerging that can be described as a “philosophical-epistemic activist” working toward the decolonization of knowledge and of being, contributing to decolonial subjects that are redoing political economy and political theory based on noncapitalist social practices.

III

How does this relate to Russia and the Soviet Union and to the articles collected in this volume? And how could we start thinking in terms of decolonization in the history of the ex-Russian and ex-USSR colonies? What are the genealogies of intellectuals (and scholars) and knowledges at risk in the

history “of north-eastern states of Europe—Poland, Russia and the Slavonic Kingdoms”)?⁵

The essay by Ivakhnenko is helpful in providing a context for possible answers to these questions. He explains:

The Russian epistemic matrix of imperial and colonial power was never constructed in accordance with the requirements of European modernity—it did not get rid of or overcome the archaic discourses but shuffled them as cards in the stack. And the number of “cards” could only grow while each of them kept its chance to be opened when the next game was played. *For this reason European reforms are cumulative, while Russian ones are always recurrent.* (My emphasis)

However, Ivakhnenko observes, this “blurredness” or “splitness” in Russian history should not be interpreted as an “indication of the absence of any prospects for the society,” even though “splitness” cannot fit the European understanding of modernity. In my view, the blurredness or splitness is precisely where an epistemic potential resides once we see that blurredness and splitness as something that makes us what we are rather than as a fault or as something that we lack but our modern European counterparts possess. Boatcă and Tlostanova address these issues in their contributions. However, Khapaeva stresses that the intellectuals and scholars she describes as “the innovators” are more prone to change partners, and instead of borrowing from the French intellectual market, they are now turning toward the United States. They are apparently not ready to look and delve deep into the splitness, into the imperial and colonial borders that run through Russian history.

Ivakhnenko’s narrative suggests that the history of the Russian Empire can be traced from the ascension of Ivan the Terrible as czar of Russia. One of the main tasks accomplished by Ivan was land appropriation. Ivan’s appropriation of land ran parallel to the Western European empires’ massive appropriation of land in the New World, but of course Ivan appropriated lands and colonized populations that were on the same continent and hence not unknown to the Muscovites. For that reason, the Russia of Ivan the Terrible did not face either of the two most vexing questions faced by Western empires: to what extent the people east of Moscow were humans; or whether the new subjects could be enslaved and exploited, sometimes fatally. This is not to say that Ivan the Terrible’s was a better empire. It means that it was just different; it was built with other concerns in mind. And the

empire-building process of Ivan the Terrible was not in the same capitalist mode of his Western peers, Philip II in Spain and Elizabeth I in England. Although Ivan had access to gold and precious gems in Siberia and the Urals and did exploit the population of the regions he conquered, he did not reach the level of global prominence that the Spaniards, Dutch, and British had. Why not? Because Ivan's empire was not extracontinental; it was more of a "domestic" project. This hypothesis will explain why Ivan, although a contemporary of Philip II of Spain and Elizabeth I of England, was not part of the problem that engendered what has become known as the "Black Legend." The Black Legend was, above all, a discredited propaganda initiated in the second half of the sixteenth century against the powerful Spanish empire. The Black Legend was built upon two pillars: discrediting Spaniards for their Moorish ties, to the point of identifying Spaniards as blacks by conflating the North African Moors (with their imperial history) with the blacks of sub-Saharan Africa, where Britain was already invested in the slave trade; and also discrediting Spaniards for the brutalities they committed in the New World. The two lines of attack were connected in that in both, Spaniards come across as incarnations of barbarism.⁶ If the England of Elizabeth I was preoccupied with discrediting the Spaniards, it was also preoccupied with the "Turks," the Ottoman Empire. In that regard, England joined forces with Spain in contemplating the strangeness and differences of both the "Turks" in Istanbul and the Moors in North Africa. What is at stake in this story is the following: Spain and England shared the Christian ethos that was confronted by the Islamic ethos of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. In that scenario, Ivan the Terrible was left in the shade, although Moscow's Christian Orthodox ethos clearly differentiated it as the Third Rome. Given their emerging capitalism and empires, Westerners needed to trace the imperial (external) differences with Islam, the Turks, and the Moscovites. On the other hand, and within the Western Christian countries of the Atlantic coast (Spain, Portugal, France, England, and Holland), the question for England was to trace the imperial (internal) difference with Spain. In this short history it is clear that the imperial external difference created the conditions for the emergence, in the eighteenth century, of Orientalism, while the imperial internal difference ended up in the imaginary and political construction of the South of Europe. Russia remained outside the sphere of Orientalism and at the opposed end, in relation to Spain as paradigmatic example, of the South of Europe. Hegel divided Eurasia this way: southern Europe, looking toward the Mediterranean; the heart of

Europe, comprising France, Germany, and England; and the northeastern states of Europe, Poland, Russia, and the Slavonic Kingdoms.

