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# **A New World**

## **A Perspective from Ibero America**

Edited by  
*H. Daniel Dei*

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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## PREFACE

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy is proud to present the 6<sup>th</sup> Volume in Series V “Latin Amerca,” part of its “Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change” publication project which is now approaching 240 volumes. The full text of the many studies is available online at [www.crvp.org](http://www.crvp.org).

A special word of gratitude goes out to Professor H. Daniel Dei for his efforts in organizing the project and for his editorial assistance. His own contribution in Chapter One, *The Ontological Condition of Humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Perspective from Ibero-America*, sets the thematic tone for the subsequent contributions, most of which offer critical reflections on the important and complex issues raised by Professor Dei. As the reader may guess, the plethora of direct and indirect topics suggested in the title *A New World* are rich indeed and may be related in different ways to what Dei expresses in the introduction when he writes: the “expression, ‘a New World’, in the title of this book maintains the semantic richness implied in the name of a continent, namely, the need of a new planetary meaning sense what it means to be human—something which is yet to be fulfilled.”

Throughout the present work, one senses among the authors not only their passionate commitment to building a better humanity, but their deep convictions regarding the possibility of contributing to such a lofty goal. At times, one also encounters what may be called just anger at the many injustices taking place in “their” part of the continent in the name of progress. But these are accompanied and supported by thoughtful and self-critical reflections that bear the mark of authenticity and promise substantial contributions indeed towards the “New World” desired by all peoples of good will.

*Edward J. Alam*

General Secretary

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy



## INTRODUCTION

### A NEW WORD, A NEW HUMANITY

*H. DANIEL DEI*

Any statistical international, national or regional social data we may consider, and even those “research” projects we may carry out to satisfy the political interests of their funders, make manifest the fact that we human beings are increasingly more indifferent towards our own future as species. Paradoxically, or perhaps because of this, the indifference grows geometrically in discourses and attempts to take care of the environment, observe human rights, prevent discriminatory practices, promote sustainable development and in the invocations for world peace.

The darkest side of our human image is reflected in figures on extreme poverty, social and moral deprivation, child mortality and abuse, corruption at all levels and in all realms, the thousands of million people lacking elementary sanitary conditions, the re-appearance of diseases long ago defeated, habitat destruction, shameful pockets of poverty and marginalisation in so-called developed countries, increasing social and economic inequality, growing physical and psychological violence, illiteracy and the downgrading of education. In sum, it is straightforward for an impartial reader to infer from this quantitative information the shift from the basic values of togetherness for the sake of economic success and development, the ideological manipulation of rights, the democratic legitimisation of the sterilisation of deprived communities, individualism, and the alternatives based on the logic of dominion. We know that statistical information provides indicators of a reality, but that world organisations and leaders hardly design their policies on that evidence; instead, they “interpret” them according to their ephemeral interests. They are not political leaders, but policy entrepreneurs.

Without a doubt, the challenge the 21st century confronts our human self-consciousness. We do not know where we are heading and what we are actually doing. We act. We go ahead, and we do not stop even a second to think about the state of the world we will be passing on after our inexorable deaths. And, nevertheless, the challenge we do *not* confront or translate into effective future action is to examine our capacity for thinking and spiritual development. For we will not successfully tackle any of the problems the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has left us by considering political, economic, judicial or social issues only within the framework of the very rationality that has brought those problems about.

That rationality, with its way of speaking, behaving, living and expressing, with some exceptions, shapes all, including the decisions made by leaders who direct the destiny of humankind; it is sustained by the exercise of freedom and power understood solely as means for

appropriating the possibilities of other cultures or other meanings of life. We are blinded by action with no other goal than instinctively building a space that is both safe and our own. Seduced by the vanity of the power to dominate, we cease to recognise ourselves in others as human beings.

The thoughts in this book attempt to contribute to the construction of a new humanity. They light upon the possibility of a “New World” in which dignity can shape new ways of establishing human bonds. This invites us to think of ourselves as human, precisely when we imagine that we have entered the “knowledge society,” because we belong, by chance, to the privileged section of the world population with access to certain information technologies.

The expression, “a New World”, in the title of this book, maintains the semantic richness implied in the name of a continent, namely, the need of a new planetary meaning of what it means to be human—something which is yet to be fulfilled. The historical responses to the challenges brought about by the arrival on the scene of a New World have not only revealed an inadequate sense of meaning but have also deepened the dystopic aspects or the shadows of the instrumental reason that had encouraged building bridges between Europe and America. Today, that instrumental reason, devoid of illusion and the hope of finding an Eden, is incapable of providing answers for humankind facing the crisis of ontological identity: the human species. The New Continent, now opening before our conscience, is no longer America, but the Planet.

In other words, this New Continent upon which we have stumbled is a humanity which has lost the human meaning of events. Hence, we propose new ways of interaction between people and peoples, imagining a logic of relationship capable of surmounting the antinomies of instrumental reason in all the realms of human life and its philosophical and scientific theoretical legitimatisations. This is a modest attempt—at times prophetic, insightful and even contradictory. It is, namely, to build a new rationality capable of discerning alternative theoretical and practical paths, with the same radical dispositions as the paradigm shifts in current thought and action.

This book aims, then, at contributing from Ibero America a positive message, with a manifest hope in some authors and understandable doubts to the extent of discouragement in others. In any case, these are reflexively critical proposals, made in the hope that it is possible to think, to be and to exist in a truly “New World,” consisting in the realisation of power and freedom as an encounter with others rather than as inescapable relationships of dominion and submission.

Chapter I, “The Ontological Condition of Humanity in the 21st Century: An Ibero American Perspective,” by H. Daniel Dei, develops some of the foundations that have inspired this project. The title reflects the global intention of this work and a vision of the spiritual state of the world. Given the globalization process, the question of national identities is but an epiphenomenon of a deeper and more essential reality: the future of the

ontological identity of everything human. Hence, questions such as “where does humanity go?”, “how to pose the question about life?”, and “with what means can we face the challenges of our human condition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” are open issues. Merely to pose them constitutes a new hope for humankind or, at least, the possibility of putting a critical consciousness of our actions qua human beings into motion. Thus, the chapter aims to show the need of a change from the logic of exclusion to a logic of dialogue that may overcome the antinomies in terms of which are being discussed: poverty, discrimination, migration, growth, destruction of habitat, the gap between rich and poor countries, technological change and the destiny of science and culture. The new Ibero American perspective, by its founding internal logic is linked to the need of all peoples without exception to re-encounter their own history in the concrete universality of the heritage of the human condition.

Chapter II, “Globalization, Information Revolution and Identity: a Reading from the ‘Other’,” by María Cristina Menéndez—sociologist and researcher at the Council of Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina (CONICET), describes one aspect of the identity crisis of humankind, namely, the revolution in information technology. This is a type of instrumental reason focused upon the freedom of having and its impact on the modes of social relationships. The globalization process, as an expansion of knowledge, reveals its antithesis in the Other, as the being excluded from that technological path of ascending information and uninterrupted self-reproduction. The synthesis of the two calls for a new relation built upon a “substantive rationality”.

Chapter III, “Where the World is Headed: Scientific Futurology or Emotive Hope,” by Carlos Enrique Berbeglia, anthropologist and philosopher at the University of Buenos Aires, advances a peculiar proposal. It critically reflects back on the project of this work while favoring life without abandoning distrust in the presumptions which inform human actions. Thus, the call for *scientificity* which generally is demanded from research works aimed at the human unknown shows a clear prejudice that favors the gathering of data—often, whimsically systematised—without critical reflection. This provokes at the same time a marked schizophrenia of which knowledge is always the victim. Though this warning is valid for any discipline, the author states that it is especially important for prospective work, where, under the guise of *scientificity*, authors introduce (whether knowingly or purposefully) hopes *about how the future should be constituted*. Avoiding this is deeply both moral and necessary.

Chapter IV, “Rationality and Dialogue,” by Ricardo Álvarez, philosopher and lecturer at the University of Morón, follows the epistemologically therapeutic of Chapter III with a historic and philosophical vision of the problematic. In fact, European rationality originated out of two notions: 1) that truth is found in consensus reached through dialogue and 2) that discussion is organised according to forensic procedures. However, in essence the two principles are not compatible.

Historically, the former gave way to the latter, so that Western reason became more monological in character, despite its formal pretension of maintaining a dialogic nature. This happened first in Plato's method and then in Scholastic discourse, and finally in the different modes of dialectics. The latest attempt to recover from this betrayal of dialogue seems to have taken place in Habermas' theory of communicative action. In that theory the search for consensus is limited to the restoration of a lost original state, and thus consensus is restricted to those who share the same "life world". The question of the "other" emerges bluntly before such a proposal. How is it that the "other" has become a problem? What dialogue can currently oppose the European monologue? Is it possible, for example, to write philosophical works without reinforcing the kind of discourse forged to solidify Western domination? Whereas in a monologue, it is speaking, persuading, imposing and refuting that matter, in a dialogue, the most important things are to listen, propose and ask. In the former, the other is only meant to listen and to be subjected; in the latter, there is a need for the other to agree.

Part II consists of a series of essays about specific issues which determine some dimensions of a new rationality.

Chapter V, "On the Possibility of a Post-democratic and Universal Democracy," is by José Luis Gonzalez Quirós. He is researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the Council of Scientific Research of Spain. Democracy has developed in different societies upon the basis of the very precise limits of national borders. In consonance with the need of a new way of exercising freedom and power, the author tackles the problem of the conditions for the democratic ideal. Thus, insofar as the forms of nations are in crisis due to local political, technologic or foreign military reasons, this will be true of the democracy on which they are based. The democratic ideal has to face three major problems: internal criticism in the various democratic states, objections resulting from the assumed crisis of the nation-state, and the extension of principles and assets of democracy to environments well beyond national borders. From the point of view of both its external and internal limitations, the democratic ideal has to be rethought as a precise political formulation in the horizon of a humanity that is increasingly more critical of the ideal of unity.

Chapter VI, "Migration and Its Two Facets: Problem and Collaboration," by Professor Susana Beatriz Violante, from the University of Mar del Plata and researcher at the School of Philosophy of the University of Barcelona, represents a particular vision of the problematic which provides a passionate response to sensitive issues regarding past and present migration and involving exclusion and inclusion and the question of cultural identity. These are considered from the existential pulse that determines the decisions by some human groups to "flee" from hunger, poverty, mistreatment, pain, burden, sadness, routine, pressures, envy, mockery, abuse. These escapes represent problems also for the destination countries and cities of the immigrants.

Chapter VII, “The Future of Law in Postmodern Society: An Ibero American Perspective” is by Andrea L. Gaston. She is lecturer and researcher at the University of Buenos Aires. This chapter returns to the conceptual field of the dynamics of law through time. Its thematic covers especially, but not solely, Ibero American society from a double philosophical and sociological perspective that operates dialectically. It focuses on the relationship between law and the spirit of justice, and criticizes the rationality underlying the prevailing modern conception of law as *ultima ratio*. Drawing from diverse fields, it proposes a new conception of the judicial phenomenon centred upon education.

Chapter VIII, “The Social Dimensions of Pain in Ibero American Post-modernity: A view from Argentinian Culture,” is by Marta C. Biagi, lecturer and researcher at the University of Buenos Aires, and develops an unusual but key topic in current academic axiologic discussion, namely, the manifestations of social pain experienced by persons and, in particular, in social groups of a given culture: Argentina and Ibero America. The reflections stem from some inhuman factual realities, such as child exploitation (sexual or labour), unemployment as a structural constant, forced migrations, uprooting and family abandonment which configure the shape of a society with increasing levels of violence. The author witnesses in this what some commentators have termed society’s “decadence of moral space”.

Chapter IX, “Questions of Subjectivity in Consumer Societies: Crisis and Perspectives in Contemporary Argentina,” is by economist, José Luis Iparraguirre D’Elia. He examines the ontological repercussions of the idea of consumption applied to the semantic use of expressions in different linguistic communities, such as “society of consumption” (in Spanish or French) or “consumer society” (in English or German). As a human activity, consumption has transcended the attainment of goods and services to meet needs, and is now situated as the axis around which contemporary subjectivity is structured, increasingly understood as the constitution of social lifestyles and identities. It is one of the most visible facets of globalization and affects the whole set of values, models and stories that make up identity at local, regional and national levels. The author examines the relationship between consumption and subjectivity, the main theories of subjectivity since the Middle Ages, and the patterns of interaction and the paradigm of rationality underlying the instituted and instituting values of consumer societies. Finally, he advances some ideas regarding the feasibility of the construction of an alternative model of human interrelationship.

Chapter X, “A New Rationality in the Organisational Society,” is the contribution of Professor Andrés Rodríguez Fernández, Professor of Psychology at the University of Granada, Spain. It revolves around a key question applied to the organisational realm and in consonance with the main orientation of this work: which view does humankind take of the last century and what are its hopes for the new century? Both aspects of the

question are linked by the powerful and influential realities of organisations. The answer is based on one premise and two assumptions presented in the chapter. The premise is that the true empire which rules the destiny of humankind is that of organisations, which extends throughout and penetrates the planet with its logic and symbols. The assumptions are 1) the reality of the phenomenon, and 2) the perspectives inferred by the author, who has vast experience in this matter. Thus, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has ended with the instauration of the logic of competition, without a clear horizon of existence, of its principles or processes, of belonging, of accountability, and of self-identity. All of these are subject to a strong power of domination and are seduced and trapped by the culture of consumption and the evanescence of circumstance and contingency. The phenomenon which ruled and consolidated this model of mankind during the previous century was the organisation of technocratic thought as an ideology of control and domination. In consequence, humankind in this new century will have to bring about a new rationality with regards to the organisations built upon the logic of democratic relations; people must be considered as citizens able to build their own identity as persons and free professionals and to recognise each other in their aspirations for liberty and infinity.

Chapter XI, "Name, Flesh and Heart," by Professor Ricardo Oscar Díez, researcher at the Council of Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina (CONICET) and member of the Academy of Sciences of Buenos Aires, tackles the challenge of the work from his area of specialisation, Medieval thought in the Augustinian spirit. He starts from the assumption that in order to change the world it is necessary to proceed "one heart at a time": 1) the human singularity, whose name, incarnation and personal nucleus, since the time of Saint Augustine, is known as *heart*; 2) concord with the principle that charity *is* foundational, as a historic possibility for a whole people. The three realities, name, flesh and heart define man in a way different from scientific and technical abstraction. Name identifies; flesh shows the suffering, pain, thirst and hunger, that is, everything that is suffered and has to be healed; the heart, finally, harbours each experience, aching and acting, shaping what it has received into a personal configuration. In terms of heart, the author shows how the cultivation of the soul leads to concordance. *Cordial* union is the condition of possibility of every group, because only if persons come together can they share and meet their needs. Charity is the unity to be desired, built and demanded because it unites the work of the farmer, the rhythms of nature and the gifts of Heaven. Only in unity, can they provide sustenance to those of us who in the current situation badly need it.

Chapter XII, "Ibero America: History and Destiny within the Framework of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," by Horacio Correa, historian and researcher of Islamic-Arab culture and lecturer at the Interamerican Open University. It is both a polemic and a suggestive contribution because it opens up paths infrequently trodden in academic circles. The essay is organized around three topics: history and destiny, the two Americas, and

the crisis and surpassing of the Nation state. One of the essential problems that Ibero America has to solve is the dualistic conception of time. Western technology has been introduced as a substitute for ideologies, covering them with a tint of dual thinking. This aspect, according to the author, needs to be taken up by the national intelligentsia of the Ibero American states. History, present and future, forms a system in which each of these moments delicately influences the others. The two Americas have organically built divergent histories which have configured different archetypes with different political, economic, social and geo-strategic realities. Ibero American unity is the necessary step, and the author thinks that Brazil has to become the attractor, because it has retained an imperial tradition from its beginnings. The second phase would correspond to the union with the Motherland—the Hispanic peninsula—establishing a mature relationship between sons and the “pater”, such as the one enjoyed by the United States and the British Commonwealth. All this implies a mutation, rather than a revolution, of the Nation states in Ibero America into a great space of cross-cultural integration.

Chapter XIII, “Globalization: Participation or Confrontation?” by Professor Carlos Castellan of the University of Morón contextualises the philosophical underpinning of the project. The modern world is characterised by a vision of the “other” as an enemy. All possible relations are analysed from a conflictual viewpoint; relationships between nations are thought of in terms of the desire for mutual domination or in terms of cooperation with those who are willing to help us achieve domination. Even among today’s allies we often see tomorrow’s potential enemy, confirming the sad axiom: “Nations do not have permanent friends, but permanent interests”. This is also the viewpoint from which social relations are approached. Sectarian and class interests take prevalence over the needs and interests of the whole. Governments seem to respond increasingly to such interests, in contradistinction to their own *raison d’être*. If the current forms of relationships continue to take hold of societies and states, the future looms dim, anarchic and chaotic. Notwithstanding, the author thinks that the world presents some interesting future perspectives today: never before has it been possible to think about achieving one of the oldest aspirations of humanity—the construction of a civilisation that represents all human beings and to which each contributes and feels he belongs. History itself constitutes a repository in which to find examples, moments in which such an ideal emerged, at least hazily: in Alexander the Great, in Antonius’ Rome, even in certain features of the way in which the Spanish consciousness faced the problem of the New World, and in the vision the Ibero American liberators had about the role the continent could play for its own future and that of humanity. We have inherited this tradition, as well as the views of dominion. We can make a choice; we have never been in a better position to do so. A sombre future is by no means unavoidable.

Chapter XIV, “The Human Condition in the Age of Technocracy,” by Professor Luis Andrés Marcos of the Pontifical University of Salamanca,

offers a necessary meditation on how what we call human is not already configured once and for all. Man is not born with a user's manual, but must configure himself as human. But such a configuration has not been, and cannot be, found by the thinking within an epistemological process devoid of any historical context; rather, it emerges according to and before what is given to man in each historical age. In our times, we are approaching—if we are not already there—a time of technocratic power; everything human has to be revised in our confrontation with it. Given that this power is of a technical nature, and that the technique itself is power, two novelties converge: technique makes it possible for power to expand (globalization) and power makes it possible for technique to reproduce. For this to happen, both have to impact everyday life. This is what the mass media does, as it is oriented not towards the satisfaction of human needs, but to mere consumption of goods that help maintain its power. In this everyday world, the philosopher has to start with a critique of the language with which such power exercises its dominion. Thinking is primarily interpreting, not in the name of any particular area of specialisation (where an instrumental logic takes place), but from an integral logic that takes account of the diverse and contradictory moments (contradictory logic) in which human life unfolds. The *dictum* of power as created for domination must be answered by *contra-dictory* thinking, namely, creation for freedom. Thinking must re-create inter-subjectively meanings shared in different and *diverse* everyday episodes.

A final comment to put an end to our initial considerations: thought is a prologue to life, an opening so that men may encounter one another. This is done in the questionings that have given birth to this modest project. In it, specialists from different Ibero American countries have contributed with different slants, from their own anguish, hope and fears. They were united by one aspiration: to think about ways to make our world more liveable for generations to come. In this, and above all, the dignity of the human person, regardless of background and condition, was the guiding principle—a dignity immensely valuable. Without cherishing the 'other's' dignity as one's own, all the projects aimed at building a better world will simply be in vain.

## CHAPTER I

# THE ONTOLOGICAL CONDITION OF HUMANITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: AN IBERO AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

H. DANIEL DEI

In the light of subsequent events, the spiritual expectations for the New Millennium turned out to be exaggerated. Not only were we incapable of returning to the ways to solve the serious problems remaining from the 20th century, but we even exasperated them. The competition to show the best ways to welcome the Millennium disclosed the power of the mass media and new technologies to simulate and take commercial advantage of the longing for peace and human advancement. They projected onto society true and deep hopes—not just expectations or prospects—of change in the elemental conditions of coexistence.

How, then, to pose today the question about life, and by what means shall we face the challenges of our human condition in the 21st century? These questions remain open; world leaders cannot give, do not know and, in some cases, are not even interested in, providing proper answers. Here the expression ‘world leaders’ is limited to those having the capacity to make political decisions that may influence the course of events. It can be applied to those whose decisions have influence at regional, national or international levels to realize fundamental changes in the quality of material and spiritual human life in the world. However, nowadays it seems not to be possible to find leaders with sufficient moral authority and humanistic convictions to support principles that are beyond their individual or sectarian interests. We have become accustomed to the strategic analysis for the most insignificant actions, without considering the public service of public offices.

Furthermore, these events of a growing dehumanization of private and civil bonds are so frequently present in the news and in our everyday lives that they have become normal and even expected. Nevertheless, they continue feeding apparently rational ethical debates on television programs, web sites and newspapers. Their appeals to the people—national identity, democracy and human rights—are, however, based upon the same practical and discursive assumptions of antagonism. This is a kind of opposition logic, the consequences of which cannot be anything but discord and growth in violence. Such leaders honor the only alternative that seems *realistic* in politics, expressed by the idea that countries (and international corporations) only have ‘interests’. This implies the limited conception of strategy as a ‘conflict of wills’, or the comforting explanation that assumes that we are located within a frame of ‘friend-enemy dialectics’.

Neither the most published thinkers and academics, nor those with broad opportunities to be heard, make an attempt to answer these questions. Their comments, diagnoses and inquiries barely touch the surface of what is decisive regarding what could or should constitute the single common question: what humanity do we conceive? Academic debates often cultivate only narcissism and usually ignore the moral imperative of the basic needs to acknowledge peoples and individuals. Their abstractions neither impact nor influence the assumptions that guide the decisions regarding our ways of being and living in a world—ways that have shortened physical distances but have created an abyss in genuine communication. ‘Peripheral’ or ‘marginal’ thinkers, as they are described in the developing world of Ibero-America, Africa, Asia, are considered part of ‘biodiversity’ when they do not accept their tragic destiny of being simple commentators. What is ‘politically correct’ according to different contexts prevents one from pondering the most important questions deep in our souls.

Under such circumstances, namely, the phenomenon of globalization and its effects in every sphere of human activity, pride has especially encouraged the question of national identities. This is true in those countries that are well placed to influence the global exchange. The question of identity is no longer a sign of a people's historical maturity; on the contrary, it has become the univocal sign of the capacity to prevail in future history by a natural reaction to the growing one-dimensional impersonal impositions. New and old types of nationalisms, social resistance movements, environmental and human rights, or the accentuation of differences, now appear where not long ago humans could coexist and share the harvest of the contingency of an ephemeral life. This manifests a world demanding new meaning for values and answers to questions that remain unanswered by social sciences, shallow philosophies, politicians or current decision makers.

This fatalistic, pessimistic, and uncertain view, into which we are *apparently* sinking, and which severs all social bonds, is nothing but a pure phenomenology of the dystopic in our current human condition despite technological and scientific achievements which not too long ago were unimaginable. Nevertheless, something it is encouraging that these achievements reveal the vacuum of our existence precisely when pure superficiality is winning the battles of life.

## **PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE DYSTOPIC OR OUR CURRENT HUMAN CONDITION**

Some postmodernists such as Jean Baudrillard, consider the current state of things to be comparable to the aftermath of an orgy. This consists in liberation in all fields and in the disappearance of all axiological frontiers. If this is so, we are at a new threshold of the human condition. However, when analyzed from another corner of the world, the diagnosis allows for nuances. Political and social surroundings seem to persist in denying a

significant purpose for the life of some peoples. Notwithstanding, in the end, the consequences of the decisions will embrace us all, and the only possible alternatives will be either: 1) fatally to dissolve ourselves in the surfeit turbulence of the amazing changes brought about by virtual technologies, or 2) to progress along the human way of being and pursue our more positive human possibilities.

Using more romantic, but not less accurate—and probably deeper—words, the issue can be posed as follows: either 1) to pursue the mundane things until the self-destruction of the world, chasing each expectation, jumping from one fascination to the other without measure or purpose; or 2) to awake with confidence to the possibility of an honorable life. This is exactly how to define hope: the foundation that supports the condition of all human projects. Indeed, present prospects or expectations shape the social image and dynamics with needs which are never completely satisfied, but are ever multiplying. It is important to be aware of the key to our current human condition and the reasons for the estrangement of individuals, peoples and nations. Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain how only a few years after the breakdown of the iron curtain we have managed to build a new wall of ignominy on the border of the United States and Mexico in the name of defending freedom while at the same time violating it. Should we avoid considering any moral evaluation regarding these kinds of decisions we would discover something even worse, namely the current rationality that is incapable of controlling the self-destructive impulses that constitute it.

In this light, globalization appears as the efficient vehicle for this marketing of needs, and a natural consequence of the instrumental rationality of modernity. However, this pollution of needs—fallaciously defined as ‘democratization of goods’—is not enough to satisfy the dignity of individuals and does not improve their real quality of life. They are consumed by each expectation, in the paradoxical search for a space of identity and continuity among the mundane objects they are designed to replace. And beyond objects, appear individuals, peoples, cultures, i.e. the universe of creative and significant values that constitute the single and most authentic possibilities of humanity as such. In this process the actual real world has disappeared, things replace subjects, so that we have become ‘goods’, ‘intangible assets’, ‘capital’, which means sheer devices of instrumentation, economic potential, and commerce. Neither is it about an alienation process, strictly speaking, like that imagined by Marx, nor a kind of Hegelian master-slave dialectic, since any improvement nowadays is a replacement of objects by new ones. The process of self-consciousness accompanied by the loss of the real world, which begins with modernity, has revealed a truly solipsistic (and narcissistic) side, initiated by the Cartesians and the need of proposing a *Deus ex machina*, so as to guarantee the existence of a world that is defined as a phenomenon of mere manipulation. This is very different from the classical Augustinian method

of doubt that was rooted in a concrete, finite and contingent, metaphysically marginal existence:

[...] historical evidence proves that modern men were not returned to the world but to themselves. One of the most persistent tendencies in modern philosophy since Descartes has been [...] the exclusive concern about the 'self', distinguished from the soul, the individual or men in general, in an attempt to reduce every experience both with the world and other human beings, as well as those of the man with himself. The greatness of Max Weber's discovery about the origins of capitalism lies, precisely, in proving the possibility of a huge and strictly mundane activity without being concerned about enjoying the world. The deepest motivation of such activity is, on the contrary, the interest and concern about the self. The contrasting sign of Modernity has been alienation from the world and not from the self, as Marx believed [Hannah Arendt, 2005: 282-283].