This simple historical map helps us understand, on one hand, the particular type of imperial external difference that Russia and the Soviet Union entertained and entertains with the West; and, on the other, the quarrels and difficulties facing the European Union. Central Europe/Eastern Europe (where the boundaries are not clear) foregrounds the shades of the colonial differences: with the West, with Russia and the USSR, and with the memories of the Ottomans. Boatcă's contribution uses the experience of Romania to underline the question of the "integration" of Balkan countries (that is, of solving the problems caused by colonial differences). And Tlostanova's essay hints at an argument she developed elsewhere: why Turkey most likely will join the European Union while Russia will not.⁷

Returning to Queen Elizabeth: Her move was not an isolated one but a crucial approach that found its ideologues justifying, culturally, the marginalization of coexisting empires. Kant, before Hegel, made a great contribution to demonizing and racializing the Ottomans and the Russians/Slavs:

Since *Russia*, said Kant in his description of national characters, has not yet developed definite characteristics from its natural potential; since *Poland* has no longer any characteristics; and since the nationals of European Turkey never have had a character, nor will even attain what is necessary for a definite national character, the description of these nations' characters may properly be passed over here.⁸

Kant's thoughts here probably reflected the common sentiment among the enlightened bourgeoisie of the second half of the eighteenth century—the bourgeoisie that Kant wanted to see emancipated. And Kant was living in a Europe whose economy was nourishing a society that was working to distinguish itself from competing empires and, of course, from the colonial world (i.e., reshaping the colonial difference traced in the previous century between Christian and Spaniards, on the one hand, and Indians and Africans, on the other). What, then, was the economic panorama supporting Kant's dictum with regard to Russia? Eric Williams, a Trinidadian historian and the first prime minister of an independent Trinidad and Tobago, gave us a lead in his book *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944):

One of the most important consequences of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the expulsion of the Stuarts was the impetus it gave to

the principles of free trade. In 1698 the Royal African Company lost its monopoly and the right of a free trade in slaves was recognized as fundamental and natural right of Englishmen. In the same year, the Merchant Adventurers of London were deprived of their monopoly of the export trade in cloth, and a year later, the monopoly of the Muscovy Company was abrogated and trade to Russia made free. Only in one particular did the freedom accorded in the slave trade differ from the freedom accorded in other trades—the commodity involved was man.⁹

Two points are relevant. One: Through England and its Glorious Revolution, Russia joined the free trade of Western empires as a weak or “local” empire but strong in free trade. Two: The expendability of human lives is a common thread of Western modernity and imperial capitalism. Free trade and expendable lives were part of the Enlightenment model that Peter and Catherine the Great tried to emulate from the eighteenth century onward. But of course Russia did not have the economic foundation that England (and France and Holland) had developed through the profitable land appropriation, slave trade, slave exploitation of labor, and massive production of commodities for a global market for almost two centuries before Peter and Catherine the Great. The Russian Empire had followed, literally, a different route.¹⁰ So by that point Russia was already marginal in the economic arena; and without a chance of having an Industrial Revolution like England’s (precisely because of the capitalist foundation of mercantile and free trade economy), it was also marginal in relation to the growing dominance of Western principles and organization of knowledge (e.g., social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, and, more recently, the professional schools—law, engineering, computing, management, etc.). Economic expansion, in the West, ran parallel to the expansion of the university, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. Thus, the socialist revolution advanced by Lenin took place in a noncapitalist (or a would-like-to-be-capitalist) country, but one in which the Industrial Revolution did not obtain, and this fact reveals the conflicting needs and desires between, say, “imperial local history B” (second-class empire) and global designs concocted on the experiences of “imperial local history A” (hegemonic empire). The imperial difference between Russia and the West does run through the articles by Tkhangapsoev, Tlostanova, and Boatcă, which reside at the crossroads of empires because of the authors’ Caucasian histories and subjectivities (Tkhangapsoev, Tlostanova) and Romanian memories (Boatcă). One of the problems was knowledge and understanding: the failure to understand Russian history based on the principles