We straddle narcissism and the mundane, both of which involve an inner logic that cannot avoid the tragic destiny of self-destruction, as it is a logic of radical appropriation and domination. These phenomena are a result of a modern search for identity and instead of being critiqued are held up as accomplishments in the progress of the consciousness of our species. Such identity is not founded in the characteristic mechanisms of that logic as would be expected by most alternative social formations and the thinking that legitimates them. Although in the economic field, the historical development of capitalism has dominated his logic of radical appropriation, it is not the foundation of the rationality that consists in the loss of the meaning of our life. Capitalism, as a model of production and exchange, is just the vehicle, the operational application in a particular sphere of human activity of that instrumental modern rationality which conceived the world as something to be dominated. Modern science, born in the frame of that rationality, obviously displays the loss of the world and becomes the privileged aid to the search for dominion. Such dominion is controlled by the market financial system and is subject to competition for an appropriation that ignores the search for truth and knowledge. Nowadays, even social sciences have adopted an economic and instrumental language to criticize the 'system' in a clearly self-contradictory and uncritical way. For example, it is no coincidence that we refer to scientific activity as the 'scientific-technological complex' or, in terms of the paradigm in force, as the development and financing of scientific 'production'. Similarly, pieces of art that try to provide reality with new meaning and value, that is, with human intention, surrender to the growing axiological universe founded on marketing. This ancient concept of *hubris* reminds us that nowadays, due to

our desire to dominate the world, we are losing the human aspect of our condition. In this process, wherein we lose the world and man, the schizoid fragmentation of our behaviors justifies any unscrupulous bond with the world and our fellow human beings.

### **PERSISTING IN AN EXCLUSIONARY LOGIC OR BROADENING THE PERSPECTIVES OF A DIALOGICAL LOGIC**

The reflection I suggest is based upon the necessity of looking beyond the usual expectations, discovering a hopeful horizon that is not necessarily optimistic—with a wider and more lasting sense of our situation. If we accept the fact that we human beings have reached the limits of our condition and that our self-destructive impulse seems inevitably to progress towards a total desertion of the values of life itself, then we may think we are close to a qualitative jump as a species. Out of horror, the threat of death of the species redirects our self-awareness to understanding a planetary destination<sup>1</sup>. Truth lies within the scope of our understanding: Man faces one of the most profound and distinctive historical crises of ontological identity regarding human nature as a possibility.

However, the conceptual tone of this statement may dissipate the urgency of answering this challenge. The immediacy of daily obligations provides us with a ‘reasonable’ excuse to hide the fragility in which human projects are supported. One expectation is followed by another, in an endless succession of unfulfilled desires or needs. Thus every dominating power generates the cracks that will leave it at the mercy of another power (better or worse). Only if persons and peoples are willing, based on freedom, to interact with others, may we build, not a dominion of power, but an environment of authentic human communication. This power and freedom of being are founded in the marginal metaphysical condition that renders all human beings as equals. Therefore, ‘transcendental conditions of consensus’ cannot be posed as many like Apel, Habermas and Rawls have suggested. An effective consensus can only be born in the willingness of putting oneself in the other’s place, in recognizing that we are unique and equal in our marginality. We are completed by the diverse and authentic world created by our interlocutor, who, like us, becomes significant from the moment he exercises his freedom<sup>2</sup>. This is the only alternative for a

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<sup>1</sup> Gregorio de Nyssa (circa 334-394/5), stated that “vice cannot go beyond the limits, [...] when it reaches the limits it changes to good” [“About the creation of man”, in *Patrologia Graeca*, edited by P.J. Migne, volume XLIV, col. 123-256: 201 c.] Note that the Cappadocian philosopher differs from the platonic tradition according to which “... it is impossible to put an end to every evil thing, necessarily, there must be something opposed to good” [*Teeteto*, 176 a]. cf Dei, 1986: 57-79.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dei, 2000: 28-35.

humanity which has to improve itself; it is the source of the unique revolutionary utopia that, in the end, will not become dystopia.

Beyond the differences that now separate and surely will separate us due to the nature of freedom itself, we confront the challenge of an ontological decision that lies in the root of humanity itself. This enables any difference to reshape the meaning of events in order to determine the destiny of the humanity we bequeath to our descendants. It is not simply about earning a position of power, but is mainly about doing, carrying out and transforming, from the bottom of our hearts, the conditions that make possible every human dream.

We seem not to learn from history. As life has become as brief as our desires, no experience is as basic as self-consciousness. I reflected in the 'epilogue' of my *Logic of Dystopia*, edited almost immediately after the events of September 11, 2001—and which would have been unthinkable if, in 1993, there had not been another attempt at the same place—that this event is sufficient reason to change the perspective of humanity (and its leaders) about the future. Symbolic and real at the same time, it was a breaking point in the basic tendencies toward our own historical future. Nevertheless, the profound consciousness of the logic that the event generated in humanity is still far from being correctly interpreted. If we take into account the subsequent events and those that vie to happen, they seem to have reinforced the decision-making mechanisms that allowed the event to happen in the first place.

## CONCLUSION

There has been a failure to unveil the 'pattern of thought and action', and to reveal the internal logic of behaviours and results. We have failed to consider the foundations of the models of social interaction currently in force in the West. Hence, it is possible that humanity will unfortunately lose another historic opportunity to make a qualitative leap in its consciousness as a species. It is not even necessary to show the essential incompetence of the power of domination to take responsibility for its own effects; for example, in the political and social exclusions that accompany such recurrent problems as internal and external migration, the progressive desertification of key areas of the planet, the gradual disappearance of ethnic groups due to expansionist policies of private economic groups, the 'oblivion' of the hegemonic power through Africa, the current responsibility of countries that encourage conflict in the Middle East, the weakening of the nation-state, the absence of a public authority capable of representing the citizen's interest in the face of the social and environmental problems caused by the market economy [Hobsbawm, 1995: 569], or the unequal distribution of wealth and the protectionism as counterparts to the free market and the development of means of enrichment.

Every social interaction is within an implicit or explicit legal framework where conflicts can be solved or neutralized with a certain

rationality expressed in the acceptance of those regulations. When those regulations, customs or ways of relating with people, institutions and organizations or countries are delegitimized and lose their ability to reply to their ontological and existential needs, it creates a state of spiritual and psychosocial anomy conspiring against the dignity of humanity itself. 'Dignity' can be basically defined as the effective acknowledgement of the elemental conditions for every person to live.

The paradigm of rationality that continues to nourish those behaviours is the analytic use of reason, adopted by every dichotomous proposal related to 'human nature'. Its consequences (operation and display) result in the formal and abstract creations of models interaction between men based upon the essential property of instrumentation. This way of using reason is what we have to overcome; we need to understand the way in which the modern world developed the progressive transformation of science into products. From the economic and social perspectives, capitalism and globalization are, in this context, the concretization of this kind of instrumental reason in the one-dimensional economic liberalism of the material relations of human life production. To sum up, capitalism has been consolidated after the collapse of the USSR and now has all the dominative power which its internal logic of appropriation demands. What used to justify the weakness of their answers to the material and spiritual needs of man lacks legitimacy before a sovereignty that has no limits to its universal power in the globalization process. But this has curbed our awareness of the main issue related to our future as a species and the possibilities of a responsible coexistence of human beings with their habitat.

What is first revealed by the phenomenon of globalization is that it is instrumental reason which allows it to spread so efficiently and without limits; it no longer encounters strong opposition. The 'war of civilizations', announced by such prestigious scholars as Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University, does not invalidate this statement as it questions not the experience of people's sacredness but the ideological and adulterated use of the representation of religion and its appropriation as a strategic factor for a dominion of power; this is the essence of the rationality that is being questioned. Such reason has left man unprotected in a scenario full of dangers. The reality of present day social life devastates every rule and renders ineffective any institutional management, whether national, international or communitary. The individual disappears among things and expectations, because our life has been built on a succession of prospects. Due to our search for identity in terms of appropriations and accumulation, we have buried our hope of being and existing with dignity.

Current models of socio-economic rationality do not argue about the role of competition, that is to say, the display of competitive win-lose strategies for every activity of life, not only in business, but in politics, in culture and even in daily social interaction. Another aspect of the social utopia of modernity is its ideal of perfect markets wherein everyone has equal opportunities from which to benefit. However, the actual situation

does not promote genuine equality since financial groups and international companies have an unrestricted and unregulated concentration of power. A logical consequence of this model of social interaction has devastating consequences for most of the world's population, especially the poor. In the end it causes spiritual misery and an existential vacuum.

Therefore, the consciousness of the risk of our situation should focus on our ability<sup>3</sup> to develop a reason r rationality that allows us to accede to theoretical truths that support authentically revolutionary social practices. This awareness is a philosophical apprehension of the foundation of our existence and the consistency of the world. This should be open to the experience of freedom of our fellow human beings since the context where that freedom is exercised determines the differences and the spiritual richness of persons and of peoples. To exercise our freedom of being is to develop a new consciousness of ourselves and to cross the perceived threshold of our human possibilities. This assumes a rationality with more possibilities than the mere analytical use of oppositions and dichotomies, that is to say, that does not operate only as understanding—a dialogical reason rather—which creates an environment of encounter from which reason—but obtains its own freedom of being and displays itself through openness to diversity in various cultures. This is the task ahead and, hopefully, will be the legacy we leave for future generations.

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<sup>3</sup> This is in the sense of a (philosophical) apprehension of the foundation of our existence and the consistency of the world.

## CHAPTER II

# GLOBALIZATION, INFORMATION REVOLUTION AND IDENTITY: A READING FROM THE 'OTHER'

MARÍA CRISTINA MENÉNDEZ

### INTRODUCTION

Reflection about human relationships that includes the temporal dimension entails a horizon of uncertainty. In Western political systems this is tied to equality and freedom, to the possibility of thinking, changing and creating, and to responsibility as constituent components of democracy as an ideal, since they remove all certainty about possible behavior. In this context, the possibility of change allows two opposing alternatives as determinants of behavior. On the one, hand 'risk aversion' and the attempt to continue the *status quo* and, on the other, reform and the aim of adapting to change. From this historical perspective a long-term view, in which the presence of uncertainty becomes evidence of the denial of the lineal or closed ways, calls for the consideration of the socio-cultural context, and appeals to the temporal establishment of the construction of 'meaning' for the interpretive understanding of behavior.

In the political field, different 'meanings' have founded and/or justified action. On the one hand, a vertical vision of politics is manifest, domestically in the relationship between command and obedience, and internationally in imperial supremacy as a power relation. On the other hand, a horizontal vision, has changed the original and unblocked relationship between command and obedience through the bar of legal rationality directed by the '*telos*' of republican democracy and of the creation of the relative balance of power of the international community. 'Meaning' belongs to the order of motivation. Its appearance or disappearance becomes a reference for the explanation of behaviors, order, its institutionalization or change, and architectural politics. Thus, the values and beliefs that give rise to human behaviors display the construction of 'meaning', understood as beliefs and rationalizations, values and feelings that connect culture, political socialization and cultural change.

From this point of view, the cultural context in which action is expressed is the interpretive element. The theory of rational choice, which explains behaviors in terms of interests, prestige, profit or power [Downs, 1992: 95-96] or Neo-institutional Theory [March and Olsen, 1997] would acquire more explanatory potential if they included the socio-historical context as an interpretive element. Having rejected instrumental logic, as a pure relationship between means and ends, identification logic takes its

place. In this context, the ends are defined as a result of comparisons and conflicts between collective identities. Associated to this logic is the subjective and well-known meaning of the subjects of the action [Weber, 1992:6], considered as signification in action. This acquires its social characteristics when it is referred to reciprocally. In this way the link between the well-known subjective meaning of the action and the cultural construction of 'meaning' is established.

Finally, the demands of the socialization process result from the intersection of the subjective and social levels because values, feelings and beliefs inherent in a society at a certain historical time are the expression of a characteristic 'meaning' specific to mean a certain society. Each one has a specific conception of the world and of things, a predominant collective mentality that penetrates it. Not only is such mentality the reason of behaviors and prejudices, but it also becomes an element in process of civilization. Due to that fact alone over a long time, its values or essential beliefs explain its distinctive identity with respect to other societies [Braudel, 1998: 32].

If we go deeper into this approach, we can not but acknowledge that, in the interrelation of groups the hegemony of a certain conception of the world can be associated with freedom in order to give it meaning and to justify it subliminally. Thus, "Freedom as a possibility of giving significance to a world as an order of sense, and finitude as an inherent characteristic of the human existence, are power sources as regards the specific capacity of the space-time determination of the possibilities of freedom. Freedom is power" [Dei, 2002: 34]. When reabsorbing the whole in a world of meaning that a certain society creates and in the language of such a society, a closure which establishes the existence of the *other* arises [Castoriadis, 2002: 206-207]. This *other* is the one who is different, the one that is judged and receives the negative or rejected qualifications for representing another world of meaning. Thus, the passage among different world representations explains different behaviors. The Greeks imagined a polytheistic world while the Hebrews of the Old Testament considered themselves the chosen people, but the Romans objected to this representation of the world. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans put their trust in the human potentialities that gave rise to the Renaissance and Humanism. In the Modern Age, Westerners imagined that they would establish freedom, equality, justice, material and spiritual progress for whole of humanity based on their belief of man's potential as an individual.

However, in the 18th century the world of significations made a turn and began to be built around the idea of industrialization and the concept of technical progress. A diverging development between substantial and instrumental rationalities began to appear: one which supported freedom and responsibility for one's own judgments and another oriented by the adaptation of ends to means. Finally, the postmodern *ánthropos* was deprived of the meaning that turned him into a pioneer and a maker of the

world. Having neither a transforming will nor goals his intention was confined to making use of what had been given to him.

From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, faith in intellectual, material and moral progress began to be criticized and many called into question the idea of the inevitable development of the individual. With this, the very meaning of the Enlightenment and Liberalism began to wane, which in turn allowed for questioning that world of meaning and proposing, once again, the historical fulfillment of a change founded on the inseparable values of freedom and responsibility in order for a collective project to be maintained. The irrationality of World War I, the boom of totalitarianism, racism, the destructiveness of World War II and the threat of a third world war, that marked international relations during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all shattered the original optimistic forecasts. In the case of Latin America, the authoritarian wave which began in the 1960s and continued until the beginning of the 1980s, and which in many cases acknowledged a past of democratic-tutelary alternation as an historical background, also underscored the weakness of the thesis of ineluctable progress. This was manifested politically by a call for debates and social analyses, as the old and exhausted concept of inevitable evolution and progress lost ground. There was a call for political reform, compensation and action, which continues today since nothing has yet replaced the ‘loss of meaning’ which is the cause of a breakdown in law and order, and a lack of faith in institutions. All this presents a new opportunity for creative imagination, which is the only power capable of making a change and helping people and society deal with the ‘loss of meaning’ in which they are immersed; only this can orient society’s future development.

Along this line of thought, in order to consider the axiological dilemma put forward at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our focus must be on the tendency to control instrumental rationality, currently expressed in the revolution of Information Technologies [Manuel Castells, 2001]. The results of this revolution are the absence self-criticism and the evasion of all responsibility for the effects of technological or instrumental development and the subordination of the capacity for self-judgment and ethical debate regarding economic assumptions. Moreover, there is a tendency in this context to alienate the one who is different simply because this one is ‘other’—insensitive to the ‘other’s’ own struggle to uphold his/her identity and to attempt to find ‘meaning’ in the world.

Faced with the appearance of the *other*, the intention of providing significance to the world by giving it a meaning was fragmented. This is because “the crisis of European rationality is a problem of eradication, a decentralization of the unity of the world’s awareness, due, indeed, to its focus on instruments of control. These claim the freedom to be and to manifest their differences. Since this is rather about a nostalgia for the lost certainty (the conception of an historical unity) and about the shock of the daily irruption of the “other,” the strange, and the primitive (ethnic, sexual, religious, cultural minorities)...” [Dei, 2002:74].

In this process of belonging and exclusion the “distopia” or wrong place phenomenon was expressed and arose, in which the “utopia” of modern instrumental reason and modernity’s freedom of appropriation developed its aspiration to be in the world [Dei, 2002: 115-116]. The freedom to have and the power to control that began to shape the hegemonic speech in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in its encounter with the other, paradigmatically the new world, have become once and for all opposed to the power to be and to the metaphysical freedom of stimulating and recognizing one’s own identity [Dei, 2002: 47, 112-115].

This tension between the power to control (or freedom to have) and the power to be confronts, from the political perspective, the requirement of order and its continuity or persistence. The construction of order, in the face of fragmentation and conflict, implies achieving the stability of institutions whose unavoidable support lies in the socialization of citizens. Through socialization, “knowledge, beliefs and feelings as regards politics and commitment with political values” become one’s own [Almond, 1999: 203]. That is why the criticism of ‘meaning’ and its representations turn into the threat of an ‘architectural’ possibility of another creation.

In what follows, I attempt to deal with this dilemma from a particular dialectical point of view that includes different approaches to the existence of the *other* in the globalized world. First, is a philosophical approach that brings up and opens the matter to new questions and answers. Additional to approaches include technological, sociological and political justifications through which the *other* becomes related to those excluded from a global order. By worsening dissimilarities this has emphasized cultural differences, thus requiring a debate to enable integrative action and change.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER PHILOSOPHICALLY**

Passing from heteronomy to autonomy makes the imaginary institution of society possible. Heteronomy or self-alienation implies accepting the extra-social origin of the institution of society, whether God, the laws of history, nature or reason. Autonomy allows the self-institution of society as a wish expressed through social as well as political efforts [Castoriadis, 2003: 332-333]. Greece of the fifth century B.C., the French Revolution, and the resulting emancipation movements well into this century, have been paradigmatic times of social self-institution. When societies approach the breaking point they approach also the creation point and can leave their heteronomy behind. This situation happened twice in history: in ancient Greece and in Western Europe.

We are heirs of this break, and politics and philosophy emerged from this fracture as the possibility of judging the established institutions and their mechanically accepted representations. Only criticism of heteronomy, whether as a ‘meaning’ accepted without deliberation, as a representation of an irrevocable order that darkens and hides the human

source of power, or as the denial of the human origin of 'meaning', can allow breaking the closure of meaning and passage to autonomy. The disruption of heteronomy through judgment and appraisal allows and demands a new creative act. The appearance of autonomy, reflexive thought, self-criticism and the new self-institution of society are caused by the end of the closure of the previous world and the authorization of the constructive debate. This is true not only of the institutions themselves, but also of the consequences of their political and economic paradigms.

This critical moment allows the creation of a new order where the members of society agree upon new meanings which lend 'significance' to their behaviors and enable them to recognize themselves as particular societies. Heteronomous societies first institute a positive *other*—the creator of order—that exempts them from an autonomous questioning of their own meaning and institution. This may be Christ, Jehovah, Allah or the founding Hero. But the closure of their own meaning and the absence of criticism also lead to the institution of the negative *other* who, with its mere existence, represents the opposition of another 'meaning' and the denial of one's own values, beliefs, rules and institutions. This kind of closure represents evil *par excellence*. The appraisal of one's own 'meaning' and society's need to reabsorb everything in its own world of meaning, leads to the refusal of the other and its interiorization as a threat to one's own meaning [Castoriadis, 2002: 201-210, 2004: 207-219].

Within this context, a universal feature of human societies is to attribute *senselessness* to the *other*, to exclude it by devaluating and even hating it. Closure of the individual and his social institution leads to the denial of the *other*, of that whose existence denies one's own meaning. It leads also to strengthening one's own laws, values, rules, meanings, and considering them unique in themselves. Hate of the other, expressed in wars, contempt for those who are different, xenophobia and racism, are based on resistance to accept the alien.

The idea that *others* are simply others is a novel characteristic in the history of mankind. This recognition of alterity implies the disruption of the closure of the meaning and the opening for discussion of the instituted 'meaning'. Hypothetical acceptance would require, as a first step, transformation from a behavior that excluded the *other*, without criticism of its causes and consequences, to another behavior that allowed and opened a debate about the institutions themselves and the social imaginary [Castoriadis, 2001: 191-196]. It is at this moment that the possibility of being connected, as a necessary part or condition for a superior identity, the human condition itself, takes place. However, a paradox already stated by Castoriadis also appears here: can acceptance of alterity turn the incomparable into something equally acceptable? [Castoriadis, 2004:214].

The *other* can be understood from the point of view of globalization as a new technological paradigm of information. In the 1970s, the paradigm of information technologies began to be used to explain the social change. When these technologies developed exponentially and

globally, they established a new way of producing, communicating and living [Castells, 2001:43]. From the point of view of this analysis, a true revolution occurred, much as the agricultural and industrial revolution had before. The main empirical expression that this revolution focused upon was the internet, which expressed globalization in its computer version.

Although any revolution implies changes, the agrarian and industrial development, on the one hand, and the development of information technologies, on the other, differed significantly. The latter bears the characteristic of self-production. It relies on knowledge as its own dynamo, since it has an effect on itself as the main source of productivity. From this point of view, where is the *other* among the interstices of the exponential development of the revolution of information technologies? While one third of the world's population has been included in this technological advance, its cascading effect and its geometrical expansion cannot avoid exclusion. Excluded areas remain in the geographical space of regions, countries or individuals, while the included areas surf a net space without national borders and develop their potentialities.

The digital gap does not accept clear borders. Exclusion is found within areas of inclusion, adding other social, economic, cultural, health and educational inequalities. Classic categories typical of the Modern Age, such as First, Second and Third World, lose explanatory potential, because even with the technical connection, the educational and cultural capacity that allows the use of such information technology and the production of new knowledge is required. The meaningful part is not the accumulation of knowledge typical of the encyclopedic mind of modernity, but rather the fact of knowing where the information is, and how to search, process and turn it into specific knowledge in the societies of the information age.

Therefore, while millions of people and regions remain active in this space, an irregular map has also been drawn, where the excluded '*others*' also coexist [Castells, 2002:99]. This situation, supported by an instrumental logic, requires philosophical and political debates about the terms, conditions and effects of exclusion as well as counterweight actions in the face of the exponential increase of the gap between the included and the excluded. The question that we pose here is the following: Is instrumental logic the only one possible? Is this the technological expression of the control under which freedom and power turn into alienation and destruction? Is there any room left for the freedom that gives meaning and allows identity? Could there be a logic which acknowledges that power is complete only when it recognizes its horizon and its limit in the *other*? [Dei, 2002: 26-64].

It is also true that this Revolution based on technology and knowledge enables avoiding determinist interpretations based on the existence of natural resources, territories or population. Along these same lines, other explanatory categories have appeared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as rational organization, knowledge management, and ongoing education, which focus on effective planning. On the other hand, the individual seeks

autonomously self-programmed development while rejecting mass organizations, trade unions and, occasionally, the national territories themselves. But this individualistic proposal cannot hide the existence of the *other*. On the contrary, the continuance of its presence poses the need of an ethical debate, because its appearance means a break of the social contract on which national states were founded. The objective is to find a restorative strategy of social differences, just as in other times the existence of the welfare state in the industrial world sought to build a minimum social agreement on which to support social existence.

The consolidation of situations of exclusion in Latin America, as well as in Africa south of the Sahara, Asia or within the North America, expresses the interconnection between these two terms: globalization and exclusion. Meanwhile, complaints and debates have not restrained the exclusion caused by instrumental logic. On the contrary, the polarization between the included and excluded gives no sign of reduction. The gap in per capita profit between the industrialized world and the developing world has tripled. The 2004 UNDP [United Nations Development Program] Report about human development pointed out the seriousness of this gap in the 90s.

Actually, according to the same 2004 UNDP report, though a huge technological development in an unprecedented number of countries was carried out through the Internet in the 90s, the standard of living decreased. This setback was more telling because in previous decades almost no country had undergone a decrease in its Human Development Index [HDI]. Their progress was slow, as their key components—literacy rates, school enrolment and life expectancy—took time to materialize, but they did progress. Since 1990, however, this curve has begun to decline. According to these records, the relationship between informative capitalism and globalization, on the one hand, and exclusion, on the other, are two sides of a same logic, which could only be changed by political wills based on ethical principles and expressed in actions directed to revert the process of exclusion.

The condition for this is a reading of globalization that does not automatically accept exclusion as given. It has to avoid the risk of change and accept a historical process with an open end. From this point of view, the design of public policies and the promotion of the civil society may make the difference, and encourage not only economic development but also equity and inclusion of the *other*. For the time being, however, the decrease of the Human Development Index shows that neither political or the philosophical debates, states and institutions, civil or political, which during the industrial revolution used to act as a counterweight to social inequalities, may now ease the contrasts and reestablish the social contract.

Under this new information capitalism, the capacity for national control of the worldwide processes of communication, capital circulation, technological development and production is very limited. Moreover, while exclusion is expressed in a circle of poverty of individuals, regions or areas

that are out of the network, its very libertarian character allows its use by illegal and criminal sectors. This enables a perverse integration that supports the global criminal economy.

Meanwhile, the division between self-programmable and generic workers is the core issue for the continuity of exclusion, unless the design of state and international policies is directed to correcting that tendency. In this sense, the Millennium Goals signed by 189 countries in the United Nations Millennium Summit of the year 2000 were directed to eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting human dignity, and reaching peace, democracy and environmental sustainability, among others, before the year 2015. They remain unfulfilled promises<sup>1</sup>.

### **THE POLITICAL READING OF THE OTHER: GLOBAL ORDER AND HEGEMONIC POWER**

A political reading of the *other* from the view of the current globalization is also possible. Empires are products of historical events. Many historical globalizations under a hegemonic power—with similar structural characteristics, such as the extension and spread of social, cultural, economic and political events—preceded the current one. The examples of ancient Phoenicia, Carthage, Rome, Christian Europe and Islam, among others, highlight the uniqueness of the Roman Empire due to its particular characteristic: to assure a peaceful space for the members of the Empire, the institution of a *Pax Romana*.

As regards the *other*, the current global order is different in showing social, political, economic lines of inclusion and exclusion; this situation appears to be an irreversible historical event. However, Fernand Braudel has warned against historical determinism. He notes that each civilization and its culture do not show only one possible development. Civilizations hesitate among various fates, very different from one another. The understanding of what this assertion implies is achieved by escaping the history of short and medium-term events by progressing towards a long-term history—the cultural history that implies grasping history as a process [Braudel, 1982: 82-171].

Arnold Toynbee, in turn, has supported the idea that a civilization dies after many centuries of existence. Internal and external commotions, caused by a chain of disturbances, are silenced by the constitution of an Empire turned into a temporary solution. Nonetheless, those unresolved commotions announce its destruction before it takes place [Braudel,

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<sup>1</sup> The aforementioned aims are: 1. eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2. achieve universal primary education; 3. promote gender equality and empower women; 4. reduce child mortality; 5. improve maternal health; 6. combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7. ensure environmental sustainability; 8. develop a global partnership for development (UNDP, United Nations Development Program, 2004: 136-137).

1982:161]. Throughout this view of history as a process and the conception that internal and external events warn us about possible developments in the decline of empires, the discussion of the *other's* existence and its exclusion in the current global order rises as an unavoidable issue and an indicator of a new process of decadence.

On the one hand, there is a claim about the lack of equity throughout the world; on the other hand, there is a parallel approval or resignation, the consistency of which is strengthened by the historical story or by the conception of the cascade effect which pre-assumes a spontaneous tendency towards the gradual inclusion of the *other* in the new order. The revolution of information technologies is being quickly and universally consolidated due to the self-generation of knowledge. However, this revolution does not reject the possibility of remedial political actions to facilitate inclusion, which requires deliberation, discussion and political decision.

This consideration prevents a division closure and allows philosophical, ethical, political and ideological debates to happen. Here the classic questions of the tension between equality and freedom or about an equal start or the equality of arrival or meritocracy acquire new importance [Sartori, 1988:425]. By these means, it is possible to consider the *other* as a fellow man due to his human condition. This calls for reflection on the disjunction between the freedom to be and the freedom to have or the power of appropriation, and the costs to develop human potentialities [Dei, 2002: 42-54, 157-159].

It also opens the debate between those who support globalization as an objective reality resulting from the self-regulation of the market, the theses of the "end of history" as predominance of liberal democracy, and of the market economy as a space for the individual development of the desire for recognition and the integration of global capitalism [Fukuyama, 1992:321, 1996:21-25], and those who critically point out their ideological character. Also, among the latter, there is a critical implosion between the Old Left and the Third Way, which turns to remedial public action [Giddens, 2002]. There even appear ecological discussions over the lack of intergenerational solidarity and the loss of the notion of a long term evolutionary relation between nature and man [Castells, 2001: 503].

In turn, the history of international relationships also supports arguments about the wide variety of possible developments. At least, five ideal types describe these only one belongs to the imperial order comparable to the current global order associated with American hegemony. But the presence of the remainder suggests the enigma about its possible evolution.

The struggle for supremacy, the balance of power, the institutionalization of the division of duties and the lack of a central control power, are other evolutionary alternatives of the international order that cause uncertainty about the evolution of the current order, although this is beyond the scope of this paper. The critical factor as a likely cause of change is not technology as instrumental logic expressed in globalization

based on information technologies, but the existence of the excluded and their probable alliances with those opposed to this globalization logic, thereby strengthening their identity as the *other*. These revert, psychologically and politically, to their condition of excluded and become excluding; they maintain their mutual rejection with the support of the same global networks that encourage their exclusion. The changing balance of the nuclear terror due to the appearance of new asymmetric threats and its negative feedback is its empirical sign. Established since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, this struck the core of the global order and forced a reconsideration of assumed certainties.

Terrorism, transnational organized crime, attacks against cyber security and biological terrorism began to be considered as some of the new challenges of the Western Hemisphere. Their diagnosis requires the action of international bodies, of states and their leaders. Their appearance nurtures uncertainties and dissolves previous certainties because the lack of inclusion and the insistence on separating the *other*, without recognizing either its identity or its claims, increase the intensity and the violence of conflicts. Therefore, an early diagnosis may warn us about possible consequences.

Conflict denial or repression does not make it vanish, as shown by the theory of conflict [Dahrendorf, 1971: 184-208]. This theory was internationally tested with the dissolution of the USSR [The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], when the relative balance of power between the western and socialist blocs became disjointed, fostered by *perestroika* and *glasnost*, and symbolized in the historic fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In the current situation, the new configuration of the forces in conflict has designed other scenarios. A new map has begun to define its dividing boundaries, based on opposing cultural ideas and strategic interests linked to energy resources and drinking water. All this has added to the new international agenda the conflicting link between the new asymmetric threats, the existence of poverty and social exclusion.

Poverty and exclusion currently demonstrate the validity of the *other* that is constantly recreated and which struggles with whoever holds the power. It is expressed in mass movements of illegal immigration, the intentional spread of diseases, and links between terrorist groups, drug dealers and excluded areas. When the situation of opposition involves the very root of the human condition, there may be few social contracts. Minimum links may have exponential effects in terms of internal instability and international consequences. This frame of reference allows us to understand the current debate about the concept of globalization in the face of the *other*, established among those who point out its objective characteristics and those who call for the correction of its negative consequences.

The idea that economic globalization, interdependence and development, the spreading of democracy as a form of government and the development of the cosmopolitan global culture may be combined in order to make the world more peaceful is opposed by other voices—such as

Samuel Huntington's in his work *Clash of Civilizations*—that have warned about the weaknesses of this new Western domination [Huntington, 1997:95].

The terrorist attack on September 11<sup>th</sup> and the subsequent fear of anthrax, as an expression of the fear of a biological attack as Tangredi points out, have changed the assessment of the concept of globalization. The point of global criminal interconnection was historically shown by the fact that the terrorists from Southeast Asia lived and were trained in Western Europe and the United States, and used such non-military tools as global communications, efficient means of air transport, financial transactions without frontiers, rights and freedom of movement provided by the democratic governments, and all to kill thousands of people and hit the symbolic heart of global and American trade as well as the center of the United States defenses [Tangredi: 2002, xxii].

On September 11<sup>th</sup> the veil of optimism of the 90s, which had silenced the ethical and political discussions founded on the Western perception of invulnerability, was removed and showed that the time of revising the idea of globalization—including the former conventional, liberal or conservative conceptions it entailed—had arrived.

## **THE IDEOLOGICAL READING OF THE OTHER**

The debate posed among conservatives, liberals, the new left and social-democracy about the link between globalization, the existence of the *other* and social exclusion, showed that the dilemma was the option between deregulation and state intervention. The key question was: Can the states manage public policies autonomously? And, in the second place, Can political engineering integrate the *other*?

The radical areas of the new left opened the ideological debate. The political and ideological space of the old left was traditionally grounded on the dialectic interpretation of the world. The international order of the Cold War, the *détente* and the nuclear balance based on deterrence (better known as Mutually Assured Destruction) except for some episodes such as the Missile Crisis, were some of their references. But since the break-up and dissolution of the USSR, the dialectical explanation lost one of its terms and the left faced the problem of explaining a new global order, named 'globalization', that had been established on the ideological assumptions of liberalism.

In this search for an explanation, the left was split. The new left attempted to find a third way in politics, mid-way between neo-liberalism and social-democracy. Anthony Giddens represented it, and took the *other*, the excluded from the system, as its nucleus. But while the new democrats and the new laborism emphasized the problems of family life, criminality and the decadence of community, and pointed out that change in the family and the incorporation of women to the labor market had given rise to antisocial behaviors and criminality, the traditional left rejected these ideas.

The new explanation caused an implosion within the old left and drew strong criticism. Anglo-Saxon opponents such as Jeff Faux considered that their arguments denoted an undertone of solidarity with conservative thought and questioned the benefits of state intervention as a remedy for these imbalances. On the contrary, they saw the message of this new global economy was that “*you are alone*”. Actually, for these critics, the Third Way was only the expression of the multinational corporate world, which considered that the effectiveness of the global market depended on a minimum intervention of the state [Giddens, 2001: 20].

Along this line of critical thinking, Jeff Faux himself pointed out that the Third Way only wanted to spread the opportunities, but it silenced the unequal distribution of riches and power by rationalizing a political commitment between the right and the left, which was actually only the rapprochement of the left to the right [Giddens, 2001:20-21]. Other voices advanced corrective political action against the acceptance of the global order as an irreversible fact. Stuart Hall was one who criticized the conception of the Third Way on globalization as a consummated fact. His criticism developed around two main issues: the rationalization of the new left about the self-regulation of global markets without the need of a social or institutional environment for their operation, and the issue of the replacement of the citizen by the consumer [Giddens, 2001: 22].

In fact, for Hall, the defenselessness in which the *other* fell showed the beginning of the end of the social contract. If, previously, the social security of the welfare state had consolidated citizenship by unifying the rich and the poor, the decrease in the public investment had stigmatized the poor, creating a system of two categories in which only the privileged were entitled to private guarantees [Giddens, 2001: 22]. In this context, he pointed out that citizens and workers without self-management capacity in their training had been excluded from the public agenda. The break of the bipolarity between capitalism and communism had allowed the establishment of a new global order that the third way did not question. Oskar Lafontaine compared globalization to a casino in which individuals are not taken into account, as a consequence of market deregulation policies [Giddens, 2001: 25].

In this context, the counter-proposal for the treatment of the *other* focused on the reconstruction of clear public action, the welfare state, the social contract and the defense of a social Europe. Lafontaine asserted that it was not the market, but the democratic state, which should act to decide the future of society [Giddens, 2001: 25]. Faced with these arguments, Giddens answered by rejecting the claim of egalitarianism. According to his point of view, it is possible to attempt to achieve only equal opportunities. The tension between freedom and equality is a key and real issue, and not only for classic liberals [Giddens, 2001: 96]. Poverty is not a permanent state that requires long-term social assistance programs [Giddens, 2001:102]. However, the search for equal opportunity implies the need to rebuild the welfare state, a key point of the Third Way proposal. On the one hand, this

is in order to avoid the social mechanisms that cause or maintain conditions of need. On the other, it is in order to prevent elites from giving up their social and economic responsibilities, including those that are fiscal [Giddens, 2001: 114-115].

Faced with the inequalities manifest in the existence of the *other*, Giddens points out that equal opportunities require the redistribution of wealth and profit as an intergenerational reallocation. Without this reallocation, inequality of results in one generation turns into inequality of opportunities in the following [Giddens, 2001:99]. In the face of this proposal, the matter which is still pending is the capacity of the state to manage effectively the reform of the welfare state.

Manuel Castells noted the reduction of the state's capacity to perform this social function when he introduced the concept of a network-state. The nation-state has turned into a network-state: a node in a network of powers constituted of a plurality of sources of authority, among which the state is but one [Castells, 1999:271]. Nowadays, the state shares power with international bodies, international corporations and drug cartels. Other data that confirm this weakening of the state's power include the increasing difficulties of the welfare state model, the loss of the state's power to control information, entertainment, opinions and images expressed through global networks of communication and by local or regional media, the parallel reduction of the state's power to control people, and the globalization of the organized crime that escapes the state's control are, among others, expressions of this weakening.

Moreover, the appearance of capacities outside the state also confirms this weakening. These include citizens' control over the state through the same information technologies, multilateralism or the constitution of political *cartels*, the strengthening of governments and local or regional entities, the constitution of regional or international supra-state bodies, the development of reactive and proactive social movements that give a sense of belonging to alternative bodies.

From this point of view, a distance between the state and the nation has occurred. The latter also shows the confined and forgotten presence of the *other*. The loss of the largest part of the state's economic resources has put the welfare state into trouble and has caused tension between the two terms of the state and the nation. In this framework, the state had two alternatives: to adapt itself to the global order and forget the nation, or to serve the nation and fail in its level of international competitiveness. That is the main contradiction. Nation-states have become the strategic players of the global interaction system with shared sovereignty while moving apart from their nations, thus, creating strong internal tensions [Castells, 1999: 338].

Nevertheless, according to Castells, the persistence of the state as node of that network is supported by the need of the global order for a certain degree of state regulation and a relative control over its citizens. In this way, a field of mutual dependency is created. On the one hand, national

competitiveness is a duty of national policies. On the other hand, national economies are attractive for the multinationals; these depend on the protection of their states of origin while also requiring human resources who depend, in turn, on other national policies. Finally, this game of needs establishes mutual dependence.

However, despite this mutual dependence, it is also possible to recognize a field of antagonistic forces. The acceptance of the global order without rules, as an expression of free trade without political responsibility, assumes, in turn, that states become mere intermediary players in a strategic world [Castells, 1999: 334]. In this context, failure to include the *other* may transform it from its initial condition of excluded into excluding, resulting in a radicalization of the mutual opposition. Some of the historical expressions of this return of exclusion are religious fundamentalism in its Islamic and Christian versions, the emergence of religious sects, nationalism and the reconstruction of national identities as cultural communities faced with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet republics, territorial communities, Catalan nationalism, Afro-American or Western Indian ethnic identity, nationalist self-assertion, urban movements, local communities, and self-immolation (Castells, 1999:31).

All these movements reject the idea of a global economy independent from societies, supported by the architecture of computing networks that represent the challenge of the new century: namely, to reach compatibility between a global logic and the (re)construction of an identity that allows the inclusion of the *other*. By these means, these movements become spaces of cultural resistance, a shelter of the identifiable meaning of the other. In this sense, two phenomena are produced. On the one hand, there is the disintegration of 'plurinational' states into national quasi-states; this rebuilds national identity on the basis of a shared history. On the other, there is the development of nations without state stature that push for the decentralization of the state and the transfer of part of its sovereignty [Castells, 1999:73-75].

## CONCLUSION

So far we have sought to provide a realistic description of the existence of the *other*. At this point, a new issue emerges. Is it enough to show from the philosophical, technological, international and ideological view points the presence of the *other* and its problematic inclusion into the globalization process? Or does this first descriptive and phenomenal approach have a prospective scenario? From this point of view, the preceding developments allow us to consider that the potential inclusion of the *other* in the international order assumes, as a necessary condition, the respect for the existence of *other* meanings and the conscious mutation from a zero-sum game to a positive score. This positive sum game assumes that losses or partial concessions of each player shall be compensated by the final result of the group. In the international order, keeping the conflict

within controlled limits demands opening the closure and putting an end to judging the *other*, while respecting differences. But the enigma of the future still holds, supported by the tension of an unsolved problem between two alternatives. One is the spread of a scientific-technological rationality, expressed historically in the Third Revolution of the Information Technologies age and in the generation of a typical “*ánthropos*”, which programs the individual to adapt himself to an instrumental logic while separating him from the *others*, who become the excluded—without access to specific training. The second alternative, supported by shared values about the concept of humankind, is acceptance of difference and a solidarity that makes inclusion possible. In fact, the mere statement of this last alternative reinforces the uncertainty, as it is an axiological proposal that contradicts centuries of history and factual proof.

At the national internal level, the inclusion of the *other* finds its limits in the international order that establishes a restriction of public management. The chain of international hierarchies subordinates the internal to the international plane and concludes by contributing to the state’s failure to meet the needs of their own national population. The dilemma issue is whether to meet the international requirements or the internal challenges and needs. In many cases, the final product of this process is a crisis of democracy as a result of its unfulfilled promises and resignation to the achievement of only its minimum goals: maintenance of its procedural or formal aspects, which assume bureaucratization and political self-preference as its most negative aspects.

In this context there emerges an appreciation of procedural democracy in opposition to democracy in so far as a system may hide or mask the unsolved matter of the exclusion of the *other*, the emptying of the substantive debate, the rejection of the ‘meaning’ or signification of the *other*, the construction of a new identity and, finally, its potential inclusion. Therefore, on the internal plane, the emergence of the network-state and the exclusion of the *other* have posed the problem of collective identity and the claim for a new social contract built upon the instrumental interests of globalization.

The approach to the reading of the *other* from the philosophical, political, ideological and technological-scientific point of view have allowed us to draw a chart where the permanent datum was the universality of the existence of the *other*, wherein other studies could also be corroborated from religious, cultural or social-historical perspectives. Does the persistence of this feature, the empirical demonstration of its existence, exhaust the matter with its scientific explanation? At this level of analysis and criticism, the problem seems to require a rational interpretation, which is circularly justified and incorporate desire and will. Only when we address these new dimensions, do the creative possibilities emerge.

The need for a creative response to the permanent historic data of the existence of the *other* is an urgent matter due to the fact that nowadays the same display of technological-scientific rationality has endowed its

presence with new facets. These are, on the one hand, the exponential development of the global order that has made it more vulnerable by provoking the structural exclusion of those who do not fulfill the parameters of its logic. On the other hand, lies the increasing danger of its existence in correlation with the increase of the intensity and violence of the conflict in which one opposes the other.

The absence of concern regarding the dire consequences of political and technological-scientific globalization, the emergence of movements and newly rebellious entities, the clashes between different cultures, the convergence between classical liberalism and the new left in view of the proposal of globalization to avoid these subjects, the absence of a corrective engineering, the studies that point out the failure to keep the millennial objectives stated by the United Nations: all these situations have concealed the existence of the *other*. These are linked to the display of the freedom to have or the power to possess, to the oblivion of the freedom *to mean or to be*, and to the aim of ignoring the probable cost of this logic of exclusion.

The current tendency is to close the circle of justification around the *included*, and to isolate the *other*; this is stated in the global order with the inclusion of those who answer the parameters of instrumental rationality expressed in information technology and in the market, and with the exclusion of those who have not done so due to technical, economic, cultural or ideological reasons. However, such justification seems to be threatened by the same logic. Optimism in progress and instrumental rationality is enclosed at a world-wide level by the combination between new asymmetric threats and the exclusion of millions of people. This makes possible a lethal alchemy that only a few can become irate emissaries without either present or future and build a new conflict of gloomy forecast. Based on the same development of the current technological-scientific rationality, supported by a religious or ideological justification for their self-immolation, they may carry out extreme actions that affect cities or regions or alter rational global plans with the application of minimum strategic changes.

In this order, the replacement of the conflict between capitalism and communism with asymmetric threats of unforeseeable political or military control has put this matter on the international agenda. Inherited policies increase violence and conflict. In order to face this situation properly and to provide a long term solution, we must attempt to understand deeply and consider, in all its complexity, the existence and reality of the *excluded other*. Although acknowledging the tragedy of the history of mankind in its recurring periods of decadence, it presents the counter fact of recognizing the *other* as part of mankind and the possibility of an ingenious integrating policy. This policy will mitigate every deterministic diagnosis and enable the development of all sorts of potentialities, not only those directed by instrumental rationality; it will replace the enemy-friend category with alterity. Vested interests are short-term, but in a prospective plane only the relationship among rationality, wish, and will, understood as

the capacity of autonomous thought, intention, decision and action, may lead to the inclusion and acceptance of the *other's* dignity and to the disruption of the historical tendency of analyzing and understanding the world from our own "*weltanschauung*".

Thus, only as an invitation to creativity and action, we have posed the opening to the ethnocentric vision of the world and the incorporation of the *other* as different. From a place other than negative assessment and exclusion, it opens the necessary conditions for the regulation of conflict, the transformation of the zero-score game of unforeseeable consequences into a positive score game, and the control of any possible break between nature and man which would have devastating consequences for future generations.

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## CHAPTER III

# WHERE THE WORLD IS HEADED: SCIENTIFIC FUTUROLOGY OR EMOTIVE HOPE

*CARLOS ENRIQUE BERBEGLIA*

Adrift in a present world where scientific futurology  
is usually confused with emotive hope  
for a change that will improve the lives of men,  
to the extreme of all having the same intellectual worth

### INTRODUCTION

The call for scientific rigour that generally accompanies the reflections and research work aimed at solving the human conundrum shows a clear bias in favour of the collection of data—usually capriciously systematized—over critical thought. This leads to a patent schizophrenia of the same recurrent victim, knowledge. Although this warning applies to any discipline with the characteristics mentioned above, it should be taken into account especially when dealing with the analysis of the future. For authors, either unwittingly or insidiously, let their hopes of what the future should filter into their work under the cover of this so-called scientific rigour, instead of limiting themselves to analysis.

How to avoid the intrusion of these aspirations into the reading of the time to come becomes, therefore, a necessary and profoundly moral requirement if the little objectivity that this view may develop is not to be swallowed up by the unconscious—though not likewise inconsistent—contradictions of a thinker's wishes, which are not always clearly expressed. The intellectual history of the last one hundred years is crisscrossed by a question about tomorrow. In the extreme this constant feature has even given birth to a literary genre, namely, science fiction, whose stories and novels foreground, in most cases, the analysis of either the immediate or the distant future.

Within this framework, the question that we are dealing with opens into a series of delimitations, each of which specifies an area with its own characteristics. In turn, these broaden the conundrum and the concomitant distress over the unpredictable, a resolution always out of reach for the merely theoretical paraphernalia that usually deals with these issues.

1. *Psycho-ontological*. Does the ante-determination that leads us to ask about the destiny of the world derive from our psychic structure? We are beings oriented towards the future in such a way that in order to enjoy the present, we need the deployment of a battery of aids, even religious, that

will allay our anxiety for an inescapable tomorrow? We are made of time, and the same time that constitutes us also devours us?

2. *Ecological*. One science associated with this discipline, among others, is paleontology, which, by proving the series of mass extinctions of multiple animal and vegetal species in the terrestrial past, establishes the possibility of a similar catastrophe, affecting the human race. Meteorology, likewise, announces alarming climatic changes. These predict an unpromising future, due to the exhaustion of the fossil sources of energy, such as petrol or gas, the razing of biodiversity by cultural plantations, or the rise of the average temperature, among the acutest phenomena.

3. *Socio-economic*. The accumulation and enjoyment of all kinds of goods intensifies to an extreme the opposition between the rich and the poor. Evils such as famine, forced emigration and its concomitant uprooting, diseases that had almost disappeared such as tuberculosis, or pandemics such as AIDS, wreak havoc among the second population sector. The atrocious injustice this involves deepens this difference to rationally unconceivable limits.

4. *Historic*. Although there have been movements of freedom and hope that have promised development and peace, these have been rare and limited to a few privileged areas. Moreover, the development these movements achieved were at the expense of the Third World, accumulating a monstrous debt that supported a high living standard. This standard was not earned simply by the property taxes they paid in these developed countries, but by the hard work and ill fortune of millions of underprivileged in underdeveloped countries

5. *Regional*. Some tropical areas of the planet are singularly rich in fauna and flora along with fresh water reserves. For various reasons, like the watering of thirsty fields or the networks that supply gigantic cities, these are becoming an ever more and more valuable asset. Those rich in minerals essential for technological development or whose fertile prairies look uninhabited will be the next victims of an imperialism which sees in these territories the possibility of extending its *modus vivendi*, characterized by the squandering of consumer goods.

6. *Population*. These constants will inexorably lead to a definitive human division, no longer into classes or peoples, but into sub-species, where groups stigmatized by malnutrition, uprooting, anomy or wars, will descend to such intense biological levels that we will doubt their humanity. The majority of the population, well-fed, washed and clothed, however, will also sink to similar level, homogenized by a degrading publicity and increasing mediocrity of a world whose only values will be the material. Both the first and the second worlds will have an ever smaller elite class of individuals who are not leaders, but through brute power silence and imprison those capable of critically and creatively questioning the *status quo*. Another aspect is the world population in the coming decades. Will it stop or grow until it exhausts the nutritional possibilities of the planet, carrying its polluting factories to an extreme and spoiling its natural

landscapes? The trend will be reversed and even the rate of poor populations will descend, for the so-called “demographic bomb” has already exploded, impacting the collective conscience. It would not be too difficult for the multinational corporations that run the world to conceive some method of exterminating those “undesirable” sectors of the population that might threaten to ruin their projects if these are to take place on the basis of a stable quantity of inhabitants. To achieve this aim, they will need to take care lest the population pyramid should reverse and the world should become an old people’s home, which is the fate of opulent Europe should the reproductive tendencies now ruling the Old Continent remain stable.

7. *Moral.* Although human behavior depends on the economic or religious details of different epochs, there are certain tendencies where rationality, mutual respect and condolences over the suffering of others merge. A latent fear of retaliation (legal on earth, and not at all diffuse in heaven); the sequence of events tinged with blood through the decades of the preceding century in the name of the ruling ideologies; the selfish individualism that is the culmination of neo-liberalism that makes men stop caring, not only for their fellow beings living in poverty, but also for those next to them, who share their likes and even justify the abuses that they commit together against the less lucky. All these seem to have exacerbated mutual distrust and consigned amiable interpersonal treatment to oblivion.

8. *Theological.* God has gone missing in current western times at the end of the Modern Age, transforming its inhabitants into ghosts that roam between atheism and the various ecclesiastical bureaucracies which are parodies of void rites lacking significance. Added to the disenchantment produced by the progressive disappearance of mystery in a world unveiled by science and technology, this leads to blurring the overall sense of life. This seems to acquire the appearance of a courtesan flirting with nothingness, while its owners cling to a provisional nature now lived as definitive?

9. *Binding.* The norms of coexistence are forever altered by the fear of the alien and singularly distant that until now has characterized, the development of different peoples and ethnic groups. This projects terror upon the person that shares our seat on the train, our floor in a block of flats or lives in a neighbourhood enclosed by poverty (a slum) or by the wire fence of wealth (a walled compound). Spaces are darkened by the presence of terrorists, kidnappers, robbers, procurers, paedophiles and other varied types of delinquency whose actions steal the limelight of a press that enjoys the description of putrefaction. Distrust absorbs the psychic energy of the present, motivations that lead to criminal acts seem to increase in proportion to the increase of inequalities. This is because we are witnessing a change in our everyday rules which affect the moral codes.

10. *The Pleasurable.* The treatment of our own bodies has always gone astray when the golden mean between an extreme hedonism associated with a necessary metaphysical scepticism, and a similarly extreme lack of interest in the desires of the flesh typical of certain religious prerogatives,

has not been achieved. This gives rise to a progressive series of interdictions and taboos that have punished human existence to the point of turning every type of relation into a predicament. Successive technologies have released sexuality from its required (and relative) reproductive implications and medications have increased the interest in the beauty of life and lengthened life expectancy, thereby transforming death into an event more terrible than ever before. Day by day, medicines that help sustain these achievements alter the artificial boundaries established between illegal drugs and the psychotropic prescriptions that create similar dependence.

These phenomena are associated with an exaltation of youth because it is at this stage of life that the acme of corporal strength takes place. With this comes a concomitant liberalization of customs to give free vent to all the impulses associated with it. In the winding road of history, will we witness a denigration of these achievements or will they continue their way toward endless links between existence and physical pleasures?

There is tourism for all ages, namely, a diet fluctuating between delicious dishes; junk food and low-calorie diets; housing suited to any sort of climate; diversity of fashion and sport united in physical benefit and delight. Will we witness a denigration of these achievements or will they also continue their way toward endless links between existence and all types of pleasures?