as well as the accumulation of knowledges constructed to understand European history. In this case, we can talk about “risky knowledges” instead of “knowledges at risk.” Ivakhnenko’s contribution explains both Russian imperial tension with the West (he calls Russia “a second-order empire”) and the control (economic, political, epistemological) of its colonies—tensions that were reproduced under the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the wild irruption of neoliberal markets, principles, and economies brought the historical picture of imperial differences into new lights.¹¹ The essay by Khazhismel Tkhagapsoev sheds helpful light on the historical transformations that led to Vladimir Putin’s presidency as well as to the destiny of several of the Soviet ex-colonies. The current situation, Tkhagapsoev argues, illustrates the “transmuted forms” that are the common thread of Russian/Soviet history. Tkhagapsoev traces, toward the end of his article, the trajectory of the transmuted forms through Russian/Soviet history. In the ninth century, he maintains, Russia adopted Christianity, which was transmuted into the spirit and forms of pagan cultures; in the eighteenth century, Russia began to assimilate European economic, political, cultural ideas, and forms while maintaining, up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the dominance of the political class of landowners (*latifundium*), which denied the bourgeoisie any access to political power. In 1917 a new turn took place in Russia—the Bolsheviks pushed Russia into socialism—but under Stalin this model of socialism was transmuted into imperialism and totalitarianism. Furthermore, Tkhagapsoev argues, understanding the process of “transmuted forms” requires a shift and a departure from the norms of the social sciences. That is to say, the model of the social sciences itself is a particular case of “transmuted form” and not a scientific point of observation where “transmuted forms” can be analyzed as if they were autonomous social processes independent of who (with what political perspective, racial and sexual location, religious persuasion, national passion) is analyzing them. Precisely because social scientists in Russia and the post-Soviet world did not acknowledge that they themselves are knowing subjects inhabited by an epistemology of “transmuted forms,” the social sciences remain blinded by their “formation” based on the history of Europe rather than that of Russia and the Soviet Union, ex-colonies, and dependent regions such as the Caucasus, from whose history and experience Tkhagapsoev is thinking.

That dense and complex history, embedded in the making of imperial difference in the formation of Western empires since Ivan the Terrible, is

dominated today by what could be described as the Vladimir Putin/Michael Khodarkovsky dilemma. Confronted by extreme neoliberalism and open corruption, Vladimir Putin had to enforce the “authority” of the (corrupt) state. Consequently, the position supported by Khodarkovsky will lead Russia to an extreme form of neoliberalism in which human life will be put at risk, not because it will be politically dangerous but because it will become expendable in an economy that privileges accumulation, property, and political and economic power. It is not only scholars that will be at risk, but anyone who becomes part of “the dispensable rest” of the population. Putin had to enforce the state in order to control the consequences of Khodarkovsky’s adaptation of and assimilation to neoliberal designs. The “natural” consequence is the risk of returning to an all-too-powerful state that “imposes regulations on its citizens” instead of granting them “the freedom of the free market.” This is the context in which Madina Tlostanova frames her argument: between the hegemony of Russian state, dealing with the imperial difference, and the global reach of the hegemony of the market. In this position, scholars and intellectuals will be at risk as part of a dispensable population for both the state and the market. Tlostanova argues that the humanities and the social sciences will become dispensable forms of knowledge unless they become expert knowledge at the service of neoliberal economy or the state, not only internally but also internationally, as a member of the G8. If, then, under the Soviet regime scholars and knowledges were at risk when they questioned the principles under which the state was structured, today knowledges and scholars are at risk because the value system of the new world order makes of critical scholars in the humanities *dispensable* human beings who deal with (from the point of view of the market and the state) *useless* knowledge. In addition, Tlostanova’s argument could also be read as a contribution to the understanding of disciplinary practices as “transmuted forms.” Tlostanova’s claims for border thinking, as an absence and as a necessity, conceding that the social sciences and the humanities created on the experience of European history and responding to European needs, can hardly work effectively when the problems and the needs at hand are those of Russia/Soviet Union and its ex-colonies and dependent regions.