11. *Mens sana in corpore libero; mens libera in corpore sano.* If there is a thread that, until now, has connected the entire human history it is the interminable struggle among economic, political and religious powers for control. Youthful bodies are the sacrifice of war; wandering minds are ravaged by ideology or advertising. The questions could increase indefinitely in a world inhabited by happy beings without signs of emotional fulfillment. Are impetuous spirits full of hatred for people wounded by misery? An historical time where the body-soul conjunction expresses a personal unity that is indissoluble by the acids of any state, corporation, religious or economic system which attempts to subjugate them does not seem possible given the conditions currently in force in the world. Could there be a future freed from these determining factors?

12. *Anthropological.* It is necessary to revise what we are as the unresolved bond—body / soul / spirit / matter—where an intentional pull attracts either one extreme or the other, upsetting the balance of the whole to favor one member. In the Middle Ages the soul was what really mattered and remained the only safe part of the whole; the body entered its diverse processes of decomposition, while simultaneously being made the object of derision and contempt. It was neglected and its deterioration was accepted with resignation. Today the body has not only recovered its ontological position in this dual hierarchy but, in addition, it is also treated in a better manner on account of the diverse hygienic and medical techniques that protect it, while there is almost collective disbelief in the existence of the soul. Thus, in contemporary times death turns out to be more sorrowful and

intolerable than in the days when eternity was a daily event because it leaves nothing but devastation in its path.

Will this dichotomy become more pronounced or, on the contrary, will a new binding connection allow humankind a metaphysical view in which neither despair nor a closed individual horizon will prevail?

13. *Educational*. The key to the destiny of a country or a given socio-cultural environment lies in the values that her citizens are taught from an early age. This depends on the coherent answer that her pedagogues give to the question, “how much of the accumulated knowledge of previous generations is worth teaching to those in our classrooms?” Current formal education faces the dangerous dilemma of, on the one hand, molding students without giving them the option to develop their own intellectual and creative potentialities or, on the other hand, turning out to be impotent as in Argentina, to overcome the influence of the media, *which do mold* their adherents into a multitude of adolescents turned into zombies. They are unable to develop their critical thought against the powers that brainwash them or to take delight in the panoramas offered to them by nature and culture—without which they could be transformed into beasts.

14. *Artistic*. The appreciation of art is beneficial to humankind however you look at it, as it brings out our creative faculty. This recalls how many times different sociological or philosophical doctrines have heralded the ‘death’ of art because the experimental daring in colors, shapes or sounds of some aesthetic current seemed to have reached the culmination of humankind’s creative possibilities. As a result, any subsequent artistic movement or individual artist can say “this single work of my creative genius signals the failure of a dictatorial and absurd plan!”

None of the manifestations that humankind proposes have been crushed up to now by other equally cultural efforts, not even those provided with some dangerous absolutist idea or sick with heralding ingenuity. Some are harmful; others transform men’s path into something worth being enjoyed or thought such as creative manifestations of the spirit.

What may probably take place, as in other historical periods, is the *stagnation* of creative activities through a fall into moulds pre-established by futile academicism or political-administrative impositions. They fear the leap to freedom at the base of any artistic work, which tends to be branded ‘degenerate’ or ‘immoral’ because the creative exaltation that it presupposes cannot be assimilated in any manner by reactionary thought.

What renewed appearance will poetic fantasies have and what new formal resources will future poets use to express the permanent human yearning for love, beauty and the unknown? What, we wonder, will become of the world with the disappearance of poetry? Though we cannot foretell the future but we are pessimistic, for if poetry were to vanish, that would foretell the coming of greater malice and violence.

15. *Telecommunications*. The requirements of military and economic operations led to the construction of roads in ancient times and relay teams would deliver mail to the necessary destination via carrier

pigeons. Today, trans-oceanic telephone cables and modern mobile-phone technology have revolutionized telecommunications. What steps need be taken by technology to obtain a *unified* device that could fulfill the roles of telephone, radio, television and camera and which incidentally could make it possible to locate its bearer at the ends of the earth in seconds. Thus, no one could evade the diverse controls on their existence which assure that they remain within immovable limits. The use of such instruments would be as compulsory as the carrying of identification is today.

16. *Town planning*. If cities are the pulse of human socialization and the most evident witness to its misfortune and greatness, the inquiry into their future development involves the whole community of architects, town planners and other related professions, because whatever we execute or plan inside their boundaries will prove beneficial or harmful for their future inhabitants. It is necessary to inquire into the trends and patterns of growth in the big cities in order to better predict the changing relations between urban and rural populations. The mega-cities seem not on the verge of collapse, as feared a couple of decades ago. Rationality will also quiet the heralds of disaster.

17. *Technical-scientific*. Science and technology, as history has proved over and over again, destroy the false neutrality as regards their application, either in the field of war or in everyday life. Countless scientists and technicians have been directly implicated in appalling actions and collective crimes, derived from their experiments and research, of this the arms race gives a reliable account which does not seem to be stopping. As a result, human existence is threatened with disastrous consequences.

But it is mainly in everyday life where the effects of the variable inventive capacity can be felt. There are applications generally positive for the individual, but others perturb health of mind under the false pretence of helping prevent certain illnesses. They expedite banking procedures or encourage increasingly greater dependencies.

18. *Consequential*. As a result of the opinions stated thus far, this factor appears to trigger the first and last value of existence: freedom that is never passive or derived from a gift from the gods who are always reluctant to let men carry out their independent acts stemming from critical and autonomous spiritual withdrawal, or from a society that is constantly anxious about securing control mechanisms. These will transform their members into poor imitations of themselves, unable to live life to the full on their own or within a regime of absolute equality with their fellow men, without their usually alienating guidelines.

Where will rebelliousness and protest lead in the time to come? How can this revolutionary energy be channeled in the right direction, that is to say, into the work of building dignified institutions and preventing these same institutions from suppressing all who support them? Or, on the contrary, is the time approaching when, due to the hygienic control of the mass media and the ideologies of fear and suspicion among other coercive orders, freedom will become possible only in the world of daydreamers?

19. *Investigatory*. Will there ever be a time in which certain *mechanisms* will be able to avoid anxiety regarding the future? This would not be to secure psycho-metaphysical relief, but because we will have come to the end of a human stage where freedom and hope combined believe that the flight from an alienating situation could be only outside present possibilities.

20. *Destiny of thought*. Venturing hypotheses about the development of ideas (not exclusively philosophical) in the fledgling 21<sup>st</sup> century entails a double danger. One is a futurology whose basis is settled on the present/precedent measuring stick of current development. Unable to rise over its immediate influences this leads to a view of the future that is 'extremely anchored' or 'caught' literally in the rules of those elaborate forms of thought. The other, on the contrary, is the risk of dispersion into a variety of possibilities adjoining fantasy. In other words, stating what we would like to happen, rather than predicting what could happen.

An analysis of everything that has been taking place in our extended current times leads us to the following question regarding the future of thought: will it become increasingly dependent (if it somehow intends to intersect with the socio-historic reality that generates it) on future economic, ecological, hygienic, technological determining factors, some predictable, others not? Here the parallel danger is that such heteronomy should become dominant, and that human autonomy would vanish. Included in this frame of increasing dependence, will philosophy in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was already consigned in the Middle Ages to the sad role of mere commentary on theology, be transformed again into a mere commentary, but this time on science? Will it keep the brilliance of its role as the liberator of the human conscience and praxis, or if lost, will this be assumed by an increasingly reckless fantasy, like the one that made the aesthetic and literary movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries possible?

21. *Justifying*. It is not a question of nostalgia that motivated the writing of these pages, that is, a traditionalist view laden with warmth and love of the past, based on the well-know adage, 'the past is always better'. This constitutes a retrograde attack on the historical process. Rather than lament over what time has snatched away from us, we should warn about the achievements attained at the expense of a great sacrifice of which the future may rob us, or the contrary:

22. *A first conclusion*. The history that we forge is *still* unforeseeable and fortuitous. This makes any methodology that attempts to preannounce it a mere riddle trimmed with scientific colouring. What will happen, in contrast, when the answer becomes an absolute guarantee of future events? Then, the future and its range of possibilities will simply have disappeared for ever. Accompanying its decease, the spirit of a mediocre present will stay the night, but this time without any options of change. Because, apparently, predestination is still far away and we have not reached the status of gods.

23. *Postface*. Is there, however, any room for hope in a world fenced in by violence? That has *always* been its fate and not a feature exclusive to the present, as the perennial heralds of disaster have *always* tried to make us see it. Moreover, does the word ‘hope’ possess in itself any positive meaning? Like the concept of ‘beauty’, it is highly abstract and requires filling in. If beauty needs the aesthetic object to make it full and thus particularize it, forcing it to a truly evident incarnation, then its intimate and strict particularity can work and be universalized, adopting the name ‘beautiful’. Something similar happens with hope: hope of what, we may ask? If we answer ‘hope in a better world’ we may still ask what the essential ingredients of a better world may be.

The opposition: ‘time of penury/time of happiness’ turns out to be false from any standpoint; poverty is always *real* for those who are starving and in marginalized conditions. Historically, it hides another fallacy, for the happiness of the people has *never* been universal—at least up to now—because the economic prosperity of some has *always* been achieved through the exploitation of others. What would have come of the great European Modern Age and of all the scientific progress of the 21<sup>st</sup> century without the dividends produced by slavery and colonialism. These plunged into the misfortune of those times the same substantial portion of humanity that still today suffers similar penury?

The same mechanical, instinctive, calculating and cold rationality that has up to now constituted the driving force of progress, but also of human discord, will relieve the energy worries of the world when it replaces the use of exhausted petrol by plant-derived substitutes. It may feed thousands of millions of beings on transgenic products, but it will not thus mitigate the sorrows of a violent and always dissatisfied humankind.

24. *A second conclusion*. I have termed my position pessimistic/optimism, because I do not discern in the horizon any definitive catastrophe capable of endangering the human species. The *modus vivendi* might change, the species may lose or gain rights, and may inflict either a smaller or larger amount of pain on itself, but it will *always* keep going. The species has survived wars and other similar calamities; this constitutes the *optimistic* half of the equation. Likewise, it will *never* manage to change its tendency to indifference, which is why I am also *pessimistic*, since such indifference of humanity toward humanity itself is the cause of its own unhappiness as a species.

## CHAPTER IV

# RATIONALITY AND DIALOGUE

RICARDO ÁLVAREZ

### INTRODUCTION

European rationality took shape as it was gradually separated from a mono-logical and an oracular structured poetic discourse, and from the original *mythós*. In general, this was based on two basic notions: 1) truth can be found in the consensus reached through the arguments presented in a dialogue; but, at the same time 2) argumentation is organized according to the forensic discussion model. These two notions play a particular role in the philosophical discourse from Plato and Aristotle to our days. This discourse is characterized by a peculiar oscillation between consensual and definitively agonistic aspects. That is to say, dialogue is a combination of a vocation to reach an inter-subjective agreement and a trend to deploy an eristic strategy. When the eristic trend surrenders—though only partially—to that vocation to agreement, discourse exercises a mild criticism which desires only to amend, adjust and complete their speakers' viewpoints. The intention and expectation fills discourse with tension and structures it. Instead, when the inclination to generate consensus gives way to the impulse to controversy, there will be a veritable 'dialogue of the deaf', since the demand to refute overwhelms that of understanding. The intention to prevail over the other, now no longer understood as a dialogical partner but as an opponent, appears then as a veritable manifestation of the will of power.

These two principles are, indeed, unrelinquishing and, at the same time, incompatible. In fact, the first principle gave way historically to the second more frequently than the reverse; consequently, Western reason consolidated its excluding and eristic character, although it desired to formally keep its dialogical aspect in its demand for consensus—as in the Platonic method, the scholastic discourse, and finally in the different dialectic modes. The dialogical does not always seek to generate consensus; usually it takes the shape of mere discussion. The latest attempt to recover the dimension of dialogue from the consensual tradition seems to have occurred in Habermas' theory of communicative action. In this, however, the search for consensus is limited to the argumentative restoration of an original state and, thus, consensus is *a priori* restricted to those sharing the same 'life world'. This world is, so to speak, *ours*. The problem of the other who does not share our own world of appraisals and experiences stands obstinately before that state of affairs.

But how has the other become a problem? Which dialogue may be brought forth today to the Western monologue in the midst of globalization?

Can we go on writing philosophy books, for example, without voluntarily or involuntarily reinforcing a type of discourse forged specifically for domination? It is worth remembering in this respect that while in monologue and in polemic dialogue the most important thing is to speak, to persuade, to impose and refute, while in conversational dialogue the main thing is to listen, to propose and to ask. In the former, the other is only expected to listen and surrender; in the latter, rather, the other is required to complete the agreement. But are we still capable of listening? Are we still capable of moving from listening to genuine dialogue?

These notions, which are implied in the double aspiration of universality and critical strictness, natural to the philosophical discourse, must be the subject of reexamination and reflection. This task, which we have just discerned, is the one that must be developed if we are to reach an understanding of the dialogue that is to be maintained.

### **FROM THALES TO SOCRATES AND PLATO**

First and foremost, it is necessary to situate the historical time in which the type of discourse, which today we call ‘philosophical’, started to take shape. In its beginnings in Ionia, philosophy was mixed with the wisdom tradition. It should be noted, in this connection, that the first known philosopher, Thales of Miletus, was precisely one of the wise men of ancient Greece. His maxims were aimed not at presenting arguments or at persuading, but only at conveying knowledge. If Anaximander was Thale’s disciple, as is said, it must be acknowledged that he introduced two important novelties: intellectual dissidence and prose. Afterwards, Parmenides in Elea, although faithful to the Homeric hexameter, gives birth to argumentation; however, he presents his doctrine as something revealed by ‘the Goddess’, and claims that his discourse is a ‘sacred myth’. Heraclites, in turn, ushers in a common *lógos* which is, nonetheless, expressed *oracularly* ‘as the god which is in Delphi’, that does not speak or remain silent, but that ‘points out’. Each speaker’s cosmic *lógos* is ‘the only wise thing’ and entails seeing the one in everything, and everything in the one. With this, any reality is conceived as a tension of contraries. Vis-à-vis this claim, all that can be done is to accept and understand. Regardless of his genius, the philosopher puts himself in the place of the truth and from there the precious drops of his wisdom emerge.

But the Median Wars brought about great social changes, and the Greek *pólis* was not indifferent to these. In fact, the *pólis* became democratic among the free Greek men, and the *ágora* was transformed into the place where power was distributed and circulated under the possibilities and limitations of discourse. Suitable and efficient management of discourse entailed an economy of political power. Public discourse became the measure of all things. This circumstance gave rise to the surge of teachers of rhetoric and eloquence. Among these, some stood out as veritable wise men because they knew how to discover, examine and highlight multiple

viewpoints in any specific case. For this reason, they were called ‘sophists’ and expressed, as nobody else could, just the right words to capture special and historic moments. They were peripatetic teachers and professionals who trained their students to defend their opinions, whatever they might be.

Socrates and Plato challenged three features of the sophists: 1) their statelessness, 2) their profit motive, and 3) the fact that they made oratory not contingent on the search for truth. It was Socrates who placed dialogue into an efficient discourse, and considered that truth came precisely from discourse. When speakers did not reach agreement, they could be sure of having arrived at something truthful, wherein something should become manifest not as an emotion or as a feeling, but as a concept. The search for truth in Socrates is always the search of a conceptual definition—not any definition, but one that sheds light on the practical and virtuous life. Socrates immersed himself in dialogue without knowing where it was going to lead him. Socrates adopted the famous motto “I only know that I know nothing”. If we were to heed the testimony of the Platonic Symposium, this should be completed, suggestively by “except that which pertains to love.”

This showed a hesitancy to enter a dialogue aimed solely at persuading and imparting doctrine and is the main feature that distinguishes the Socratic/Platonic discourse from that of the sophists.

Socratic dialogue is also quite different from Parmenides’ ‘sacred myth’ or from Heraclites’ oracle. Socrates calls for dialogue from a questioning that admits his own ignorance. Much has been said about Socrates’ irony and his art of entangling the other dialogue party in that party’s own contradictions. Little has been noted about the propaedeutic aspect of that technique, which merely points to making the other realize his own ignorance. Even less has it been understood that this propaedeutic was necessary exactly as long as both speakers of the Socratic dialogue had abandoned all intention of defeating the other, and looked rather to answer the respective question together. If there is one irony in these dialogues, it lies precisely in that once and again the dialogue party does not take Socrates’ declaration of ignorance seriously and considers that declaration as a strategic resource to hide and carefully keep his wisdom secret. For this reason, he is enraged and resents how Socrates forever asks difficult and misleading questions and does not decide, once and for all, to impart his doctrine so that it can be discussed openly. Why does he conceal his position in long interrogatories?

The answer here is that Socrates does not want to have a doctrine or a personal opinion that comes apart from, or outside of, the dialogue itself. Paradoxically, he believes that all knowledge dwells in a more radical ignorance. He is not avaricious with his teachings, but he has rejected all dogmatism. Teaching means showing, making the others see what is shown to both participants in the dialogue. This does not mean, on the contrary, to say or announce what is to be seen; that is, a kind of speech where one will only speak and the other will only listen. In this sense, no one teaches more than Socrates; and not only through his dialogues but, more simply, through

his attitudes. The greatest Socratic teaching lies, therefore, in the circumstance of his death that affected Plato so much.

In the hands of Plato, Socratic dialogue suffered a decisive displacement. In the first place, the fortuitous and arbitrary feature of the dialogue parties' witticisms disappeared. The mature Platonic dialogues develop one topic, theatrically and beautifully, so that the different aspects of the problem addressed are distributed among the different characters, but the (justified) feeling of the reader is that the answers have been established beforehand. As lucidly pointed out by Hegel, in his *Lessons on the History of Philosophy*, "The characters are here ... puppets in a dialogue ... because the author makes the characters answer as he thinks they should answer. And the questions are usually framed in such a sharp tone, so harsh, that they can be answered only in very simple terms". Because Plato, unlike his teacher, does not believe he does not know anything, his theory of reminiscence (*anamnesis*) suggests that truth does not arise from consensus but from inner search. There can be but one truth: that which appears as self-evident to the one who ascends in the contemplation of ideas. Here, Plato's truth is the only one.

#### **ARISTOTLE, READER OF HERACLITUS: THE PROPOSITIONAL SPEECH**

This feature, both eristic and dogmatic is repeated in Aristotle. We know that he wrote dialogues in Plato's style, but these have not reached us. We do have, however, his class notes, veritable treatises in which Aristotle, as the one who knows, imparts his teachings. This Aristotelian discourse is reinforced by the conception that Aristotle had of language. We can find this conception explicitly, on the one hand, in his *Péri Hermenéias*, and, on the other hand, in his logical studies (the set of which is the so-called *Organon*), although his *Rhetoric* and his *Poetics* are also important in this respect. For Aristotle, language serves several purposes, but one of them is central: the descriptive-informative purpose (the feature he called *apófansis*). According to this characterization, truth is not in things but in propositions; and, in fact, truth is defined as a propositional property. A proposition is an assertion that must be either true or false, because it entails saying something about something else, so that if what is said coincides with that about which this is said, the proposition must be true and, if not, false. Truth is, therefore, correspondence between one specified propositional content and reality. This theory of correspondence, so successful in Western thought, has some basic problems: 1) propositional correspondence cannot be established, in turn, by only one proposition, and its truth by another one, and so on. 2) It is not easy to see that there may be an unmistakable criterion to tell when a proposition conforms; that is, when it is true. 3) The importance given to the logical principles and the syllogistic chain as a privileged mode of reasoning ends up confining truth to the place of consistency (therefore, its deployment is effective for

demonstration and deduction, but not for discovery). 4) Induction is suspected of being usable only with great precaution and distrust. 5) Aristotle's theory of truth entails, to a certain extent, an extra-propositional knowledge (and, here, this means extra-linguistic) of reality. But such reality is, in fact, thought according to the doctrine of the categories, which, however, relies on the propositional structure. Just as there is a subject of which different things are predicated in propositions so that the subject bears all its predicates, in particular things that make up the real thing there is equally a substance that bears all its accidents. In this respect, note that the verb *catégoréin*, from which the noun 'category' derives, means precisely 'to predicate'; therefore, the categories are all the possible predications. Thus begins a vicious circle that is at the basis of all metaphysical problems. 6) Aristotle does not ignore the other functions of language (to pray, plead, command, prophesy, praise, express emotions, desires or feelings, etc.), but he leaves them definitely aside; for him, speaking is to say something. Particularly, he pays no attention to the fact that speaking is to speak to someone and, sometimes, with someone. Aristotle's dialogue is self-contained; it does not require the others' consensus to work; it requires only the others' surrender. Truth is not in the agreement established between dialogical parties, but in the logical consistency and in conformity with a reality that cannot be contradictory (because propositional language cannot be so). This is the reason why Aristotle becomes so angry in his *Metaphysics* with Heraclitus. It would be interesting to delve deeper into the reasons for that anger, as it would reveal some features of this rigorous and dominant discourse, which expels as contradictory (that is, absurd) any truth that is not its own.

Heraclitus had emphasized that all reality consists in a continuous transformation and tension of contraries. The most important thing in Aristotle's lack of understanding of Heraclitus is, precisely, the bewilderment and scandal caused in Aristotle by the theory of the unity of contraries. For him, it is "impossible that something may be and may not be at the same time; and, for this reason, we have shown that this is the most truthful of all principles", according to his *Metaphysics* III, 4. This privileged consideration of the so called "principle of (non) contradiction" is what underlies the repulsion expressed by Aristotle of the coincidence of contraries argued by Heraclitus. Is such condemnation fair? Does Aristotle fully understand Heraclitus' doctrine? Let us express here an impertinent assessment: perhaps Aristotle did not care to be fair to or understand Heraclitus. In fact, on a certain occasion, Aristotle mistook him for Empedocles; and we could even suspect that even this confusion is spiteful. For Aristotle, Heraclitus, more than a thinker to be analyzed, is an adversary to be refuted in the briefest and most final manner possible. This is not only because he refutes the generalization of the "truest of all principles," but because his opinion that any entity exists and is what it is only by virtue of the presence of men (who go down to the same and different rivers), seems to harbor Protagoras' relativist speculation, for whom "man is the measure

of all things”. Of course, this does not lead Heraclitus to any relativism whatsoever. In fact, in fragment B 89, transmitted by Plutarch, we read: “Heraclitus says that the awakened ones have a single world in common; those who are asleep, instead, each turns to a particular world”.

Aristotle’s condemnation of Heraclitus is ultimately due to the irreconcilable notions of language maintained by each of them. For Heraclitus, the exemplary model in this respect is the oracle that “either says or hides, but only points out” (B 93). Its language must be understood, therefore, as an expression of that oracular discourse, of high metaphorical value, which only seeks to point out what is hidden to one’s everyday experience in order to awaken one to a higher (or deeper) experience. Let us remember Wittgenstein’s differentiation between showing and saying, defended in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and let us say that Heraclitus’ discourse does not *say*, but *shows*, while Aristotle’s discourse is aimed at being capable, as such, of *saying*.

In effect, Aristotle seeks to establish a type of language different from both poetry and prayer; that is, a type of informative discourse, confined to be either false or true—a tool free from the ambiguity of empirical knowledge. That is, it brings to our presence; it puts us in front of its pro-positions (that is, places before us), some fact or state of affairs. In this manner, this act of saying expresses things as they are and, therefore, this act of saying uncovers things, and makes them available for our consideration. The act of saying expresses things differently from what they are and, then, hides them. This uncovering and hiding are its intimate possibilities, which are classified as propositional truth or falsity. This will lead us to a criterion that distinguishes one from the other. This criterion may be thought of as verification or match; that is, as correspondence (verifiable extra-linguistically) between what is said and the act of saying. In this, we have precisely the birth of scientific discourse as an essential instrument of scientific knowledge. But this instrument must be controlled, ordered and tamed in order to ensure its efficiency. This is achieved through the rigorous implementation of a series of rules and principles: Logic. Heidegger has said that the current technical era is the consequence and culmination of metaphysics (this being understood as the deployment of a necessary time in the Western history of being). But we could also say that technical era is not the closure of the movement started by Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (since, as observed by Duns Scotus, technology is still one kind of physics) but the closure of the movement started with Aristotle’s *Péri Hereméias* and his *Logic*, that is to say, with the project of *lógos* and, consequently, of the world thereby objectified. In this project, *lógos* (understood as a tool at the service of a universal will for domination) is *only* talked about by man, and is no longer in man or for man, as it was for Heraclitus

Certainly, Aristotle does not fall into any naïve identification of significant discourse and propositional discourse. In *Péri Hereméias*, he points out that: “Any discourse is significant. . .but not all discourse is

propositional; only that in which something true or something false is said, which is not the case in all instances; for example, prayer is a kind of discourse, but it is neither true nor false". However, he insists on interpreting Heraclitus' discourse as propositional. The bewilderment and scandal that this situation causes in him is apparent. To his eyes, this kind of discourse, which says that all things are and are not, "seems to turn everything true" (*Metaph.*, 1012a: 24) And if we compare his different judgments on this doctrine (especially *Metaph.*, 1005b23, 1062a30 and 1063b25), the following conclusions can be drawn: 1) Heraclitus did not say that everything is and is not; there are individuals who believe he said so; 2) if Heraclitus said so, he did not know what he was saying; he may have accepted that opinion from other individuals; 3) if that was his actual opinion, then he was lying. In short: he cannot have thought so, or, at least, Aristotle was not ready to admit it.

At most, Aristotle comes round and admits to the doctrine of the contraries in a sole and particular aspect, that is, as long as it expresses fight (*pólemos*) and disagreement (*éris*) as the origin of everything. Thus, he cites Heraclitus in *Ethics to Nicomachus* (IX, 2, 1155b14): "That which opposes agrees, and from disagreeing elements the most beautiful harmony (arises), and everything is created by disagreement". And in *Ethics to Eudemus* [VII, 1, 1235a25], he points out that: "Heraclitus censures the poet, who said: '*I wish disagreement between gods and men disappeared!*'" [Homer: *Iliad*, XVIII, 107]. Because there would be no harmony if there wasn't low pitch and high pitch, or animals if there weren't male and female, which are mutually opposed". In fact, Heraclitus is extreme in his censure of Homer, declaring him "worthy of being expelled from the contests, and beaten", as stated in paragraph B 42 (cited by Diogenes Laertius), because there would not be contests if disagreement disappeared.