The frictions between local histories of disciplinary formation in the humanities and the social sciences (i.e., the history of Europe) and the local histories where the humanities and the social sciences emerged as “transmuted forms” (i.e., Russia/Soviet Union, ex-colonies and dependent regions) are addressed—indirectly and directly—by Dina Khapaeva (Rus-

sia) and Manuela Boatcă (Romania). Khapaeva tackles the crisis of the social sciences and, once again, not as someone who is inhabiting and being inhabited by the history of France but as someone inhabiting and being inhabited by the history of Russia (in its pluri-national and pluri-ethnic configuration) in dialogue with debates and discussion about the crisis of the social sciences in France, the most recent irruption of U.S. power, and above all the history of knowledge formation and transformation in Russia—thus, “the syndrome of paradigms,” the title that frames her argument. Khapaeva, noting the unidirectionality of translation, points to academic “transmuted forms” as a syndrome of dependency in which scholars search for and venerate a “new” paradigm that will solve the crisis of the social sciences; the syndrome is manifested in their inability to respond to and cope with the radical changes brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Khapaeva contrasts the crisis in France with that in Russia and suggests that while the crisis in France is internal to the history of the social sciences (France is one of four European countries where they originated), in Russia the crisis is deeper in that social scientists continue to look for “translatable” paradigms from Western Europe or the United States: “Pessimism and frustration became a habitual theme on everyone’s lips, indicating a certain discursive norm of Russian scholarly life.” This is a common thread running through both Khapaeva’s and Tlostanova’s analysis of scholars and knowledges at risk in Russia today.

Boatcă makes a similar argument. The title of her contribution is clear in this respect: “Romanian Academia between Communist Censorship and Western Neglect.” The argument announced here parallels Khapaeva’s double critique of French/Western social sciences and Russian social sciences, and Tlostanova’s double critique of the power struggle between the market and the state. Boatcă also has to deal with a slightly different scenario, as the memories of the Ottoman Empire are still “knocking on Romania’s door” at the same time that Romania is knocking on Europe’s door. In the spirit of that critique, Boatcă is right to underline the blurriness of the “post”: something that doesn’t have a name, but also the unnamed but already framed in the seemingly only-one chronological pattern of history—the Christian and Hegelian idea of universal history. Double critique is in a way moving from the “post” to the “de”; not to “deconstruction,” but to “decoloniality.” Romania was colonized not by Western empires but by Russia and later the Soviet Union. Romania, Boatcă reminds us, is one of those “wretched and unhappy little countries in the Balkan peninsula.” That is to

say, you do not have to be colonized in the same way that South America and the Caribbean were, that India was, that Algeria and Tunisia were, to be damaged by the effects and consequences of the logic of coloniality. Whether or not you have been colonized according to the “canonical model” of colonization, no one beyond Western European imperial countries and the United States, the promoters and exemplars of modernity, can escape coloniality—the darker side of modernity. “Decoloniality,” a political and epistemic project (contrary to “postcoloniality” which, like postmodernity, means new articulations of modernity/coloniality), is one way we can read Boatcă’s argument. Decolonial knowledge (“theorizing from the borders,” in Boatcă’s terminology) is knowledge at risk and also places the scholar (the enunciator) at risk: “The use of modes of thought” — observes Boatcă — “and categories of analysis specific to the thinkers’ locus of enunciation in the changing European world echoes Romanian sociology’s constitutive problem — having emerged and developed as a ‘science of the nation’ and recurrently placing its promoters at risk in relation to hegemonic social sciences” (see Boatcă and Tlostanova for a perspective from Romania/Germany and Caucasus/Moscow, respectively).

Boris Dubin’s contribution could be read in tandem with the previous observations by Boatcă, but located in Russia instead of Romania. What happened to Russian intelligentsia in the past twenty-five or so years — or, from the last decade of the Soviet Union to the first decade of the neoliberal era? Dubin notes that the interest in university education began to drop in the early 1980s. Due to circumstances that Dubin describes in his essay, “the intellectual groups, in fact, were not able to fulfill the task of comparing, mediating, and integrating the various layers of values accepted and functioning in the society at several levels — sectors and zones, groups and generations.” In the 1980s the internal fractures were the consequences of the restructuring of Soviet society after Stalin (1960s and 1970s), but Dubin also describes the status of the intelligentsia, of the business sector and the political spheres, in the mid-1990s, when it was driven by the struggle for power by any means, including dirty tricks and disregard for the law: Dubin observes, “The specialists more often than other groups single out the self-interest among these negative qualities.” Dubin’s observations are complemented, indirectly, with the general picture of Russia drawn by Joseph Dzhalsinsky, a distinguished journalist and scholar who is very active in the restructuring of Russian society. Scholars in the humanities and humanistic learning are at risk in the middle of a society dominated

by the individual orientation of looking after oneself and improving one's situation at any cost. Furthermore, Dzhaloshinsky's analysis of Russian culture shows that the shadow of the West was always there, as both desire and hazard. In this regard, Khapaeva's analysis of the social sciences could also be understood in relation to the socio- and egocentric vectors described by Dzhaloshinsky, and the essay by Ivakhnenko could be read as providing a historical context to understand the three cultural vectors of Russian transformations described by Dzhaloshinsky.

Dzhaloshinsky concludes, after arguing that *tolerance* is constantly at risk in an egocentrically oriented culture, with an optimistic but I would say realistic view of the future: "The road toward a new civilization," he states, "turns out to be long and difficult. The change of cultural matrixes of peoples' interaction presupposes the tackling of many interconnected tasks: the change of the very socioeconomic reality with the purpose of making it more clear, transparent, understandable for an individual consciousness; the securing of the transfer from the repressive culture of communication to the dialogic one; the shaping of the reflecting rational individual." In the process, Dzhaloshinsky reflects on the crucial role the media has to play in building a dialogic consciousness instead of being at the service of the dominant cultural vector. I read Dzhaloshinsky's contribution as a multiple critique and as a blueprint for a future society in which dialogic consciousness will be achieved not by looking toward and applying Western models (in the social sciences, in political theory, in political economy and consumerism), but by examining the thresholds, the borders that run deep in Russian and Soviet Union history—that is, by assuming the blurredness and splitness that Ivakhnenko identified as a common thread in the history of Russia (from the empire to the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation). The recognition of this splitness and of the need to build a dialogic consciousness takes us to Tlostanova's question: why there is no border thinking when this seems to be what is needed in order to work toward the construction of the dialogical consciousness that Dzhaloshinsky is calling for? But then, at this point, border thinking will be an issue not just for the imperial history of Russia and the Soviet Union but also for the ex-colonies, for a triply marginal history like Romania's: at the margins of the Ottoman Empire, the Soviet Union, and Europe. It is no coincidence that Boatcă is also calling for border thinking and critical consciousness instead of the territorial and nationalist iron box that mirrors, in opposition, the ideology of modern empires.

Expertise is necessary, of course, but only to be mobilized beyond itself and toward the construction of a dialogic (or pluri-logic) consciousness. Expertise cannot be an end in itself, drawing an egocentric society toward its own death as self-serving individuals pursue success, material wealth, and the glory (and pleasure) provided by the power to have slaves. This volume is also a philosophical attempt that, in the end, is turning out to be a decolonial philosophical attempt. Not all the contributors may endorse the way I am describing the end result. Nevertheless, each essay collected here evinces a struggle, a conflict, a tension with imperial reason (both in its Western articulation and in the ways Russia and the Soviet Union struggled with it) and the colonial enactments of imperial reason. Imperial reason cannot be dismantled from inside. It can be criticized only within its own logic, which puts the critique already at the mercy of the imperial logic. What a dialogic consciousness demands is that we stand back, disengage, delink from the spell of imperial logic, and engage in a different project. It is this move I identify as a decolonial philosophical attempt that is deeply seated in Russia's history.

IV

What is in the future? The contributors' responses are varied, but all of them agree on the exhaustion of Eurocentrism, both as borrowing liberal and neoliberal models and as revamping Marxist history, and on the exhaustion of Eurasianism or any version of what Ivakhnenko describes as "neo-traditionalism."¹² The time of abstract universals seems to be running out. The decolonial horizon opens up a new space (the borders and the margins where the questions are being asked on the basis of histories that have been silenced and devaluated and subjectivities that have been repressed as barbarian, traditional, and sometimes primitive); it opens up the possibility of thinking other-wise, from the borders¹³ and about the present but also shifting the geography of reason from the disembodied dominance of theology and egology, to the geohistorical and biographic locations of the disempowered: that is, of scholars and people in general, *at risk*; that is, the constant risk of becoming expendable lives in the neoliberal civilizing mission and in the market-oriented democratic future.