What must be understood here is how Aristotle's consideration of Heraclitus, as well as the consideration of the previous philosophers, is definitely controversial. Aristotle includes in his *Metaphysics* the first history of philosophy, but writes those pages only to refute opinions which are different from his own, and, therefore, to make himself clearer. The other philosophers are, for him, mere predecessors or adversaries. In either case, it is acceptable for him to misrepresent their ideas in order to more easily and thoroughly refute them. In this way, he places himself in the privileged place of having real knowledge.

The development of philosophy, from that time to our day, has made us accustomed to that gesture which attacks the others' opinions as if we were ruthless judges, and defends our own ideas as if we were resourceful lawyers.

### **REASON IN THE SO CALLED "MIDDLE AGES"**

Regarding the "Middle Ages" we should take as a starting point, as suggested by Alain de Libera, that there is no such thing as the Middle Ages

proper. More than a subject of study, it is a construction that is not always justified. What fully characterizes it is the conviction that reason and faith cannot lead to different places. It is assumed here that no argument can lead one away from what is known by revelation. And revelation is always ours. Christian faith is affirmed as opposed to the gentiles (pagans, Stoics, neo-Platonics, among others), the Jewish faith, the Islamic faith, and the multiple heresies. Also, each of these systems of beliefs is opposed to all the others. The revealed truth is so apparent—as thought by any follower of any belief—that those who do not accept it must be blind or lying, or denying it because of sheer stubbornness and lack of good will. In this manner, speaking meant placing oneself not only in the alleged place of knowledge, but also in the (even more doubtful) place of the pure, or those who are “pleasing in God’s eyes”.

However, this era—so strongly conditioned and restricted regarding its possibilities for open dialogue—gave rise to an extremely sophisticated mode of exposition. This began from a plurality of opinions: the scholastic method, perfected by St. Thomas Aquinas. In this discourse to defend a particular opinion it was submitted for debate. The arguments for and against were stated, and the matter was not considered solved until a full account of these arguments had been provided. It was necessary to refute each opposed argument and provide grounds for an alternate position. Truth had to arise from that contest, as if it was a knightly tournament. Certainly, threatened by the risk of being convicted of heresy, the scholastic discourse ended up being so concerned with accepted orthodoxy that the truth was not always able to unfold fully. A polyphonic conception of reason opened, but it was primarily polemic. The arguments were *against*, not *with*. And all this led to introducing endless cues, distinctions and justifications, quoting as support for each argumentative step, respected authors or books considered sacred. Though this flow of speech reached huge speculative heights, it was doomed to agonize between sterile lengthy explanations because (among other reasons) of its inability to overcome the agonistic territory, ultimately forbidden to the other as a possibility of fertile and loving dialogue. This led to intolerance, persecution, lack of dialogue and an incapacity to reach consensus.

### FROM “I THINK” TO ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE

With the Cartesian *cogito*, subjectivity came to the forefront of reflection. Truth was defined in terms of *clear* and *distinct* ideas in the mind of the individual subject, which meant relinquishing attempts to ground truth inter-subjectively. In fact, dialogue with the *other* not only no longer appeared necessary to the self-conscious and self-referred individual in his quest for truth, but might even appear to hamper the quest for truth. The *other* became a problem. The Cartesian method allowed any man meditating alone—in his bedroom close to the fireplace—to gain access to certitude. Dialogue did not seem to be necessary.

In fact, any reader of the *Discourse on Method* soon grasps that the effort is not aimed at reaching the truth but, rather, to ensure it. The Cartesian doubt entails the need for a subjective certitude, and it walks towards that certitude. But this demand for certitude leaves the *cogito* enclosed in itself, playing with its representations. It is not, therefore, unusual that subsequent to Descartes, thought has generally lacked the possibility of establishing enriching dialogues. However, a question arises here concerning the difference between Descartes himself, and the Cartesians for in the sixth part of its *Discourse*, he called for the joint search for the truth:

. . . invite all good spirits to try to go forward [in the research undertaken], thus contributing, each of them, according to their inclination and power, to the experiences that should be made and also communicating to the public all the things learned so that, the last ones starting from the place where the predecessors have finished, and thus joining the lives and work of many, all of us could go much farther than each of them alone could arrive.

If we desire to verify to which point that ideal of collective and dialogical truth search was far from materializing, we can read Kant's bitter complaint in the prologue of a certain text of his dating back to 1763, entitled *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*, in which he condemns certain readers who:

. . . incapable of contemplating the big picture of a link, subtly look at the small pieces, without being concerned about the fact that, if something deserved reproach, that reproach may also affect the value of the whole and some improvements in individual pieces cannot affirm a main plan which is only partly defective; those who are only concerned about transforming in ruins any construction just commenced could be feared by virtue of their number, but their judgments as regards the decision on the actual value has little significance to down-to-earth people.

If philosophical modernity had been born from the Cartesian *cogito*, it was reasonable for the individual's identity to appear self-grounded. If such self-certainty was challenged, there seemed to be no other alternative than to consider identity as an illusionary construction; that is, as a collection of habits. Only with Hegel's dialectics does an innovative horizon open up. For Hegel, identity is not a mere illusion or an original piece of information, but self-consciousness becomes identity through the recognition of the *others*. Any self-consciousness has to have the ambition to be recognized. But this recognition is essentially conflictive: identity is

gained in a fight to death for recognition. This is undoubtedly true, but it is only half of the truth. It is true that identity is affirmed in the others' recognition and that this recognition must generally be gained. But it is also true that not all recognition is conflictive. The young man gains his identity by opposing and differentiating himself from his mother and father figures, by rejecting their values and opinions, by restating their orders. But the result of this "death of the father", necessary for the growth of each individual, is not the mere inversion of domination roles or the final abandonment of these figures which ruled his childhood years. Maturity also requires a time of reconciliation or, in other words, the symbolic re-birth of such figures. Also, there is recognition in the loving look of the others, in the respect received gratuitously (not only arduously gained in a "fight to death") and, after all, in the pure and simple affection or *sympathía* with which each individual relates to his peers. However, the dialectic thought cannot see in the affirmative movements anything other than excuses to fix the stormy flow of reality. Movements rely on the negative, and everything is movement.

Hegel's dialectic, superbly exemplified in the master-and-slave game, as shown in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, suitably states that identity depends on the others' recognition, but understands this desired recognition as a mere result of the conflict. For this reason, in its unfolding, Hegel's philosophy shows a polyphonic (and even symphonic) amplitude, but whose different voices always fight among themselves to reach syntheses which include and deny them. Nothing could prevent readers from feeling that, behind each of those voices, there is only one score written by only one composer. The dialectic method represents the most sophisticated attempt on the part of Western thought to hide the essentially isolated and monological character of its reflection. The eristic element here has been internalized and systematized; all previous thought of past eras are but a moment of the *one* Reason's self-unfolding, which knows that it is a part of this unfolding. Also, in the materialistic version, dialectic leads to a warlike vision of thinking—against ideology, capitalism, idealism, exploitation, bourgeoisie, etc. This is such a strong characteristic in the thought of Marx, for instance, that any alteration leads him only into utopia, as we see in parts of the *The German Ideology*.

## **SINCE THE LINGUISTIC TURN**

The twentieth century has imposed upon philosophical reflection the linguistic turn and, within this, especially, the pragmatic turn. In fact, Humboldt already said that each language is a conception of the world; that is, it implies a specified pre-understanding of reality. For this reason, we say that more than speaking about a language, it is the language that speaks to us because it determines what can be said and thought. The importance of the linguistic turn is such that Karl-Otto Apel does not hesitate to speak about a transformation of philosophy. This transformation consists in

attributing to language the transcendental role traditionally assigned to consciousness. In this manner, language establishes, according to its syntactic structure and its semantic and pragmatic uses, what can be known and thought. It is, actually, the characteristic of possible being. This transcendental character of language has led some to speak about its “unsurpassability”; though this may be an exaggeration, because beyond language are action, sensation and emotion, and in their presence we are frequently lost for words. Should this not be the case, we could well defend the wish to know, think and express rigorously and exactly everything we do, feel and experience. But a simple accidental hit with a hammer on a finger goes beyond anything I can say about it. I cannot communicate what a color is in my visual field to a person born blind. I cannot explain what I feel when I reach an orgasm or simply what it means to be happy or sad. In my relationship with the others I can present arguments and, thus, tend to a possible rational consensus, but some of those others may always respond by hitting me on the head. Can somebody who is in love rigorously describe their experience?

That we may reject the purported unsurpassability of language, considering it excessive, does not imply that its transcendence must also be denied. Our ways of speaking make up ways of thinking and, therefore, possible ways of organizing our extra-linguistic experiences. The pain on a finger differs from one culture to the other, from one era to the other, and from one individual to the other. The experience of being in love is strongly contingent on values and assumptions absolutely dependent on history and the symbolic expectations built by the various human groups. A punch in the face or the challenging gesture with which another individual may respond to my argument is also an instance of language, because it does not lack meaning. Of course, in that case, a notion of language including gestures and attitudes, among others, would perhaps expand too much. Everything would, then, be language; and, thus, the transcendent-*ality* of language would be a banal expression.

I surmise that what actually happens is that language arises from human life (that is to say, from interaction among persons, so that, as the late Wittgenstein suggested, speaking about a language is ultimately to speak about a way of life), conditions it and feeds it, for the simple reason that language structures life. Without linguistic mediation there is no concept, and without concepts nothing can be thought. The red color, the orgasm, the explosion of violence, falling in love or the hit of the hammer on the finger are not linguistic in themselves but can only be thought of through linguistic mediation. Linguistic mediation, by structuring them in one way or another (always with some ambiguity, with some degree of confusion and imprecision), modifies their sheer perception because linguistic mediation includes them in the symbolic universe which forms us. In other words, everything is mediated (for this reason, language is transcendental) but not everything is mediation, (for this reason, language is not unsurpassable). One example: a prick (suffered upon a vaccine

injection, for example) can be a transient tolerable nuisance (if I understand its meaning) or sheer aggression that I suffer terrified, as pure pain (if I am unable to make it meaningful). Another example: one smell can be associated with a pleasurable or terrible sensation (if, for example, I am about to be executed in a gas chamber). Now, if thought (and even the unconscious, according to Lacan) is structured linguistically, it is worth remembering that language is social and that it is the expression of transcendental inter-subjectivity from which our subjectivity emerges, so to speak, as self-consciousness. For this reason, Levinas and Ricoeur can say that self-understanding demands the mediation of the other.

Since all linguistic facts are seen as modes of social interaction, rejection of any mono-logical conception of language is inevitable. To characterize a linguistic fact, then, is to analyze a way of life. This is the profound meaning of the evolution of Wittgenstein's philosophy, from the *Tractatus* to the *Philosophical Investigations*. There is no private language; language is a practice occurring in that space in which men cohabit. And it is not a trivial or superfluous practice, because language makes them subjects. In fact, the world is also the result of that practice. This is what Husserl points out in his late writings when he states that, ultimately, transcendental subjectivity is transcendental intersubjectivity because that intersubjectivity operates solely linguistically. And, as a language, it occurs as itself in the modes (pointed out by Heidegger in *Being and Time*) of speaking, being quiet and listening; the latter being the formulation for the former two.

It is necessary to say, then, not only that 1) language makes the world and makes us as individuals, and 2) language is an intersubjective practice, but also that 3) as long as the most intimate being of man is a being-with, itself capable of listening and, for this reason, of speaking or of being quiet, truth does not happen in the "inside" of a subjectivity (which, after all, is subject to the social practices) but in the "between" of the dialoguing relationship. It is this "between" which should be characterized as the "life world". In fact, there is no isolated person (not even if one is alone because, in such a case, the others are not there, and this means that they are present for him as absent); and for this reason there is no private truth either. Even if I defend "my" truth in relation to others, my truth is made up in such comparison and discussion (and, therefore, intersubjectively). Our subjectivities and our world are shaped in dialogue. And such dialogue, from an analytic viewpoint, may validly point to the domination of one's subjectivity by another, or to communication between them. Perhaps both intentions are always present in any dialogical situation, with each prevailing at different times.

In this respect, Jürgen Habermas wrote in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, of a strategic rationality, on the one hand, and a communicative rationality, on the other, and drew a distinction between them. In fact, it could be said that strategic reason falls into what we have called the agonistic aspect of discourse, and that communicative reason

expresses its consensual aspect. But while we speak here of different aspects that exist together in the same discourse—perhaps one of them with greater or lesser prevalence than the other—Habermas seems to characterize two different discourse modes. From this dichotomy, he has developed an interesting theory of argumentation according to which argumentation, when not used as a simple manner of persuading or convincing for purely strategic or egotistic aims, represents the attempt to restore a lost consensus. For Habermas, communicative action entails the aspiration of a counterfactual universal consensus.

Nevertheless, the consensual trend whose outline we see in Habermas' philosophy has a powerful limitation in the maintenance of an original consensus which seeks to be regained, because this restricts the effectiveness of the aspiration of such consensus to those who share a single "life world". Only among us (the educated Western Europeans), Habermas seems to say, can there be consensus. This means to exclude the others from dialogue; that is, those who are alien to our "life world". Such exclusion dangerously goes against the correspondence of a theoretical statement which is aimed at offering a model for conflict resolution. It would turn out to be that we could solve conflicts argumentatively only among us; whereas if the conflict appeared with others, the resolution should be made extra-discursively, that is, through force. Thus, the main question is displaced: the problem is not as much the mechanism put in place to reach consensus between dialogical parties but, rather, the conditions for entering dialogue. In other words: it is not so much a matter of how we can reach agreement, but rather to know how we can be accepted as valid dialogue parties. The political consequences of this statement are that the possibilities of dialogue in search of the generation of consensus would seem to be, in principle, non-existent among different civilizations. Therefore, the problem is that the groups excluded from discussion would be obliged to make themselves heard, in one way or another, of which terrorism is one. The consequences (obviously, involuntary) of Habermas' theory show this to be inevitable. I am not suggesting that Habermas is spitefully throwing us into a world that indulges in the law of the strongest, but on his view, if communicative action is to be efficient it must entail a common world of values on whose original consensus different disagreements arise which rational argumentation seeks to overcome. This way of presenting things excludes from communicative action those who do not share such a common world of values and throws them into purely strategic action or, even worse, into violence. Moreover, Habermas' theory of communicative action may have neglected the fact that behind any argumentative discourse (that is, of all saying and silencing) is listening: without listening there is no communicative action. It may be necessary to advance the possibility of a philosophy with bigger ears.

## CONVERSATION

Language is said in us although we are not aware of that. We are talked about; in other words, we are always already in the *lógos*. But the *lógos* is never an isolated, self-sufficient, Cartesian individual. The *lógos* always places us, as Heraclitus taught, in the ordinary, in *tò koinón*; where the essence of communication lives: in its *koinonía*, that is, in the establishment of our mutual community. It is not, therefore, that this community is a pre-condition to *lógos*. Rather, *lógos* constitutes any community and, at the same time, the community conditions *lógos*. It is not a linear and unidirectional causality: *lógos* communicates, that is, it produces a community or “worlds of life,” which reverts on *lógos* and on the other social practices, and so on. In this manner, the most closed subjectivity becomes, thanks to *lógos*, intersubjectivity, and *lógos* shows itself as dialogue: we *are*, then, dialogue. The main forms of dialogue are discussion and conversation. Discussion points to the affirmation of one’s own viewpoint and the refutation of all those opposed to it. Its natural territory is conflict. And, therefore, it is present in the agonistic aspect of the philosophical discourse, which, of course, cannot be done without, but which does not exhaust its possibilities. Conversation, on the other hand, opens the consensual aspect of dialogue. In fact, it would be more suitable to speak here of a “conversational” aspect, because the term “consensual” suggests that consensus must be reached at any cost, while, sometimes, it is only a matter of assuming differences in a framework of respect. Dissent may also be *good* dissent. Communication does not entail, for example, that an atheist and a believer must necessarily agree in their disposition towards faith. The difficulty (sometimes, insurmountable) in reaching agreement on aesthetical or ethical topics does not always imply an intolerable failure of the dialogue parties involved. The different directions which each of them intends for their personal lives do not mean a failure of human reason by virtue of its own multiplicity. The complex and powerful area of affection is not subject to rational agreements: lovers, for example, do not need to reach consensus about the sense of their feelings, although, perhaps, it may actually be convenient to speak (and listen) about these. But, in this as in the other cases mentioned, reason does not argumentatively seek to establish (or reestablish) consensus, but merely conversation. The atheist and the believer may talk about their agreements and differences just as, in general, all men can talk about their ethical and aesthetical outlooks, or about their personal goals, or about their affections. It does not matter that no consensus may be reached if conversation can take place freely and sincerely.

But what is conversation? To begin with, “conversation” comes from Latin: “*conversatio*”, which takes us to the verb “*verso*”: to spin, to go round something, to ramble, to take a walk. It is, therefore, a verb of movement. There is a *dýnamis* going on here, but not a *télos*. It is a movement without a pre-specified purpose. It is not the walk towards an end but a rambling. The prefix “*con*” (“with”) indicates, also, accompanying. It

is two people going around something. That something is the topic of the conversation. There are two speakers that “converse” about it. Conversation joins them in this movement that is like a dance. It joins them, making them one. Such a union is called in Greek by the sacred name of *Eros*. Any conversation is, therefore, erotic. And this is our first assertion: to say that any conversation is erotic implies that it is not eristic. An eristic discussion is mere dispute, not a conversation, although in any conversation, of course, something may be discussed. In conversation there is a loving act of taking into account the co-dialogist. One walks with the co-dialogist, not against him or her. For this reason, the image of dance is illustrative. However, again, this does not exclude the existence of dissent or confrontation. Now, any conversation confronts and, at the same time, links, unites, binds; conversation establishes a universe from diversity; conversation gives rise to consensus. In this aspect, conversation looks like argumentation.

However, conversation is not argumentation, even when it may include argumentation. This is our second assertion. Certainly, argumentation purports also to give rise to consensus which it seeks to reestablish upon verifying its interruption. Argumentation appears, in effect, upon the loss of consensus and seeks agreement by persuasion. Conversation, instead, does not seem to seek to reestablish anything or entail an original lost consensus; rather, conversation seeks to establish original agreements; that is, to give birth to agreements from difference itself.

It has been established, as mentioned above, the convenience of considering two types of argumentation: strategic and communicative. The first one undertakes discussion with the aim of imposing an opinion. It seeks consensus, then, for one’s own opinion: it does not hesitate to manipulate or introduce sophistic resources. The second one, on the other hand, according to Habermas, seeks a consensus for the most rational opinion and rejects strategic tricks. In either case, however, argumentation is always the fight of arguments. It is always *pólemos*: war; hence “polemic”. For this reason, polemic is featured by a clear agonistic spirit. The polemicists intend to make their truths succeed. Conversation, instead, seeks to give birth to truth in dialogue itself. Although it may exclude argumentation, it does not purport to impose a prior opinion—neither by means of manipulation nor by means of rational polemic.

Conversation’s agreement admits of dissent at the center itself of consensus and vice versa. The one who converses constructs *with* something and not against something. In this regard, conversation represents the purest type of dialogue; so pure, certainly, that even Plato does not hesitate, in his *Theaetetus*, in identifying his own thinking with a silent conversation which the mind has with itself: “when the mind thinks,” Plato explains, “it is simply talking with itself, asking itself questions and answering these with a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’. When slowly or suddenly it eliminates doubt and the two inner voices silently assert the same thing, we say that the mind reached good judgment”. However, from another point of view, Platonic dialogue is

not, perhaps, the best example of conversation. Hegel, in his *Lessons on the History of Philosophy*, points out that, in conversation, what is said appears contingently joined and the topic is never exhausted. He writes: “When two or more persons intend to entertain themselves by talking, without any other purpose, the rule is the fortuitous feature of the witticisms”. Although Platonic dialogues show certain features of conversation—that is, more or less arbitrary which, at the same time, make the topics addressed more lively—usually they leave readers, in the end, with the feeling that another outcome could have been obtained; however, Hegel says, its development is in agreement with the topic itself and shows “a beautiful and consistent dialectic path”. Now, Hegel’s accusation of contingency aimed against conversation seeks to highlight, by contrast, the purportedly necessary, rigorous, scientific character of dialectics.

We can easily agree, then, that conversation is not a dialectical deployment. This could be our third statement, while refraining from discussing here the relevance of a full assessment of Hegel’s dialectics. On the other hand, in analyzing Hegel’s characterization of conversation, the following should be pointed out: 1) that philosophical topics (which Hegel refers to) are never exhausted; therefore, these are not mere problems (which call for absolutions or dissolutions) but questions proper (which only admit, ultimately, of existential solutions); 2) that, also, “the fortuitous character of witticisms” will be inevitable once the illusion of absolute knowledge is set aside; and 3) that, however, the likeness of the conversational situation with an “entertaining” situation is apt because, in effect, those who have a conversation entertain themselves; that is, they *entertene*, hold themselves, become established in a common area, in a shared and solidary space. This space is open and has been gained through conversation; this is the space of dialogue in which, as mentioned above, those who converse revolve around a topic.

This circular space abhors straight things. For this reason, conversation as such does not admit of rhetoric. Therefore, we arrive at the fourth assertion. Rhetoric comes from *rhetor*, which means a straight line direction. Rhetoric is the art of directing discourse towards a pre-established aim without deviation. It is a strategic discipline, the science of lawyers, peddlers, advertisers and politicians. The aim of rhetoric is to persuade, to convince, to use words as weapons and tools. This has nothing to do with what we call “conversation”, because in any conversation, I expose myself freely to the risk of conversion and reversion of the opinions volunteered. Because truth is illuminated in conversation and only in conversation, it implies such a risk. No individual truly enters a conversation if they do not open to the possibility that their opinions may thereby be modified. This is our fifth assertion: conversation implies that those holding a conversation do not become identified with their opinions, although those opinions manifest and express the individual. The individual may allow those opinions to be discussed or talked about without feeling personally attacked or challenged. And this is, obviously, a sign of health.

## CONCLUSION

We cannot and we do not intend to eradicate the agonistic aspect of philosophical discourse, but we would like to think that it is possible to subordinate it to its conversational aspect. Should we have to look up in the history of philosophy an extreme example of the agonistic aspect, we could quote Nietzsche's "hammer philosophy". If, on the contrary, we were urged to show a sample of the prevalence of the conversational aspect, we could read some pages of Ricoeur or Gadamer. This leads us to the problem of the philosophical text. Is not any text the discourse of an author? Does that author not propose his or her own opinions and defend these from the objections that others may pose? Is it possible that the philosophical text is not primarily polemic? In this case, where would the conversational aspect be? The conversational aspect should be looked for in the notion of text as proposal for a conversation that demands readers to be complete. Without the readers' active conversational disposition, any philosophical text is incomplete. Texts, so to speak, are waiting for their readers. To write a philosophical text is, therefore, to hold a deferred conversation with the author's target readers. Moreover, it is the disposition of such a reader that makes the text conversational. Nietzsche's most polemic texts are likely to start a conversation with the reader who establishes a suitable relationship with them. And, conversely, Ricoeur's most conversational works can be read eristically. No matter how soft the author may be, conversation from his discourse will be impossible if he does not find the right disposition in his reader.

Deconstructions, critical philosophy, structural analysis, among others, are but limited strategies to approach any text. They are helpful in that that they allow access to the writings that confront us, but are not helpful when they intend to fix that access. Can we not think, instead, that philosophy books are devices to develop and exercise conversational thought (instead of theoretical speeches which demand surrender or rejection)? But what does a text give readers as material to be thought of? How do we understand ourselves through it? Is not every text, after all, an unexhausted hermeneutic reserve? Perhaps, we should learn to read.

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## CHAPTER V

# ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A POST-DEMOCRATIC AND UNIVERSAL DEMOCRACY

*JOSÉ LUIS GONZÁLEZ QUIRÓS*

Life without illusions is impossible  
—José Ortega y Gasset

At the beginning of the 21st century, the political ideal that legitimates the form of government known as democracy has to face, at least, three essential problems: first, internal criticism in the various democratic states that note its inefficiency to ensure a sufficiently fair social order or to respect an accurate limit of restrictions to individual freedom; second, objections resulting from the assumed crisis of the nation-state (the continent where democracies have been able to flourish), and last, but not least, the extension of principles and assets of democracy to environments well beyond national borders. The first type of objection covers a considerable part of the regular political life. This means that, once free from the dangerous belief in the possibility of reaching Paradise, it belongs to the field of action rather than to the field of theory. On the contrary, in the other two cases, theory has still much to do to clear the way. The objective of this paper is to present some prior issues according to which the democratic ideal should be generalized with a view to proposing it as a specific political format in the horizon of a mankind more and more decisively confronted by the serious difficulties posed by the ideal of its unity. We will have to deal, then, with the last two problems mentioned. The nature of the borders is a crucial issue in both cases because democracy has developed in different societies—although it has not matured in others—on the basis of a very precise limitation, namely, the limitation of national borders.

This consideration should not lead us to erroneous assumptions that they have certain virtues or a certain kind of reality that provides them with an importance they actually lack. But it should make us realize that borders are a correct expression of the principle of finitude, without which man's life tends to lose the possibility of being truly human. The finitude of our existence pervades all our actions, provides meaning to our freedom and sets a framework in which power may be legitimately established as a fully human function [Dei, 2002: 40]. It is necessary to know how to draw out the consequences of this principle, both on the national and the international plane, in places where constitutions prevail as well as in those governed by less strong principles, the legitimacy of which is not that obvious. The great issue

of this newcentury is whether we will be able to build a politically *human* world or whether we will limit ourselves to the economic and technological conquest of the earth.

### THE NATURE OF NATIONAL BORDERS

Borders are the application of the idea of a limit to the political reality, or rather, to its geographic expression. The idea of limit is ambivalent: on the one hand, it looks inwards, to what it limits; on the other, it looks outwards, to what it excludes. This ambivalence of the idea of limit is very strong, at least in two senses: the ontological and the psychological. From the ontological stance, the limit creates finitude; it distinguishes one from the other. But in so doing, it creates a difficult idea, that of identity, as a kind of *conceptual atom* that may be neither analyzed nor divided. It disintegrates when expressed in the form of components or characters that may be disaggregated, and may not be broken up in the form of singular individuals, because that singularity means nothing in the face of the clarity and strength of the identity label that constitutes and describes them. Now, one of the features of modernity is that it effectively questioned the doctrine of the limit anchored in the idea of identity; in this, the Parmenidean heritage has finally given leeway to more flexible lines of thinking. This has been one of the most fruitful legacies of modern scientific thought since the beginning of calculus with Newton and Leibniz up to Cantor and contemporary mathematics: the intuitive boundary of natural and rational numbers has been broken-up in favor of a much richer and rigorous concept of number.