In the Soviet Union, knowledges were at risk because of the dogmatic control of knowledge by the state, and scholars were at risk if they contradicted or questioned the epistemic Marxist doctrine. After Soviet times,

knowledges became at risk because of the neoliberal invasion and the corporative values that transformed the university (see the essays by Dubin, Dzhhaloshinsky, and Tlostanova). Excellence and efficiency, as we know, are two of the core values of neoliberal doctrines. Efficiency is geared toward the market, and the idea of excellence is build on what Max Horkheimer described as “traditional theory.” By traditional he intended not an evaluation but, rather, a description of theories based on facticities, on the assumption that the world is as it is and we have to know it. Excellence is achieved through a close disciplinary rhetoric and normativity; in this sense Excellence becomes complicit with Efficiency, and both play into the hand of neoliberal ideals and goals. Scholars in the humanities and the social sciences have been at risk after the collapse of the Soviet Union precisely because of the corporativization of the university: critical theory and, even worse, decoloniality of knowledge are considered not dangerous but just useless with respect to excellence and efficiency.

The volume has not been organized with the intent to “report” on knowledges and scholars at risk (a task that area studies specialists can perform much better than I can) in the postsocialist world from afar (i.e., scholars based in Europe and the United States). “Dialogic consciousness,” as Dzhhaloshinsky claims, as a road to the future, cannot be an abstract universal implemented by the empire and forcing people all over the world to enter into dialogue. A dialogic consciousness is not a matter of public policy, either. Dialogic consciousness shall be seen as the projection, toward the future, of what African American sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois discovered as “double consciousness.” Double consciousness is not something that can emerge from the imperial subject embedded in the imperial reason (e.g., the subject of the sociocentric and egocentric vectors in Russian culture). It is, rather, the critical awareness of the *damnés* (using Frantz Fanon’s characterization of all those devaluated and marginalized within the paradigm of imperial reason).¹⁴ But is this a viable way out in Russia, Central Asia, and the ex-colonies of Eastern Europe? Dialogic consciousness cannot be a new form of imperial reason; it has to emerge from the experiences of the *damnés*. And the *damnés* are by definition those who have been wounded by the colonial difference, diminished as human beings. For this reason, we cannot see the *damnés* in the domains of the imperial difference. Second-class empires are of course racialized (Russian is Slavic and Orthodox, China and Japan are yellow empires, etc.), but when the struggle is at the imperial level, it is not exactly the humanity of the declared nonhuman (the *dam-*

nés) which is at stake. Dialogic consciousness would come, is coming, from the variegated manifestations, around the planet, of decolonial reason. This issue intends to be a small contribution to decolonial thinking: the beginnings of a search of dialogic consciousness, from particular local histories (Caucasus, Russia, Romania, and the Americas) to an epistemic decolonial shift which all the contributors seem to be looking for and moving toward.

Russia and the ex-Soviet colonies are now caught in the struggle between a communist past and a neoliberal present; between the European Union (to which Russia and most of the colonies do not belong, though the Ukraine hopes to join) and the United States (which has its eyes on Central Asia and the Caucasus for political and economic reasons); between totalitarian regimes, as in the pre-Yushchenko Ukraine, and the United States' imperial totalitarian designs to control resources and the strategic location of Central Asia in the post-Yushchenko Ukraine. As Tkhangapsoev repeatedly asks and Khapaeva forcefully bring to the forefront, the detached social scientist in Russia (and by extension, the detached area studies specialist in Europe or in the United States, since area studies is a scholarly endeavor of modern imperial countries), what kinds of scholarly and intellectual projects are necessary to understand the present and project just, peaceful, and equalitarian futures? What kinds of knowledge and understanding can be generated from the historical experiences of Russia and Central Asia that are not dependent on the experiences of Europe and the United States, where the social sciences emerged and flourished? What are the potentialities and possibilities to engage in decolonizing knowledges running the risk of being left outside institutions of higher learning that promote skill and efficiency and, indirectly, the reproduction of coloniality?