If in political life, the analytical resources were able to defeat identity, the *identity label* should give way to singular human beings, capable of multiple assignments who are not subject to just one description. But new developments in the theories of mathematics and physics have not influenced political theory; for one reason, politics is not simply about truth but about *interests*, and for many so-called *nationalists*, there is no better *business* than the development of an assumed collective identity.

From a psychological point of view, limits are hard to recognize and accept. Transgression is an essential force in the development of human life and psychology, where the first thing one sees in limits is the opportunity to go beyond them. Given the actual continuity of experience, limits, as taught by mathematics, have to be established and calculated, and in so doing, we always learn something. The idea of limit is anything but simple; therefore, turning a virtual line in nature into the mother of an identity is an abuse that requires *psychoanalyzing*. In this respect we have to ask ourselves, first, whence politics has taken the idea of limit; second, what we could learn of political value by meditating on the origin of this idea. If our question refers to the origin of the limit, we may answer in two different ways: what comes from within or what comes from without. In the former case, if the limit is established from within, ours would be an Aristotelian idea of limit, because we would be asserting that the limit comes from nature, from the finite

substance, and that the limit lies where this substance finishes. In the latter, we would be adopting a more modern stance by understanding that the limit has not been previously set, even though we may be aware that there is an area in the world where what is is no longer that which we have talked about. That external delimitation, by approximation, would be a convention, a calculation or a balance; an arbitrated calculation or formula, in fact, with advantages and disadvantages.

Nationalism operates on the assumption that borders are natural, whether geographic or of another more cultural type, but natural or Aristotelian depending on the nature of what the nation is. Non-nationalists believe that borders are where they are and have produced fruits of a certain quasi-identity, but that the arbitrary nature of their establishment cannot be forgotten. Nationalism justifies borders based on specific features in nature (the sea, for instance) as marks of reality itself. It is true that nature helps to set borders and to a certain extent imposes them if no technologies can overcome their obstacles, but any border is actually a limit resulting from the art of negotiation, a stratagem. Its determination depends on randomness and agreements that are sometimes lost in time (this happens almost always with land ownership, for example), but that had a huge coefficient of arbitrariness. Mostly, they were established as useful formulae to restrain violence, as signals that would remind us of the steps that should not be taken in the future; they were nothing but an agreement to settle disputes. This arbitrary and expeditious nature of borders is particularly evident in some cases by comparison with the natural and cultural continuity they separate; such is the case, for instance, of some Amazon dwellers who, though they belong to culturally homogeneous communities, are Brazilian or Colombian, without even knowing it. But borders between cultures are also arbitrary, such as, for example, the internal frontiers of languages and the limits of each of them with respect to the others.

In any case, the artificial has a positive content, added to its capacity to deny the identification between need and nature. Being the result of an agreement, borders become a seat of peace. To try to remove those means to go against that agreement, fostering a rebellion or a return to the original *bellum* that the establishment of the border avoided. Borders are therefore respectable, as respectable as the alphabet or the decimal metric system, precisely because they are artificial, a common finding between parties that disagreed as to where their limits finished or should finish. Threatening them implies the will to raise trouble and, normally, an uncontrollable wish to be able to make a living on that. The passage of centuries, however, has tended to provide borders with content, so that finally something happens at borders and a new alienation arises which, in the worst scenario, creates a new rivalry, such as the rivalry that, according to Baroja, confronted the two halves of a town separated by a railway line.

The most obvious result of the establishment of borders has been the consolidation of a certain class of identities, of a criterion of belonging. It is necessary to point out that it is the border that creates the identity in

peace and not the other way round, since there are no Platonic identities different from the human identity. Any identity has empirical origins, it is established by aggregation and is continuously changing; only a self-referential and authoritarian turn in its development makes it something that is outside the ordinary world, a supra-reality that has to be respected. Therefore, no borders are badly established because there is no golden criterion to establish them, and whoever thinks that, in general terms, peace is better than war, should abstain from moving them or from setting new borders where there are none.

Nationalism's tendency towards exclusion ends up by legitimating various forms of aggression. Exclusions are always a necessity that results from the definition of a criterion of inclusion (without which there would be nothing to argue about). It is qualitative exclusion that needs to be questioned because of denial of the ontological identity they state and invent. From a strictly political point of view, Kedourie perfectly defined nationalism:

Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century. It pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organization of a society of states. Briefly, the doctrine holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government [Kedourie 196: 9].

This *self* that precedes *government* in Kedourie's definition is the key issue. Nationalism considers the matter solved even before posing it, because, as a political movement, it does not attempt to respond to any ontological question; it seeks only to possess—and it does so by appearing to respect natural realities. A theoretical assumption frequently slips in as unquestionable evidence when we assert the need for an established *demos* for democracy to exist, namely, we assert that the mere existence of the *demos* assumes and/or claims an identity element which should be in charge of facilitating the unavoidable relationship of belonging or inclusion and which, in some way, would be the true correlate of the corresponding political representation<sup>1</sup>. Though highlighted in complex contemporary societies, this identity element is misunderstood if intended as something beyond a certain administrative and/or sentimental element (the ownership of a certain identity document, for instance).

This representation makes sense only in the face of a second one as it generates by itself a division by reflecting the differences that evidently exist in

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<sup>1</sup> On this subject, see Vallespín (2000: 168 ff.).

the heart of the community. Thus, the representation itself generates an alterity, alienation, and it is in the heart of this division where the claims for an identity, as a sign of belonging, start to acquire a politically accurate shape. The representation places the whole in front of each one and generates a tension that may give rise to a competition for authenticity. The statement of an identity is, from the very beginning, an action to facilitate rejection and exclusion, which facilitates the attempt to discredit, to exclude individuals and groups, to claim the exclusive representation.

Apart from the self-interested political use, to seek the identity element is, however, to place the cart before the oxen, it replaces a set that results from the aggregation of actual individuals with one of the subsets of those elements that share certain stressed common features; whereas the only relevant feature is the mere presence in the group whose delimitation is always arbitrary and never natural or essentialist or *identitarian*. Identitarian statements rarely appear without an exclusion attached, a kind of strange disagreements that are useful more to deny a specific political reality than to assert that something really exists. Any identity is either a natural feature that makes no cultural connection (because the contrary would be precisely to deny the idea of culture as free construction) or a constructed cultural feature: there is no excluded third option. Admitting natural determination is a more or less crude forms of political biologism. The creation of a new identity corresponds to amputation nationalism which corrupts and falsifies democracy because it seeks to replace this with a mafia due to its full identification with the political identity it alleges to represent.

In general, exclusion is the result of an attempt at protection in the face of the need to share our resources and efforts with our fellow men. As Rorty points out:

“Who are we?” is quite different from the traditional philosophical question “what are we?” The latter is synonymous with Kant's questions, “What is Man?” Both mean something like “how does the human species differ from the rest of the animal kingdom?” or “among the differences between us and the other animals, which ones better most?” This “what?” question is scientific or metaphysical. By contrast, the “who?” question is political. It is asked by people who want to separate off the human beings who are better suited to some particular purpose than other human beings, and to gather the former into a self-conscious moral community: that is, a community united by reciprocal trust, and by willingness to come to fellow-members' assistance when they need it. Answers to the “who?” question are attempts to forge, or re-forge, a moral identity [Rorty, 1998: 93].

The practice of exclusion may be somewhat justified if we believe that inclusion is not possible because the result would not be viable. But the identitarian exclusion lacks any kind of moral legitimacy for it assumes the creation of a core of privileged beings from which the more unfortunate and poor individuals are excluded as slaves or cannon fodder, but never as fellow men. Jacobinism tends to be the opposite of human solidarity.

The idea of politics as the development of a collective supra-entity (the nation) that takes charge of the development of history and the implementation of successive revolutions (or salvation formulas) is entirely responsible for the near complete disappearance of patriotism and, in more general terms, of the idea of civic virtue, from the conceptual map of modern political thought. As I have shown in greater depth elsewhere [González Quirós, 2002], when the nation is established as a *superior reality*, it becomes a political hypostasis, a monster produced by passion without the guidance of good sense.

To understand the historical disruption suffered by the idea of patriotism (a concept whose sonority refers us to the Roman Republic), note that its meaning cannot be limited to politics, though the effects pervade the political. Whenever politics tries to be identified with patriotism, it should be suspected for in a system of freedom, patriotism is not a policy among other possible ones, but something quite different. Patriotism, unlike nationalism that makes smaller or restricts, seeks emulation or the best for those who share our life. Nationalism may be defined, precisely, as the attempt to make the moral and sentimental meaning of patriotism support an exclusion policy: the nationalist is whoever claims that there may be no patriot except the one the nationalist proposes. Patriotism, at its best, is a civic and individual virtue, whereas nationalism is a collective vice, an *identitarian* craving. Patriotism, however, does have the tendency, almost universal nowadays, of not recognizing commitments other than those directly and immediately associated to the individual's own and exclusive welfare.

Nationalisms are prone to re-writing history to show a reason for their positions, and that reason can be more easily defended if a long-dated affront or mistake is found. Doing this with history is easier than with the present reality, because history resists less than current events: dead people are kind and let us speak without interrupting us. History is always an invention, a reading or translation that may be more or less consistent, traditional and objective. We know that something happened and the historian's effort is to bring us closer to it. But even though the past is, in a certain way, fixed, it changes deeply in another way, life as a landscape, what we leave behind changes as we move forward. History is not only what happened but, above all, what matters about what happened, or what is told about what happened. History has to be told and sung; we can say what Count Arnaldos' romance asserts, "I only sing my song to whoever goes with me". That is why history is a heritage, is a capital asset of our days, a new tale told to a new *us* who wish to understand the paths along which we

have come to be what we are. Objectivity is, above all, an attitude of the listener who wants to leave things as they are, to prevent the past from being definitely lost. Losing along the way certain dimensions of what we actually are, we become barbarians, that is to say, part of those who believe they are not interested in history.

By making history and re-telling our past, we have to walk between the Scylla of an excessive assimilation of the past into our present and the Charybdis of a totally objective strangeness that is in fact impossible. The ideal of narrative objectivity and of understanding what no longer is as if it were alive and present cannot be denied. But it is not advisable to be carried away by enthusiasm and suppose that believing in the ideal of objectivity, and the effort to achieve it, will provide us with some kind of assurance that it has been reached. The translation of texts into contemporary language presents a particularly clear example of the problem in one of its aspects: as McIntyre wrote with respect to objectivity in the reading of old texts: "The notion of a perfect timeless translation makes no sense" [1990: 51].

In fact, the problem of objectivity in the historical narrative has exactly the same logical structure as the problem of understanding a different culture (the problem of *what* is a different culture and *how* it differs); it is, in short, a variant of the objectivity problem [González Quirós, 2003] or the problem of the incommensurability of paradigms which has been mentioned so much in the history and philosophy of science of the second half of last century. The example of history as a tale of the past is particularly relevant in considering the possibility of understanding among different cultures, because different cultures extend and distinguish themselves in both time and space: cultures of the same root but of past times, cultures of a different but contemporary root.

## **CUTURAL BOUNDARIES AND MULTICULTURALISM**

The differentiation among cultures refers, in the first place, to a distinction among societies, among various places and their corresponding lifestyles. Cultures do not exist in isolation, so some psychoanalysis of our idea of different cultures could help recognize that what we specifically distinguish are societies or communities, rather than cultures. We differ as much from societies far from our own as from societies that are close to but rivals of our own.

Outside this distinction of communities, boundaries between different cultures are extremely inaccurate and depend on erudite and always dubious considerations. What matters from a political point of view is not the clash of cultures but the economic, political and moral rivalry among societies confronted by historical reasons. In the strictly cultural field, there are no absolutely clear boundaries either. Considering culture as creation, as the result of free initiative, of imagination, of the responsible thought of those who work with symbols and ideas which unquestionably separate us from mere nature, the creation work of people in different

environments is very connected. Those who are in the border of that task that has to be perpetually renewed and consists of making ourselves more and more owners and aware of the meaning of our life and of our own destiny are doing the same, but in different ways?

Common factors in any kind of culture carry enormous weight, and a clear philosophy and a suitable policy are required to reveal them. As Isaiah Berlin said:

I do not know any culture that lacks the notions of good and evil, true and false. As far as we know, courage, for example, has been admired in all societies. There are universal values. This is an empirical fact that appears in mankind, one of what Leibniz called *verités de fait* and not *verités de raison*. It is a fact that there are some values that many human beings in a large number of places and situations have in common, either explicitly or consciously or expressed in their behavior, manners and acts [Isaiah Berlin, 1993:59]

The idea of cultural identity hides some dangerous misunderstandings and tends to be a political combat weapon. When the existence of a cultural identity is proclaimed, what we actually do is deny the individual's freedom, reduce people to a supposedly superior and more worthy system, drown the subject in a qualifying label. Cultures, as far as they exist in groups, are as permeable as groups themselves, they are connected through individuals, they are neither ponds nor pools: they are rather *fieri* than *factum*.

In the Western tradition, one of the currents of liberalism that may confuse us. According to John Gray's distinction [2001, 11], there are two liberalisms: one that seeks "a rational agreement on the best possible way of life, and another one based on the" belief that human beings can flourish in many ways of life". Gray correctly assumes that the former is inspired and supported by thinkers such as Locke, Kant, Hayek or Rawls, while the latter responds to authors such as Hobbes, Hume, Oakeshott or Berlin. The first liberalism attempts to seek a universal project, certain utopia, while the second one strives to achieve the pacific coexistence of different, and even opposite, ways of life. In this second liberalism, tolerance is a peace strategy, the goal of which is not intellectual or moral consensus, but coexistence. Gray believes that conflict is inherent in the political life when several different ways of life are at stake, but actually, whether they are or not, conflict is the essence of political life. Gray [2001, 123] seems to assume that as the first liberalism thinks about reaching a universal civilization (because tolerance along these lines is a means to reach truth), the second one has to renounce any similar purpose. Communities and individuals with conflicting values and interests accept that coexistence, rather than the agreement on any kind of truths, is the only thing that can be achieved. These two liberalisms pose very different problems because they start from totally different pre-suppositions: the former, from a universalist

point of view and the latter from the appreciation that the diversity of cultural traditions is unyielding to any kind of rule. There is a Hobbesian background in Gray's ideas though not enough to justify why those who believe they have universally valid principles, that could improve the life of any community, should renounce defending and spreading their ideals.

This second way of understanding liberalism, although its values may be evident in the field of social practice, seems to be dominated by solipsism and the unavoidable clash of cultures that also underlies Huntington's interpretation. At least in the latter case, it may be understood as a pessimistic comment on the current confrontations between some countries dominated by radical Islamism and the great American democracy. But the question is slightly subtler and more complex than shown by Huntington's analysis; it should not be taken for granted that whenever there is an apparently unsolvable conflict the reason is an insurmountable identity difference. History shows to the contrary a logical process of assimilations and abilities, so that with consistent tolerance we should be optimistic and not consider that the battle has been lost before even putting up a fight. It is not reasonable to take for granted the unavoidable cultural persistence of identity manners, unable to learn, to open up to dialogue and civilized coexistence. Some processes may take longer than we would like (and we would have to consider relevant responsibilities without putting them all in the same bag), but that does not mean there is nothing impossible or eternal. Absolute relativism cannot be true, because there are always common values to talk about and particularly open individuals willing to trespass this kind of illusory border. Fundamentalism is, of course, the main obstacle that stands in the way of progress of the strategies that seek the expansion of values whose mere statement requires universality (a person's dignity, human rights, freedom of conscience) even if they have not been recognized in many societies. Fundamentalism becomes strong in the defense of what is peculiar and that meets undue sympathies in our romantic side that balances our rationalism by acknowledging that living is more than thinking abstractly. It is impossible to live without feeling part of a community that is expressed in feelings not subject to a rational analysis.

Relativism is the other face of fundamentalism. Criticism of the excessive pretensions of universality of certain esthetic or metaphysical conceptions, has led to providing the same contingency and relativity to, for instance, clothing habits as to ethical principles; we have ended up confusing freedom of conscience (founded on an absolutely positive ideal such as respect to the human dignity) with moral skepticism. Fundamentalism not only supposes a mistake from the logical point of view, but it implies, above all, a very serious limitation to freedom, an amputation of the possibilities of choosing one form of human being or another, which means absolute submission of the individual to the random circumstances he may be forced to live.

We should not deny, in the abstract, the possibility of a solution, of finding a way to move towards a reconciliation of positions and ways of

coexisting that go beyond what fundamentalists consider insurmountable. But we should not abandon ourselves either to a politically correct angelism even though, in the short term, it may seem academically attractive and sentimentally profitable. Specifically, to deny, today, that Western democracies are threatened by an enemy (who, according to Rorty [2002], and for lack of a better word, we call terrorism) against whom we do not know very well what to do, is to be stupid, or hypocritical or foolish. Nor is it good either, faced with bloody events such as those in New York, Madrid, and London (just to name the cases of the so-called first world) to blame the United States of America, carried away by an anti-Americanism useful only to hide the seriousness of the problem we have to confront in all its crudity, urgency and complexity. It is no use hiding under the cloak of a progressivism that ignores what is really at stake, because, quoting again Rorty's prophetic words:

Some day Berlin, Paris and Madrid will probably experience the shock that New York experienced last year. The people who blew up the World Trade Center may well find it equally gratifying to blow up, or spread disease germs around, the Prado, the Eiffel Tower, Potsdamer Platz or the Palace of Westminster. The difference between an intolerably arrogant and appallingly rich infidel nation and various smaller, better-mannered, slightly less rich infidel nations may not seem very significant to those who wish to imitate bin Laden's success. [Rorty, 2000]

We cannot deny the seriousness of the threat, we have the right to try to survive and not let that threat alter our system of values. Very likely, the only possible way to do so is to extend outside our borders the same type of freedoms that have allowed peace and prosperity within them, even if we know that this has rarely worked by force.

### **BEYOND BORDERS: DEMOCRACY AS A HUMAN IDEA**

The delicate system of political balances which our democracy entails requires a polyarchy, and that is simply unimaginable in a regime in which, for instance, there is no separation between spiritual and political powers, in which there is no respect for freedom of conscience nor for the institutions that preserve it. Whether this is consistent or not with Islam, is a question in which theologians disagree, although pessimists abound. However, the situation in the world may not be limited to the analysis of just one stressful event, no matter how important it is. The problem of Islamic terrorism is only the most flamboyant of all the issues the new situation of the world presents: a very varied set of cultures, regions and societies that may not remain aloof much longer because mankind covers the limits of the Earth and globalization makes us live, for the first time, in the *same* world. In that unique world, suddenly

turned small, large political and cultural units coexist, Europe, Russia, the English-speaking world (the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), Latin America, China, India, the African countries, the Islamic countries... a mixed mosaic of societies with different religions, cultures and political systems.

How can we think about a world community in which human rights and democracy gradually become a reality? Without them, there will be no reasonable possibility of peace, because it has always been easy to give in to the temptation of taking the different populations to the slaughterhouse to defend their alleged identities and, at the same time, the regime that exploits them. The verification of the value of this truth plays an important part in the Kantian reasoning with respect to the possibility of perpetual peace: “in a constitution under which the subject is not a citizen, in a constitution that is not therefore Republican, war is the easiest thing in the world, because the ruler is not a member of the state but its proprietor, war does not make him lose anything” [Kant, 1985, 17]. The thesis herein held is that the future political configuration of the world should be consolidated by starting from the diversity of existing nations, fostering freedom and democracy throughout the world and creating cooperative environments more and more extensive and sound among the different countries and areas. It does not seem a ridiculous thesis, but its implementation implies some conditions that may not be so evident.

The absolutely first condition for all this is to go, as Daniel Dei says [2002, 163], for “the possibility that is life”, for the flourishing of the marvelous possibilities that are the gift of human nature, the so varied forms that our freedom is able to build. It will not be possible, however, to take even one step if some basic convictions about life, its goodness and its meaning are not shared. Democracy and freedom are meaningful only if life has meaning; otherwise, and life can have meaning only, if it is respected, if its dignity is considered a superior value (which does not actually mean that it is the supreme value). This questions the current doctrine of the unlimited sovereignty of states, the presumption that—within the limits of the borders themselves—everything is an internal affair in which there may be no kind of external interference. This doctrine, regardless of how extended it may be, is strictly inhuman, because it would mean the impossibility of an intervention, for example, in the case of genocide.

On this matter we stumble against a logical difficulty intimately associated to the nature of our borders and their relationship with legitimacy. If legitimacy were restricted to a specific territory, then, any intervention from outside the borders would be illegitimate. In fact, it is reasonable to assume that most of the external interventions hide objectives indefensible from an ethical point of view, but the question is whether we can even start to consider a world where democratic powers have the means to promote the birth of democracies in those societies where democracy has yet had no room. Interventions of just one nation or of *ad hoc* coalitions will always be under suspicion of unfairness, of using sublime arguments to obtain more tangible

benefits, and, this however necessary they may be and ethically defensible in specific cases, as they have been at key times in past history. We should not even mention that this kind of *interventions* can not be limited to the military aspect, but that they have to be predominantly economic, political or cultural, and the use of force should be strictly restricted to very extreme cases, always provided an agreement has been reached by most democratic powers (something quite different from the current UN) about the legitimacy of war.

To solve this matter, we should use international institutions capable of legitimizing this kind of humanitarian intervention (if possible, without an excess of bureaucracy). But it is evident that so far we have placed the cart before the oxen in this subject, because UN bodies respond, as their name points out, to the logic of sovereign states, among which many would deserve the kind of external interventions they would not be willing to legitimate. Furthermore, in practice, the effective appearance of a state much more powerful than the rest (obviously, the United States) makes other states boycott the initiatives they think will benefit the great power or harm their own interests. In practical terms, our system of international institutions is not based on the rights of people but on the interests of the states, which must be changed if we wish to make progress.

While more than half of the UN member states do not meet the minimum standards of democracy and human rights, to wait for this organization to make some progress, is to wait in vain. However, the idea is not to eliminate it, but rather that those members who share the ideas of democracy, freedom and respect for the citizens' dignity and rights, and where public opinion is free, dare move one step further and establish new legal mechanisms to increase the number of rational opportunities for an international coexistence in peace and freedom. This ideal would require two quite difficult prior conditions: in the first place, the group of democratic states should put the safeguard of rights before their own interests and, consequently, they should stop treating other countries differently, for example, tolerating in China or Pakistan what they would condemn without any justification in any poor and resourceless country. That is, democracy should stop being a system of internal consumption and become a secure and habitual guide of external behavior of states, overcoming thereby the cynical appeal to a *reason of state* to legitimate crime and arbitrariness. The second condition is perhaps even more difficult, because it requires that the public opinion of those countries abandon the relativism that makes them judge as perfectly tolerable and even interesting what they would not consent to at home.

The idea of *perpetual peace* defended by Kant [1985, 14] was supported, particularly, on the conviction that "The state of peace among men living side by side is not the natural state (*status naturalis*); the natural state is one of war. This does not always mean open hostilities, but at least an unceasing threat of war. A state of peace, therefore, must be *established*". Therefore, peace is not merely the absence of aggression—as assumed by the alleged order of non intervention. It is the achievement of an agreement

among Republican states who, founded on freedom, dependence on a common law and equality of all citizens, would associate to ensure peace. And since there is no law, and there cannot be one above them, that peace would only be based on the common recognition of a set of rights for all men.

It is true that in order to be a member of the United Nations—regardless of what the texts may say—respect for human rights, freedom of conscience, guarantee of the rights of minorities or the respect for the political rights of citizens are not unavoidable conditions. Yet, it is evident that, under the current circumstances, the UN does not meet the necessary conditions to lead the search of a mankind not submitted to the despotic arbitrariness of the states. This, in turn, is the objective of a generalization of democracy and an essential condition that an idea such as *perpetual peace* to be at least conceivable.

Totalitarian states are totally incompatible with perpetual peace and the development of democracy throughout the planet. This is evident, not only from a historical point of view, but also from an ideological point of view. For if a state does not accept the limitations to its power born from the prior right of its citizens, how is it going to accept limitations from those who are not part of it? Only the circumstantial lack of military, economic and political power will explain its non-expansive restraint. On the contrary, the right of intervention should be the obligation of a prospective Republican federation, which would thus not only consolidate its right to peace but also be the future guarantee of peace. Obviously, it is necessary to build a new generation of international institutions, regardless of how this may alter the current balance of powers and of the important political risks it entails. That this may be done by existing organizations is a question for specialist, but having some states subject themselves to scrutiny through public parameters and goals of legitimacy appears to be very difficult indeed.

The progressive creation of the conditions required for the establishment of a universal democracy, and with it, lasting peace, requires, therefore, the modification of the nature of our national borders. The idea is to gradually create larger environments where war is not acceptable (this is, very likely, the case of the European Union) while also creating international bodies with a new legitimacy that may be only based on a pact or federation of stable democracies.

The question of whether democracy may be imposed is, therefore, very closely associated to the question of whether peace can be ensured. We are not talking now of the deterrent logic defined in the main scenario of international relations forty years ago. The enemy of civilization now is totally heterogeneous and asymmetrical: it should be identified not so much with a culture as with a historical phase which has not yet reached a sufficient expansion of the political ideals of freedom and democracy. Nothing still to be done in this field will prevent the full acknowledgement that there is an uncompromising plurality in the ways of life nor will it mean

believing in a miraculous compatibility of all goods and principle—the endorsement of what Berlin called the Platonic prejudice, the assumed full harmony of any kind of goods and values. It will therefore be necessary always to take very much into account a principle of intellectual tolerance, a maxim well stated by Smullyan [1989, 202]. As our author notes, this is closely associated to Carnap's principle of tolerance: "Instead of trying to prove your opponent is wrong, try to discover how he can be right".

So understood, tolerance is not a surreptitious way to validate relativism, but a particular consequence of strong convictions about human nature and freedom of conscience. It is wrong, however, to unduly extend the idea of tolerance, the basis of which is the respect for the other's conscience and dignity, to the supranational environment, where the criteria of liberality and prudence is not enough, because it is necessary to use unmistakable rules in view of the importance of the values at stake.

Darwinism has made us think in a way hardly consistent with the purpose, but human rationality is unthinkable without a valuation of the goals. Contrary to the notion that any way of life is a response as valid as any other to the enigmas of the existence, there appears, from the very beginning of Western thinking, the conviction that a happy life is a meaningful life. This is a life that can strive to achieve certain values, even if occasionally that may, occasionally, jeopardize one's own life. We face now a question whose seriousness depends on our response to that insurmountable alternative that supposes the final overcoming of the specific moral contradictions of modernity.

The crisis of modernity has not only been a crisis of principles; it has also been an experience of failure. We have proved how a supposedly superior culture may coexist with the mass murder of millions of innocent people and how an allegedly liberating policy and the search for a *new man* acted as the perfect rhetorical alibi for crime and barbarism. The 21<sup>st</sup> century should draw very accurate lessons, very hard indeed, of those failures: it should learn to build a new cultural and political framework to support an effective promotion of human dignity. Dignity is a notion that may be dressed up with different effects some less essential aspects of which may be relativized, but whose basic core has to be absolutely unquestionable: freedom of conscience and opinion, no submission to guardianship or slavery, personal and moral autonomy. We will not undertake here a detailed analysis of the implications of the idea of a person's dignity in its various aspects. But it is essential to highlight that we cannot speak of human dignity in a regime not governed by certain legal principles and guarantees, in a system that does not recognize popular sovereignty, in short, in a non-democratic system. Democracy is perfectly compatible with cultural and moral diversity, provided that cultural scenario respects essential principles, those that represent the dignity and inviolability of the human being and his/her essential freedom. Democracy allows for different ways of human relationships much more honorable than

the mere relationships of control and submission characteristic of the situations in which non-democratic states develop.

Mankind has achieved a high level of scientific, technological and commercial development, but this development has been compatible with a variety of political forms where the democratic principle has not always obtained the required recognition of the established powers. Thus, being a man is still a synonym, in too many places, of being a subject, of being submitted to situations of legitimacy not inspired in the power of the people, and which do not consider their actions a service to the people. Evidently, many democracies also usually corrupt these principles, but, at least theoretically, they have systems that may reverse these situations perfectly well, while in non-democratic regimes, people are hopelessly submitted to the whim of a god alien to mankind: a nation, race, religion, party, ancestors, or whatever. Under these conditions, humankind may not reach maturity, may not come of age, and may even completely lose the dignity that turns us into ends rather than means, namely, the human identity that is always a moral project, and not a simple biological fact.

Reason, the human instrument to dominate the world, should surrender before man's dignity, before the incalculable value that each of us, absolutely irreplaceable and extremely singular individuals, represent. Reason does not exist to be deified, but to enable the flourishing of the best opportunities of material and moral enrichment, everything that makes us see life as sacred and worthy. There is now an exceptional opportunity and we should stop regretting the bloody unbalance between our intellectual and material capabilities and our moral heritage. Once we have learnt from our mistakes, once we have received the lesson of realism from the holocausts of the last century, we will be ready to address, prudently but ambitiously, the objective of rescuing democracy from its national borders and undertake a true generalization of the system of freedoms and rights it comprises. It is true that, as José Jimenez Lozano points out, the layer that separates us from barbarism is always very thin, and nothing ensures us that political and moral progress will certainly take place. But we can and should strive to strengthen and extend certain conquests, even if we know that the road will be tortuous, ambiguous and, sometimes, very disappointing. The effort will always be worthwhile because it implies seeking a more reasonable, balanced, fairer, and more humane world. It will not be Paradise in earth, but should very clearly be distinguished from certain forms of hell that we have learnt so well to organize; this achievement is attainable and should therefore be a moral mandate.

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## CHAPTER VI

# MIGRATION AND ITS TWO FACETS: PROBLEM AND COLLABORATION

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### INTRODUCTION

Some ethnic groups of specific countries are those perceived as “running away.” The phrasal verb “to run away” is used instead of the present participle “migrating” because people tend to run away from hunger, poverty, abuses, pain, burden, sorrow, routine, pressures, envy, mockery, abuse, and so forth. The reader is invited to expand the list with whatever type of oppression he or she deems applicable.

These “escapees” represent a problem for their host countries, cities, or safe havens. In numerous cases and instead of concentrating on complex situations that require solutions, host countries lack a professional and/or suitable labour force at their disposal.

Through a historical oversight, we may have forgotten how we evolved into what we are today. By being in charge of our identity, we may have also forgotten, to a greater or lesser extent, that these cultural backgrounds have been modified to evolve into an identity with increasingly less distinctive elements and increasingly more diversity. This is a contradiction that has nothing to do with this study, which attempts to analyze some of the components of exclusive and inclusive situations to which many people are submitted. As a starting point and before examining the crisis in which we are implicated, we are invited to perform an exercise of active memory and analysis from multiple perspectives.

We are interested in pointing out the importance of events that were not previously observed, but had contributed to cultural changes. At face value, these are different from current situations and subsequent accomplishments. These are conjectures we might make given that we identify ourselves as thinking beings with a capacity for analysis, albeit a trait we do not usually fully utilize.

### ESCAPES OR MIGRATIONS, HISTORIAL PERCEPTIVE

Some inhabitants of the United States of America, like others of many continents, feel worthy of the land in which they choose to live. Here, we do not refer to the original natives of the land but to early emigrants who were initially conquerors. Driven by an ambition to live in foreign lands through a haughty sense of "superiority" that considered these lands virgin and devoid of human beings, Europeans at the end of the 15th century

simply did not acknowledge the existence of “others.” When the Europeans met the natives, they treated them as objects. Perhaps worse, the Europeans were obsessed with the material world and this clouded their emotions to display any love for the natives. Moreover, as firm believers in the Divine Right, they assumed they were permitted to conquer the lands of these natives. This right emanated from a God with imposed characteristics, and a Papacy that guaranteed this right. The Europeans not only manipulated, corrupted, and massacred the natives, but they also committed this sacrilege against a God in whose name they carried out one more genocide.

During this period, Alexander VI—a simoniac and corrupt pope—ordered the development of the spirituality of the natives. He wanted them to abandon polygamy and other sexual practices that he considered vices. His objective: to illegitimately and privately appropriate lands behind the Crown’s back. His excuse: the natives were not Christian. The result: genocide was cloaked under the banner of a “just war.”

Obviously, the great victories achieved by conquerors through massacres, torture, oppression, and intruding into the culture of others, generated something different from themselves and what was desired. For example, victory had produced a feeling of liberation. However, among these conquerors lived people who were capable of denouncing such crimes, vexations, and perversions. The latter also stated in the name of God that natives were not animals, prey for display, or slaves for use in the King’s treasury. Due to certain attitudes, it appears that how these conquerors forcefully took these lands and men is now forgotten.

Some who opposed genocidal praxis in South America were San Martín, Belgrano, Mariano Moreno, Bolívar, and many others who today continue in the defence of the oppressed. What is avoided; what is sought? Some answers immediately spring up: goods, wealth, glory, power. Also, there are those that ran away in search of freedom, pleasure, joy, peace. Studying history proves at least this much to us.

## **MIGRATION AND IDENTITY**

The ‘identity of a people’ rose up from these controversial elements. There is no doubt that they were changing their initial cultural characteristics because of: a) adaptation to a new geography; b) mixture with despised and unrecognizable beings; and c) combat against unknown situations. These men wanted to maintain their cultural invulnerability. One is ‘foreign’ only to the ‘autochthonous’, however, in this case, the autochthonous became foreigners.

Although we are not those who have taken part directly in such crusades, many feel “proud” of being the result: American, Argentine, Chinese, Moroccan, and Spaniards. In the case of South America, this is accompanied by a certain resentment for the lost and desired Europe. This feeling might have to do with negation or with always being on the side-line. Neither the named people, nor those that are not on the list, have the

same “dignity”. Unfortunately, dignity does not have anything to do with personal qualities, but with the abstract position of being the ones who “subjugate” or the ones who are “conquered”; this is not just, since dignity is to be found in our inviolable character as human beings.

If to talk of “personal identity” is an extremely complex situation, it will be much more so to speak about the identity of a human group and even more so to discuss a universal mankind. From our point of view, we consider it convenient to talk about the characteristics of some people that converge in X ideology, or of those who try to implement a new position which was not contained in any of those that existed. If we maintain or use the term “identity”, we are explaining that A is equal to A, according to the traditional logic. Referring to people, we should say that A is equal to B and equal to C—an equality in difference. We are accepting a classification that has to do with an education which must “produce” newborns capable of repeating a schema of life and culture in which people feel safe and happy for belonging to a specific “cultural form”.

It is important to note that if we talk of identity, we are also “identical”, in some specific characteristics, to those people whom we do not want to look like. Moreover, though we do not think that we have something in common with them, we do because we were born in the same cultural environment. In this sense, we are all subjects of the same identity that made possible both types of people. In this case, to talk of “identity” would also introduce an element of exclusion of those who, though living in a specific culture, do not want to belong thereto. Or they are expelled from it because they do not mimic the accepted behaviour. Somehow, they are running away from an identity which does not accept them.

To be heirs of a certain culture is not something to proud of per se, nor something to despise. To be heirs of a culture involves thinking about the values that the culture represents in order to sustain them without imposing them. We do not deny, as was stated by Foucault in his *Speeches of Power*, that if repression only forbade, nobody would obey; but certainly, this has to be well thought out. Obviously, this does not justify, in any way, torture or genocide. Through artistic creation and creative strategies that cultivate genuine freedom, cultures can preserve what is best without giving in to oppressive prejudice.

## **CULTURE AND EPISTEMOLOGY**

We understand culture as that ensemble of knowledge and actions that keep having favourable results in the development of a human group. Such developments include not only interaction among people, but also the geography, flora and fauna of the place and the ways of relating to all these. When troublesome situations are solved, a feeling of security and confidence appears in a correct epistemological process. That result is taken as “true” and can then be applied to similar situations. A problem appears when the applied cognitive techniques do not give the expected result and

new forms have to be sought out. This implicates a state of insecurity that would keep generating cultural changes in which interpersonal relationships are included. Such relationships with the 'others' deserve to be modified.

We already know that efforts to improve interpersonal relationships have been ignored by most conquerors. In most cases, the victors expect those they have conquered to learn the language and the culture of their oppressors, as if it were the duty of the conquered.

### **PERCEPTION, CULTURE AND OPPRESSION**

The recognition of cultural multiplicity has been applied historically to relationships among cultures in varied ways, resulting in what we can call subcultures. These are created within complex processes of endoculturation caused by the subjugation and rupture of societies. The affected human group is obligated to renounce a part of its cultural patrimony and incorporate new languages, conducts and forms that come with the environment. This subjugation forces an explicit acculturation under the imposition of the dominant culture. These elements, of which people are not always aware, are partly intangible, especially in cases of countries with increasing immigration, as in Spain for instance.

The well-known remark of Berkeley is helpful here "to be is to be perceived". This relationship among human-beings is possible only when perception exists. Now we should stop at the result of this perception, bearing in mind that we also run away from perceptions or from their absence. Examples are those who suffer the oppression of not being perceived, those who feel ignored, lifeless. If to be is to be perceived, then the "other" *is* when I discover him.

But what do I discover in the other when I perceive him, when I realize by my senses that he is there? We should perhaps talk about the individual look of the West which they imposed on us and tried to impose on all cultural expressions. Note as well those cultural expressions that keep allowing this, perhaps for efficiency, as an answer to specific needs and not only for subjection or domination. Those born in the near or far East, the natives from America, or those from any political-geographical space, look at this individuality in different ways. Fortunately, as we have already said, even within the same culture, there are those who have different perspectives. What we have said concerning the gentiles and dignity, and concerning the contradiction involved in having a similar and different identity at the same time, raises the importance of maintaining differences; each of us is born in an equal and different world, simultaneously,

It is crucial to recognize the other as different and to accept the difference not as an illusion of myself, but as genuine difference. At the time we must keep in mind that I myself am the "other" to the one in front of me, even if we share the same socio-cultural environment.

We continue thinking with a certain level of conviction that to perceive the other, to respect and to accept him in his difference, we have to

recognize that we are different in front of the “other”. When we say that we accept “the other as a different one”, the centre of valuation is again ourselves. We do not put ourselves off centre, and therefore the other is always going to be an alien. In order that this does not happen, we must understand ourselves from the place of the transference of ‘me’, that is, from the place ‘among us’, ‘among our differences’, where laws and value judgments are made regarding our moving and changing identity.

When I see ‘myself’ as different from the other, I open myself to the need to listen to his laws, to relate them with mine. Only this allows for a space of joint interaction; that is to say, of dialogue, which every oppressive ‘centre’ lacks. This is why we must delineate the centre carefully, because it legislates and institutes what must so that we cannot see anything else as good or as culture.

Usually, there are human groups that fight to the death with excessive force based on a feeling of superiority which comes from advanced weapons and great monetary wealth translated into power: these groups perceive themselves as the centre of the universe, the *umbilicus mundi*. Much of humanity feels incapable of fighting against such power and by submitting, due to their feeling of impotence, they make it easy for these groups to carry out their oppression. We suppose that we all feel ourselves ‘owners of the truth’, but we do not all recognize it. There will always be people who want to “master” the “other”. We are intelligent beings, but often times we use our intelligence for exclusion instead of for fellowship.

It takes many centuries to modify such behaviour. Many times we seem to augment it. Lack of respect can indicate that there had been respect among people at one time, but it may also indicate that there was very little respect to begin with?

## **RESISTANCES**

Most cultural groups resist what they consider to be disturbing and dangerous elements. The security we had in a certain truth is dissolved in the imperceptible intrusion of elements not desired nor expected. Different perspectives of the same event inevitably emerge; this can be highly enriching, but it can also be destructive if one perspective tries to maintain that it has the final word and whole truth. If other perspectives are not allowed, the result is some form of war, which can be a struggle for technology, industry or food. These struggles are accepted by many as *natural* expressions ‘of the species’. War offends human nature and dignity, although to make it appear just and necessary, some turn to psychoanalysis and speak about the presence of two impulses ‘eros’ and ‘thánatos’, human rivalry and the struggle to dominate. In writing on the malaise of a culture, Freud cites the pathology of those who are incapable of repressing the “thánatos” principle. In quoting such Western thinkers, we recognize that we are continuing the cultural form of the Western mentality that “guides”

our thought. But this does not mean that we cannot benefit from these perspectives; we can use these insights, be critical of them, and apply them to our own situation, while being open to other perspectives as well.

## **INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE**

The type of distance or approach affects the possibility of intercultural dialogue, e.g., geographical distance. Dominant centres did not consider this when they took the 'other' as a 'colony', but, they do recognize a geo-cultural distance when the 'other' becomes independent. Speaking of a 'geo-cultural distance', entails borders and the rejection of the one on the other side as not being what we want him to be, namely: just like 'me'. By excluding him we emancipated him from the desires of the conqueror-colonizer so as to think for himself. From our point of view this is an unproductive way of thinking.

The possibility of intercultural dialogue would then have to do with the desire to know the other whether or not his skin, customs, dress, or nutritional and sexual habits disgust us. This means that we do not have to detest the other's way of seeing the world and acting with it and in it. All ethnic groups should generate this opportunity to look for inclusive elements; this would expose oppressors and preclude them from continuing their tactics of domination and oppression.

Epistemologically, diverse cultures, both perceivably and imperceptibly, filter the discussion of values. This implies both an advantage and a disadvantage. There is an advantage if we start from the utopia of a common desire and maintain the traditional values of 'good-bad' wherein there is general agreement of what 'the good' is and on the ways to attain it, while making way especially for the role of free will and choice in achieving 'the good'. The disadvantages have to do with accepting an unfulfilled and disabled life as an order of fate, without any hope of achieving the good. A disturbance would occur with the appearance of a decomposing element for then one would not know how to act.

## **THE THREATENED IDENTITY OF SOME**

When the term 'people' is coined to distinguish one human group from another, it has the meaning that appears in the dictionary: 'conjunction of inhabitants of a place, region or country; the common people of a population'. This last phrase seems pejorative and feudal, reflective of a monarchist, military and/or religious mentality. Why have we allowed ourselves to be mistreated over centuries in this way? Those who stand out by their capacities are not part of the people? Is that dictionary written by common people? These people fall into fallacies due to the use of expressions of domination and exclusion.

In democratic thought, leaders rise up from the people. Therefore, there is no sense of a distinction between 'common or little people' because

we would all be 'common people'. Perhaps the distinction is protected by false democracies and not only in America; certainly, it would legitimize the definition given by the dictionary. This definition acquires a non-representative symbolic meaning from which, one assumes, it has to be a people. 'People' comprise everyone including those who do not think they are part of it. "Little or common" people have to be recognized by 'common people', otherwise 'they would not be accepted' as representatives of some people which they almost never represent, thus generating a cultural ambiguity.

This would be one of the ways in which 'an identity' is threatened, namely, when differences are more notorious and acceptable by the centres of power on the contrary, many people are prey to authoritarianism, guerrillas and state terrorism when searching for unity in their behaviour.

Historical vision plays a decisive role if we manage to analyse history as continuity and not as a story of foreign things that occurred 'far away and some time ago' or at a time which we are made to think does not belong to us. Extremely present events are not distant; they allow us to understand who we are and somehow who we will be. They are going to allow us to break with the irresponsible castrating illusion of a unique way of thinking, and the impossibility of modifying reality.

Without reason they apply force, closed fists and weapons. History is not repeated, but continues, which is worse because there is no time in history without cruelty and perversion. Here, the weak could be strong if they were to use the power of reason and argumentation against these fraudulent and violent methods. 'This is so, but can cease to be so' must be what all those that want to generate change must think; this is how change has taken place in the past. Why can't we generate such change now and talk of improvement and evolution?

We have lived with a monopolistic interpretation of our past, or without relating thereto. This could have been bequeathed to us by our parent and grandparent immigrants who, 'to have a new life in the new world', forgot their own history. But, what are we doing with this in our surroundings? Forced to inculcate obedience, we have accepted it. But we must not forget the 'good disobedient ones' who freed us from slavery, torture and guilt, which previously had been acceptable behaviour. We write from lived experience and cannot forget when the guilt was deposited in the victim adducing the famous expression: 'what will be, will be'; 'better to be quiet because the punishment will be worse' or something like this that justifies a false merit. History is the story of the struggle for power, avarice, possessions, and simony, as well as against hunger, oppression and in favour of equity.

Avarice was present in nearly every invasion of one people against another. In the case of America, this was the desire to possess the land and its gold and silver, two metals considered 'precious'. This desire was present in the 'invader' (which differed from that of the 'immigrant'). This excessive search led to slavery, torture, and massacre in order to denude the

soil of its wealth. The soil does not belong to us if we think that nobody is its owner, or belongs to us falsely if we apply the property principle. The inhabitants of this territory did not consider these two metals (the gold and the silver) to be precious. They were only 'metals' which they did not use to improve their quality of life; they were used only in their ornamentation and art. The inhabitants of this territory could do without them, but the avaricious usurpers could not.

In such a crusade, assassins were given cause by their service to the crown and 'heretics of the catholic faith' were burned. But when this proved to be problematic as the decreased native population meant a lack of workers, rather than recognize that the cause of this diminution was their own vileness—that the Indians, like gold and silver, were not 'renewable matter'—they began 'to import' African slaves, submitting them to similar humiliation.

The natives were not respected: they were not considered people. There was no effort to understand the peaceful way of life of most of the groups, and when these faced the usurpers they were treated as heretics and massacred for not accepting 'bulls' read in Spanish and Latin, two languages totally unknown to them. We are not going to detail events that nearly everybody already knows or should know. There is an abundant and an accessible bibliography to delve into that records and documents the conquests of the people and so-called heretics—genocides carried out in name of God, any god, not only the God of Christianity.

Today, we who write this book are the descendants of those conquerors, together with the survivors of the genocides. In a few cases we were the fruit of love, but in many cases the fruit of violations. We feel ourselves native and we defend all those that are subjugated. We no longer feel 'European' and, often, we are not recognized as having such an affiliation by these dominant centres. However, we are heirs of that same culture that on this soil became something different from what was desired.

## **MIGRATION AS A PROBLEM**

Today, we ask ourselves why they do not recognize us as part of their culture, but look upon us as modifiers who have infiltrated their real culture. Neither recognizes the other while we fail to acknowledge our 'identity' or, better 'our idiosyncrasy.' If we maintain a thought protected only in the arbitrary use of markers of gentility, we do not eliminate the discrimination nor the superiority of some over others. If those titles refer to ways of being, of seeing the world and making us different, we do not have to eliminate them, but we ought to maintain the difference without borders.

Should we allow 'the weight of the events' to lead to change? Can we do so with anticipation? The people who flee from hunger, misery, and humiliation think like those who thought that they had the right to appropriate things that did not belong to them; these people need each other. The question does not lie in knowing whether we are useful or useless, but

in knowing that we are people. Many people do not know this and are convinced that the other is not a person; this is what allows for the abuse of another's integrity.

Mistrust towards the immigrant enters all corners of human development. One example here is that a university degree obtained in one country does not serve in another; we have to accredit it. We are not talking of adaptation to the legislative differences that vary from one country to another, but of History, Philosophy, Physics, Biology, and Medicine. The suspicion of the fraudulence in granting titles in some countries imposes homologation, and we end up suspecting those who suspect us. The professional quality should be evaluated not by the name or the amount of hours devoted to a subject, but by the intellectual and professional honesty whereby each one carries out his or her pursuit of knowledge.

It is a bad thing, not simply to have too many possessions, but to have taken them from others by force. This means snatching away not only their material goods, but also their culture and their lives. It is absolutely immoral to act under the pretension that brute authority and power justifies a certain way of thinking and acting. It is immoral to deny the possibility of arriving at truth and to pretend that truth is to be found in the one who has the strongest weapons and the most money. It is immoral to prevent people arriving from 'other places, cultures or languages' in 'our' country or culture under the pretext of 'losing it', when we have for centuries supported these same processes.

## **MIGRATION AS COLLABORATION**

Many are able to establish relations with those who arrive in search of work, happiness, and the opportunity to live in a better country; they offer their friendship and aid and understand the 'immigrant's' need to work and study. We have spoken above about different layers in society, which include the governing class and which do not consider them part of the common people. Unfortunately, this class is still influential, and, oftentimes, undervalues the rights of the common people. Unfortunately the oppressive centralized mentality still exists. The conscience of the injustice appeared among us and now it is not important who submits to whom (Europeans, Americans, Muslims...). Nationality, language and status are already irrelevant. What is really important is the fact of domination of humankind against humankind. Here we attempt to unmask the arguments that maintain the difference in values and the need to oppress.

The solutions are distopic: we use this term to describe those who hypocritically deny what they desire. They deal with 'utopia' which knows that the desirable is impossible. They transform this into 'distopic' because they make an effort to advance possible solutions, which disperses the utopia in order that it might never be realized. .

We have spoken of cultural divisions within the same original culture and we have asked ourselves what causes these divisions. Our

response has been to point out that when the values of the original culture are forgotten and replaced by materialistic values, then the divisions inevitably appear. These divisions also affect the whole phenomena of immigration: perhaps thousands of immigrants try to amend the historical injustice by paying with their work and their lives for other people's avarice. Thus they repeat the lesson and make mendacity and theft their job. Indeed the very concept of job hierarchy and offices is conventional.

We defend in the 'others', their customs, religion, food and characteristics of the speech and desires. Many rulers feel 'invaded'; they never cease to think that the 'newcomers' are the result of 'continuous conquests' in search of a future that is denied to them in their country of origin. Immigrants know that they will lose most of their culture in a symbiosis that will generate a different culture. While mayors cry out about the fall of the 'walls', the 'cuirass of their cities' and the modification of their sacrosanct language, they forget the treasure of intercultural dialogue and fail to analyse the reasons that have given them the impulse to live in 'their' city in the first place.

In many cases immigrants are very welcome when they bring an intellectual capacity which offers solutions to problems that are much more efficient than the solutions of the native. We do not hesitate to indicate that this capacity, developed in certain latitudes, is the legacy of the continuous experience of people in complex situations, wherein they must improvise or invent strategies with minimum resources to overcome difficulties. These strategies are valued by those who do not confront these daily needs.

As Giordano Bruno said: "It is necessary that there are all sorts of men so that there can be their opponents". However, they keep insulting the foreigner, treating him as heretic and insisting that they adopt 'the good habits', the 'civilized' ones, which, of course, are assumed to be those values of the host country.

Also in the Americas, there are those who continue to favour spurious companies so that they become rich (with the work of those considered native); the companies are known as the kingdoms across of the ocean. The change already took place and the ones invaded were usually massacred, though some of the aboriginal populations managed to survive a bit longer. 'Reservations' and the blood mixed in our veins still remain. Many human beings are gone or are moulded according to the image of those who are created 'fathers' and who generated this model of culture. Could it have been otherwise? Here, what is important to recognize *being* before *process*.

In many ways we live in an ignorant, bellicose, corrupt and inhuman world with people who do not think about other people or who do not concern themselves with how to regulate the population of the world wisely, and to distribute the goods of the world justly so that everyone is able to find adequate food, shelter and happiness. We know that many cultures do not have the best living conditions, education or even just treatment between sexes. Is globalization, whose advantages are enjoyed in

big cities, but whose disadvantages are felt outside the cities, a genuine and just form of development? Faced with such oppressive situations, reactions vary. Some disappear, while others are forced to leave their homes and live in the place of the oppressor. Sometimes, they reap benefits from such moves, but often times they are exploited; the oppressor continues to be central while the culture of the oppressed is absorbed into the broader “culture” of the oppressor.

The conquerors run away, as much as the conquered do. Human beings are able to understand singularity and the non-existence of a universal causal principle. Although such negation has been affirmed by many philosophers, we can understand it only at the moment we cease to observe the attitudes of people. This was sought in order to generate robots who do not have to think about, or accept, the differences of people who emigrate.

In the title we spoke, on the one hand, of collaboration that is not already completely recognized, and on the other hand of the problem when economies are not able to absorb the number of people who enter a country, causing them once again to fall into the realm of the excluded.