The humanities and the social sciences (the first a legacy of the Renaissance, the second a legacy of the Enlightenment) are losing their critical edge, losing their ability to unveil and critique oppressions and injustices in the political and economic arena, and not only in Russia. In these domains, neither scholars nor knowledges are at risk. The critical function is taking place beyond institutions of higher learning and modern and Western (from the Renaissance and through the Enlightenment to our days) disciplinary formations. The questions that are open to the future, and that are being asked all over the world, are requests for the decolonization of imperial knowledge formation and institutional implementation in the modern/colonial world (many of the authors here refer to this imperial knowledge formation as Eurocentrism, that is, the universalizing of Western knowl-

edges). Decolonization of knowledges implies sets of double processes. On the one hand, one must reveal that the principles and historical foundation of knowledge and the social sciences are intrinsically interwoven with the establishment of Western capitalism and the racial matrix of power still dominant today. For that reason, the social sciences and the humanities today remain entrenched in the same logic. On the other hand, one must reinscribe in the global scene principles of knowledge and understanding that have been eliminated as primitive, traditional, or irrational by the defenders and practitioners of modernity. The task of intellectuals in Russia, Tlostanova suggests, is not to withdraw from the process of production of new meaning but to actively take part in it despite all the risks and obstacles with which the state (with its revival of neoimperial ideologies) or the market (with its corporate culture) confront us. The articles in this collection offer a glimpse into the spaces being opened up for decolonial thinking.

Notes

- 1 I was at the European Humanities University (EHU) in Minsk, Belarus, teaching one segment of a Soros Summer Seminar on the postcolonial and postsocialist (or post-Soviet) conditions. The EHU in Minsk was shut down by the government of President Lukashenko in August 2004. It was recently reopened in Vilnius, Lithuania.
- 2 There is a vast bibliography on the concept of modernity/coloniality from the past ten years. Two references are relevant to my argument. The first is the foundational article by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano originally published in 1991: "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," trans. Sonia Therborn, in *Globalizations and Modernities*, ed. Göran Therborn, 41–52 (Upsala: Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research, 1999). The second is an article in which the Russian/Soviet empires are brought into the logic of coloniality: Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova, "The Logic of Coloniality and the Limits of Postcoloniality," in *Globalization and Postcoloniality*, ed. Revathi Krishnaswamy and John Hawley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).
- 3 See the reports by Joseph Stiglitz and Jeffrey Sachs, especially Stiglitz's *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 2002).
- 4 See Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Who Lost Russia?" in *Globalization and Its Discontents*.
- 5 Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (1822; New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), 102.
- 6 See William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: Development of an Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558–1660* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1968); Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- 7 Madina Tlostanova, "Seduced by Modernity: Why Turkey Can Be/Become Europe and Russia Cannot," in *Islam, Latinité, Transmodernité: 11^{ème} Colloque International* (Ankara-

- Istanbul: Académie de la Latinité, 2005), 305–36. For the tensions and conflictive future from the perspective of Balkan countries, see, for instance, Jozsef Borocz, “Goodness Is Elsewhere: The Rule of European Difference,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48.1 (2006); Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Daniel Chirot, ed., *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
- 8 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Frederick P. Van De Pitte (c. 1800; Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 235.
 - 9 Eric Williams. *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 32.
 - 10 See, for instance, Dominique Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), and Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).
 - 11 See Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, and Jeffrey Sachs, “Reaping the Whirlwind,” in *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 131–47.
 - 12 See Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization* (Washington and Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).
 - 13 Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova, “Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to the Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 9.2 (2006): 205–21.
 - 14 I am deliberately thinking from black philosophers rooted in the memories of African slavery and diaspora thereafter—not only W. E. B. Dubois and Frantz Fanon but also their current interpreters. See Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of the European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2000) and *Existential Africana: Understanding African Existential Thought* (London: Routledge, 2003). I am deliberately not thinking (although my unconscious may be) from white philosophers rooted in Greece and Rome. And I am deliberately not touching on the complex question of the role of Jerusalem in Western history. For the role Greece played in the thought of Martin Heidegger, see Charles Bambach, *Heidegger’s Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism, and the Greeks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); and for the role Jerusalem played in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: Modernity, Empire, Coloniality,” *City* 8.1 (2004): 29–55.