If speeches and action are not based upon the daily reality of common people that recognize the real problems of a given society, then the capacity for change and innovation is truncated and clings to but a single path, taking on “essentialist” or even metaphysical dimensions. From this metaphysical conception, the immigrant cannot be seen as a collaborator, but as a problem. A division of the spiritual vision of the inner and the external is necessary in order not to be conscious of the contradictions, and not to take them as disturbing elements beyond the ideologies and conceptions arising from the prevailing culture. Cultures would work like preconceptions, transforming themselves into truths and preventing their natural evolution.

A mature society must not give in to mere compromise and resignation, but must be self-critical and recognize how all the different and complex cultural dimensions are related. What should be valued above all is the intercultural encounter, which can serve to enrich and strengthen society.

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## CHAPTER VII

# THE FUTURE OF LAW IN THE POSTMODERN SOCIETY: AN IBERO AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

ANDREA L. GASTRON

Hay un hambre que es tan grande como el hambre de pan.  
Y es el hambre de justicia, de comprensión. Y la producen  
siempre las grandes ciudades donde uno lucha, solo, entre  
millones de hombres indiferentes al dolor que uno grita y  
ellos no oyen.

(There is a hunger that is as big as the hunger for bread.  
And it is the hunger for justice, for understanding. And the  
big cities where one fights alone, among millions of men  
indifferent to the pain that one screams and they don't hear,  
always produce it.)

—Enrique Santos Discépolo

## INTRODUCTION

This present anguished reflection of Enrique Santos Discépolo is a good starting point for an essentially human journey that is as old as it is current, and which is intended here, once again, to imagine possible legal models for the future. This inquiry involves our whole being in the world, since culture and law are connected. In fact, in the law not only can the rules of law be clearly seen, but also (and essentially) the values they support and social behaviors that they legitimate. Werner Goldschmidt refers to this matter in his *trialist* theory, when he describes the three dimensions that converge in the legal world: the *dikelogical* dimension (the world of values), the *ruling* dimension (the world of rules) and the *sociological* dimension (the world of facts) [Goldschmidt, 1960].

Therefore, the proposal of building a legal order for a new world involves all and each one of the aspects of our social life, even when it seems a paradox. This is true also from the core of legal 'science' itself, where law becomes alive (for many, independently),<sup>1</sup> with its own operators

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<sup>1</sup> Analogically, we can apply here the notion of Levi-Strauss about "myths", systems of symbols through which societies structure their representations of the world. "Myths", and among them legal myths, i.e. the consideration of law as an isolated phenomenon of social life, acquire, for this

and with its own dynamics. Although it is not the purpose of this work to discuss different perspectives of the epistemological approach to law, they agree in the acknowledgment, either expressed or tacit, that the “legal order does not constitute, in fact, a self-sufficient system to solve all conceivable cases” [Nino, 1995: 94].

The recognition of the insufficiency of the legal system opens a new avenue for reflection about the future of law. It is precisely at this point that the non-regulatory legal notions<sup>2</sup> (that is to say, Goldschmidt *dikelogical* and sociological dimensions) enter into play. Among them, a notion that particularly interests us is that of justice. Not because we will analyze it in detail, but for its relationship with the law.

Without intending to exhaust the topic, but simply to bring it back to life, we will engage here in reflection on ideas related to how this dynamic developed in Ibero-American societies. This will be by means of a double dialectical focus: the metaphysical focus and the sociological, instrumental focus.

### **THE SPIRIT OF JUSTICE**

When in his *Lógica de la distopía* (Logics of Dystopia), Daniel Dei discusses the philosophical issue<sup>3</sup> of human destiny, he postulates, as an hypothesis, five statements, in two of which he refers concretely to law and its future in postmodern society. The author proposes a definition of what the legal phenomenon implies and urges us to meditate on it. Thus, he conceives the law as “the regulation of power and freedom in a certain society according to a spirit of justice”. Immediately afterwards, he points out the need for reflection on the future of postmodern society law [Dei, 2002: 26/7].

Even when we agree with the idea that the law cannot be detached from what is fair, it is not easy to completely understand what is understood

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way to say it, own life, not being men those that think of myths, but myths those that are thought of men”, clearly unconsciously (Magri, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> We name in this way those legal notions that, according to the hegemonical speech, do not integrate the normative aspect of law, a “closed, self-sufficient and without vacuums system.” In our perspective, the philosophical, sociological, economic, political, religious, technological, etc. dimensions, can be not only legal, but also normative, since they are part of the rule of law from their legislative conception, going by their application, until their interpretation for the jurisdictional bodies.

<sup>3</sup> Dei traces a significant line between *issue* and *problem*: while the latter refers to “an obstacle in our contact with reality that has 'solution' provided that we adopt the appropriate methodology and have information or the necessary knowledge“, the first one outlines “a question on sense”. Therefore, science deals with problems, while philosophy deals with issues: what the man is, what the world is, etc. (Dei, 2002: 23).

by the ‘spirit of justice’, let alone to define it. In this way [Dei [2002: 26], mentions the “*harmonic*<sup>4</sup> adaptation between spaces of identity in which movements of the freedom and power of each man are set within the framework of one society and of each society with respect to the other”. Conceived in this way, to administer justice implies much more than the classic definition of ‘giving everyone their fair share’: it means having an effective disposition towards a communicative encounter in the recognition of the possibility that we are part of a fair world [Dei, 2000].

According to our initial focus, we can observe in this definition several levels of analysis<sup>5</sup>. From a sociological point of view, the aforementioned definition does not completely satisfy. On the one hand, because we suspect that here the problem of fairness has been replaced by ‘harmony’. The two notions do not necessarily coincide: could the meaning of *harmony* in an Eastern culture be in opposition to that of *justice* in the West? On the other hand, even when the explanation may be obvious, it is necessary to distinguish between the *natural* inclination that men and societies have toward freedom and power in an ideal, or rather deontological frame (a statement that is, at least, debatable),<sup>6</sup> and what actually happens in the empirical reality,<sup>7</sup> wherein multiple painful examples show that too many people are not inclined to defend the idea of *justice* referred to here. However, it is in this philosophical frame that Dei presents his ideas. From this space, the vision of justice which the author conceives is not only interesting, but also liberating for one who, in spite of a continuous search, does not find it in the phenomenal world.

History, *magistra vitae*, shows that, when this ‘spirit of Justice’ does not exist or is biased [...], the law ends up legitimating depersonalized uses of power and canceling individual and national freedoms [Dei, 2002: 26].

Indeed, paradoxically, the spirit of Justice may be better understood when it is absent; then citizens are mobilized against the lack of justice, and

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<sup>4</sup> The italic is original of the author.

<sup>5</sup> We can certainly add to the points of view mentioned before, the political, ethical, religious, etc, dimensions, but note that this is not an exhaustive list.

<sup>6</sup> We think, mainly, in the Hobbesian or Marxist conceptions of power, State and justice, to mention two of the well known authors that would put that statement among question marks.

<sup>7</sup> We should make clear that, to our understanding, the society does not constitute a “space” or frame in which people are developed (and consequently, neither to movements of freedom and power). On the contrary, *the person takes the society inside*: so inside indeed that as Durkheim demonstrated, one acquires conscience of the obligatory character of social behavior, when one deviates from this, and a *sanction* appears.

perfectly know what they want. We leave, once again, the philosophical frame to choose the approach preferred by science.

Our nation knows enough about mobilizations and protests for justice. Indeed, Argentinean history can be told in terms of such protests: the unjust and the old appear as synonyms in popular knowledge ('older than injustice'). Not all nations, however, underwent the same sufferings. The Swiss sociologist, Christian Lalive-D'Epinaï,<sup>8</sup> says that his is a society 'without history': the last time that the Swiss went on strike was during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the last time they took to the streets was during the Second World War. It is not the purpose of this work, however, to carry out an exhaustive description of the popular mobilizations for justice. We leave to the historians the task of trying to understand the meaning of the narration of the past based on the absences of the present. But in speaking of justice, it is fair to remember that the claims for a more equitable society are not exclusive to this part of the world: there are examples as different as those of Japan or the French resistance. Therefore, although the clamor for a fairer world seems to be universal, the conditions in which they took place have varied over history. The literature offers multiple and rich examples in this respect, but perhaps more eloquent are the verses of Lope of Vega in his immortal *Fuenteovejuna*: 'Cuando se alteran/los pueblos agraviados, y resuelven, /nunca sin sangre o sin venganza vuelven.' (When aggrieved nations / become agitated /and they make up their mind, / they never return without blood or without vengeance.)

## LAW AND MODERNITY

Our choice of *Fuenteovejuna* to illustrate the spirit of justice is only apparently fortuitous: the work brilliantly exemplifies the fight between the crown and the feudal nobility that preceded the Spanish unification by the Catholic Kings. It puts in evidence, through the popular claim of justice or 'rule of Law', the passage from a feudal manner of community life to the political or national society, and the consolidation of the entrance of Spain into Modernity. What a historical coincidence! The time in which *Fuenteovejuna* was conceived, in fact, witnessed the discovery of the New World by the Spaniards. The painful birth of America into its new historical reality would mark inherently and accompany forever the *new* continent by the claim for Justice. This inaugurated a Modernity that coined the definitions of law and rule of law that have prevailed until today: law defined after *sanction* as *ultima ratio* or last resort.

We should observe here the classic definition of Max Weber: "An order should be called law when it is externally guaranteed by the probability of *coercion* (physical or psychical) exercised by a cadre of

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<sup>8</sup> In personal conversation with the author.

individuals with the mission of forcing the observance of that order or of punishing its transgression” [1964: 27]. We would also like to cite two more definitions by the same author regarding state and power, which are subjacent to this modern legal conception. For Weber, state is “a *political institution* of continuous activity, when, and to the extent that its administrative cadre successfully maintains the pretension to a *legitimate monopoly* of physical coercion for the maintenance of the order in force”, while ‘power’ is the “probability of imposing their own will inside a social relationship, even against all resistance and whichever the foundation of that probability” [Weber, 1964: 43-44].

Therefore, modernity conceives law as a phenomenon framed in certain typical forms of state and power, characterized as the domain of some people over others, under the legitimacy of certain typically modern instrumental rationality.<sup>9</sup>

In Thrasymachus’ sense of justice, what is fair is equal to the interest of the strongest, that is to say, the state, by virtue of the delegation of the monopoly of the use of force through the ‘social pact’ (Hobbes). This prevailing view in the hegemonic discourse of social sciences (that includes, of course, legal speech), constitutes, for modernity, a *paradigm*<sup>10</sup> that, according to Dei, seems to have turned into a *paradogma*.<sup>11</sup> It is this same rationality, this same logic that today is being strongly discussed due to the fact that humanity is facing “one of the deepest and distinctive historical crises of its ontological identity: that of its own identity as species” [Dei, 2004: 3].

The *utopia*, the place of hope, becomes then, at the beginning of the new millennium, *dystopia*: the bad place. And America, formerly also a utopia (the New World), constitutes today one of the most eloquent chapters of this history. It manifests ever more deeply a line that separates power and obedience, wealth and poverty, opulence and marginality.

## **LAW IN POSTMODERN SOCIETY**

The challenge for new generations, therefore, consists in building a different way of life: “it can be affirmed that post-modernity is the end of a

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<sup>9</sup> Defined according to Kantian meaning.

<sup>10</sup> The legal paradigms are associated to the perspectives that are conformed by the implicit images that the society has of the legislative practice and of the enforcement of the law: this is, in fact, what “is inferred from legal decisions that, by virtue of certain criteria, are considered exemplary, and in most cases, is usually equal to the implicit image that judges have from society”. (Habermas, 2001: 473).

<sup>11</sup> *Paradigms* also configure a closed frontier to the fullness of life itself as long as they condition the creation of encounter environments among men [...], as true *hypostasis* of reality in the texture of supposedly consecrated positive knowledge“. (Dei, 2002: 153-4).

story: a story of a rationality that has put an end to all dreams, but that has shown certain effectiveness to carry them out" [Dei, 2002: 116]. It is time, then, to shuffle and deal again. The hope of our own existence, and that of our children, shows us that the construction of a new utopia is still possible and should be attempted once more.

Again, the words of Dei are relevant here: "The possibility of the absurdity of life is a matter that adopts the most dramatic personal experience in the search for meaning. At this point, *ab initio* of any story, the nonsense is eliminated as an alternative to the origin of the existence" [2002: 113].

This utopia poses a new conception of law: mere coercion is not enough in a state that is defenseless before 'new threats' and new problems; today it is not clear what this is, nor is its scope clear. For this, we have the ashes of the modern and already old utopia. We should not underestimate, however, those ashes: it is well known that the Phoenix was reborn from those ashes. We support a definition of law that necessarily includes, among its components, if not justice itself, at least its spirit, its yearning, its desire, its eagerness. These components, which carry so much pain and unfulfilled dreams as well as hope throughout history, manifest the people of Ibero-America in all its greatness and in all its miseries. With this, the wise words of the Argentinean jurist, Eduardo Couture, come to mind when he told the lawyers that "your duty is to fight for the law but, the day you find a conflict between law and justice, to fight for justice". This is also a modern legacy.

Is it possible to transcend (and here we appeal no longer to the sociological or the philosophical perspectives, but directly to the possibility of life on our planet) the prevailing notion of power as a dominion relationship, as a 'zero sum' calculation (to the extent that this power arises always at the expense of the others), and to express it in new terms? We do not know it, but to attempt it today is a categorical imperative.

If the sanction is no longer enough as an essential element according to the conception we are elaborating about law in the postmodern society, and if, on the other hand, the spirit of justice is not excluded from the legal phenomenon, we should conclude that the idea of law proposed here for future society is indeed as revolutionary as was the parable of the Prodigal Son, and the Judeo-Christian pardon regarding the *Lex Talionis* (Law of Retaliation).

It is necessary now to turn to the political<sup>12</sup> and revolutionary act of creating a new order of law for the society of the future, and to completely assume the consequences of this deliberate act of intellectual freedom. This new law includes the experience of what has been learned, the mistakes and successes of a long and already condemned legal conception rationally defined.

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<sup>12</sup> We use Mannheim's definition (1993: 100-1), for whom a political act is the innovative act, that is to say, the act that originates rules.

In this way, we do not conceive law as based in the characteristic way of sanction, but as a process based on a feeling toward a genuine pre-disposition to dialogue between the parties, in the sincere conviction that both parties will thus be strengthened in their search for the truth. This process tries, to a certain extent, to overcome the so-called 'procedural' conceptions of law that are characterized by offering an open frame to any result [Zuleta Puceiro, 2003: 20]. We think that law constitutes a true teaching-learning process, in which mistakes can be capitalized upon, since they constitute new opportunities for action.

In fact, by instrumental rationality, in assuming (ahead of time) the failure of certain means for certain ends due to lack of adaptation, one cannot realize the long but vain social process of education that is generated from the errors. These can be seen as short term failures, but are also valuable sources of social learning in the long run.

Undoubtedly, this vision implies a new dimension for time: the time of the teaching-learning process, which may even take several historical generations, and that incorporates the experiences of life, the personal experiences of the whole being and of all beings, within their own circumstances. From this point of view, it is clear that the concepts of justice and law have changed through history, as did human societies. Indeed, there is still a lot to be changed in these dynamics, as the history of mankind has not ended. In general, we can see that some spaces of freedom and equality have been extended. From a sociological-legal framework, this trend can be observed, in Ibero-America, through the *formal* extinction of certain *legal-normative institutions* of the past: slavery, *mita*,<sup>13</sup> *encomienda*,<sup>14</sup> racial inequalities, sexual discrimination, etc.

Thus, legal changes taking place during the past years have reached areas so dissimilar as procedural law (i.e., in the evaluation of the evidence), family law (in the democratization of family relationships: between spouses, former spouses, parents and children, children born in and out of wedlock, etc.), civil law (in the changes regarding responsibility and the scope of the development of damages), administrative law (i.e., in the consideration of compensation by state expropriation), etc.. These have resulted at the same time in a greater inclusion of the different social actors into the legal dynamics (women, religious, class, age, and ethnic minorities, etc.), an inclusion that, of course, has not yet ended.

At the same time, every day we are surprised by acts which are 'instrumentally irrational' in terms of the logic of the market, but absolutely rational from a solidarity or cooperative logic. These show that education, and therefore law, are still possible: a mother gives birth to her baby, putting at risk her own life; voluntary doctors dedicate their time and work to assist sick people; a teacher teaches the first letters to adults that had not had the

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<sup>13</sup> Forced labor imposed on South American Indians by the Spaniards.

<sup>14</sup> Indian village and inhabitants granted to Spanish colonists by royal decree.

opportunity to learn how to read and to write when young; a stranger stops the car to help another repairing mechanical damage to his car. None of these appear in the newspapers, no one expects an immediate compensation, except for the feeling of happiness this produces in serving others. But we all know that these cases are countless.

Examples like these were perceived by great authors, although many times it is necessary to read them between the lines. Indeed, the Weberian conception of a rationality that considers the values, no longer the ends, of the action, is an example of this perception [Gastron, 1994: 81]. What is true is that the overwhelming logic of the 'action-reaction' pattern, can be disarticulated when we oppose to 'violent action' a 'non violent' answer (or a 'new action', as long as it is not conditioned by the act that provoked it, and therefore, free of their consequences) [Arendt, 1974: 318].

The fact that this opposition is not so frequent in the history of mankind does not mean that it does not have a certain transcendence (we think of the Gandhian *ahimsa*<sup>15</sup> or the 'other cheek' of Christianity); the fact that it is not in the daily news, does not imply that it does not exist. In what other sense could the spontaneous and silent emergence of the increasing number of solidarity networks, which still sustain a more visible, but also more discredited and corrupt public world, be interpreted?

## **TOWARD A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER**

Using this sociological approach, we will look now to the contributions of the social sciences to gender studies from Ibero-America, as these emphasize the emergence of new epistemological and methodological paradigms [Gastron, 2000: 127-145]. Today it is not possible to think about the future of law in the postmodern society without considering the gender perspective in the legal world. This perspective transcends the mere incorporation of women into the judiciary (which was unthinkable until recently), since today this inclusion has, as fundamental motivation, 'labor equality' between genders.

A legal perspective on gender implies, among other things, shedding light on the mechanisms through which the expectations of institutions and those engaged in the legal profession (manifested through monolithic perspectives) are imposed on minority group perspectives, especially women. At this point, we should mention the interesting distinction between power and influence, based on some of the definitions examined: while the first guarantees, in the form of legitimate power or dominance, that the order of the one who exercises it be obeyed [Weber,

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<sup>15</sup> Meaning inoffensive, that does not use violence: it is the rock foundations of the Gandhi's credo, and one of the fundamental mechanisms through which he had successfully opposed to the British power, achieving the independence of India.

1964: 43]; the second operates indirectly: it is power through the others [Amorós, 1988: 20]

While males have the power, women only have influence ('behind every great man, there is a great woman'). Acknowledging this social reality in many countries, measures have been taken to inform people with decision making power (among them, members of the judiciary) about the importance of the incorporation of a gender perspective in the areas under their charge (including the whole legal process). We have selected a few of the many examples from four Spanish speaking countries: Spain, Peru, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua.

In Spain, Law 30, of October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003, by the King, imposes measures to incorporate the assessment of gender impact on the legal provisions elaborated by the Government.

In Peru, the Judiciary promotes some courses for the post of the Justice of the Peace, which are carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, by virtue of the Program of 'Improvement of Access to Justice' financed by the Inter American Development Bank, training on gender topics is being promoted for the Justices of the Peace in four departments of the country.

In Costa Rica, where the president of the Supreme Court is a woman, women officials of the Judiciary's Technical Secretariat of the Gender of the Judiciary and of the National Institute of Women (INAMU) have joined to initiate the validation of a process to raise public awareness that is directed to male and female judges so that they can include, in their determinations, gender perspectives based on regulations and laws included in international agreements on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In Managua, Nicaragua, an event called 'For Gender Justice' took place in October 2003. It was sponsored by the Government of Denmark, through the Human Rights Program for Central America; the Woman, Justice and Gender Program of Ilanud, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). This international meeting included representatives of the Supreme Courts and Constitutional Courts of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela.

## **CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF LAW IN THE POSTMODERN SOCIETY**

If it is true that 'experiences of pain and hope teach us deeply about law and justice', then education is still possible. It is time to think of law as a teaching-learning process, and emphasizing its relation to the popular yearning of justice, that is, to conceive it from the perspective of the minority groups (among them, women), and to discard old modes of discourse. We must build a legal reality where the logic of solidarity is

imposed as a norm, more than as an exception and where justice is based on an authentic disposition to communication.

We should attempt to reach a 'new social construction of law' from a common understanding that is based on respect and genuine 'understanding' of the place of 'the other as an entity by him/herself', just as the French Revolution wanted. This was the foundation stone of modernity according to the ideas of freedom (as assumption), equality (as objective) and fraternity (as condition).

Today, when it is popular to speak of 'prospects', we face an irreversible fact: the future, fortunately or unfortunately, is still a *field of uncertainty*, "politically uncertain for all generations, for all nations, and for all the people, perhaps foreseeable or maybe controllable, but always uncertain" [Agulla, 2000: 11-12].

If, as part of humanity, we are going to build the future, we should assume ethical as well as political responsibility. In the chaotic but enlightening narrative of Juan C. Agulla, one of his last works, he states: "[it is] an existential, current, historical and cultural problem that is projected toward the future, inserted into an unknown future, since the future is not what it used to be" [2000: 7]. (Paul Valéry). ... "A virtual existence—is thought, perceived, dreamt, criticized, defended, denigrated, and, therefore, misunderstood [...] a virtual future—is feared by an ample intellectual sector of the West, because they see and even predict danger or risk environments for the life of man, humankind and the entire planet."

Before the Society of Risk, it is not wrong to propose alternative values through which human life should be worth more than a dream. The political uncertainty of the future of humanity and the absurdity of the nonsense of life constitute, perhaps at the moment, the only truths on which the law of the society of tomorrow will be based. They are few, but overwhelming truths.

#### **EPILOGUE: IBERO-AMERICA AN UTOPIA TO KEEP ON BELIEVING IN—IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING<sup>16</sup>**

Antes de la peluca y la casaca  
fueron los ríos arteriales:  
fueron las cordilleras, en cuya onda raída  
el cóndor o la nieve parecían inmóviles:  
fue la humedad y la espesura, el trueno  
sin nombre todavía, las pampas planetarias.

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<sup>16</sup> The title was suggested to us by the Hebrew expression Lamroth Hakol ("In spite of everything"). This is the name chosen for their community, located in Florida, Province of Buenos Aires, by its founders, Jewish Germans who escaped from Nazism, when they arrived in Argentina during the II World War.

(Before the wig and the coat / there were the arterial rivers:  
/ there were the mountain ranges in whose frayed wave /  
the condor or the snow seemed immobile: / it was humidity  
and thicket, the thunder without name yet, the planetary  
pampas.)

—Pablo Neruda, *Canto general*

When re-reading these pages, we have the feeling that the words can be part of the thoughts of a night owl dreamer, a romantic of the past, a confirmed optimist, or at best, simply an idealist—far from the kind of “neutral” text required by an objective scientific work; our position is, at best, not very conventional, since we sustain that the law will be transformed, in the future, into something similar to the educational social process, in the dynamics of trial and error. Where are the legal components, the sanctions, the state, the power, in this idea?

At this point, it is fair to say that there is some intuition of experience of life, of common sense. We nurture ourselves with these sources of knowledge, and at the same time we rescue them. Scientific ‘scholarly’ knowledge and discourse feed, probably without knowing it, from the alternative, not official or marginal knowledge.

It is true that the resources of a science conceived to describe, explain and predict phenomena are insufficient to envisage the future: for this reason, we proposed a double-focus approach that works dialectically: sociological and philosophical, instrumental and metaphysical. Anyway, the modern, rational, empirical science has a birth certificate (probably, with the appearance of Galileo Galilei), but not a death certificate? Many years ago, Mark Twain complained that human intelligence is limited, but stupidity is limitless.

The history of humankind, which seems to confirm this phrase, contains a subtle paradox: in all religions, in all cultures, in all known societies, men always kept a space for a hope that transcends all empiric corroboration, because it touches the soul [Bollnow, 1962; 89]. Once again, deceitfully, as in a Pandora’s Box, the unreasonableness that contains the nonsense appears: is life an absurd wound?

In the omnipresent hope there hides the astonishing human capacity to continue learning in spite of everything; what should this be called if not intelligence? How to recognize it, if not in law? As a work based on the difficulties of the teaching of law in a University of the Province of Buenos Aires, Cardinaux and González concludes: “the crisis is not a valid excuse to defer the debate but a good reason to deepen it” [2004: 145]. Against all logic, for centuries, the future of law continues today; it is capable of being spoken, imagined, felt, and dreamt by men and women, even from Ibero-America. And this is not insignificant.

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## CHAPTER VIII

# THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF PAIN IN IBERO AMERICAN POST-MODERNITY: A VIEW FROM ARGENTINIAN CULTURE

*MARTA C. BIAGI*

Justice is subjected to disputes, power is clearly  
recognizable and it is not subjected to disputes.  
In such a way that it has not been possible to  
empower justice, because power  
has contradicted justice and declared  
that it (justice) was unfair and that it (power) was fair .  
And therefore, unable to make powerful  
what is fair, what has power has been made fair.  
—Blaise Pascal, *Thoughts*, § 285-288

### SOCIAL PAIN IN POSTMODERN CULTURE

We were invited to participate in these collective reflections about some of the consequences of a certain ‘logic of interaction’ in the postmodern world. These are condemned to perpetuate the prevailing personal and socio-political crises during all of European modernity. From our own discipline and in a fertile dialogue with philosophy, our aim is to offer a vision of Latin America to other cultures and regions.

We are not philosophers; our expressions come from the social sciences—particularly from sociology and political science. But we believe that those sciences, without abandoning their own object, ‘are close to’ metaphysics and can strive to reach the point of “maximum ontological density that such sciences can and should reach” [Caponnetto, 1992: 45].

We agree that all sciences share a metaphysical character, particularly, the social and human sciences. These should be able to approach a vision of man that, "without abandoning their particular perspective, uses the principles of the entity and the entity ‘itself’ to reach the ontological strength that is possible when knowledge is not relegated to a simple construction of thought” [Caponnetto, 1992: 46].<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To show the hierarchy of metaphysics within the sciences, we adhere to the way in which some thinkers we follow in their philosophical reflections define themselves in questions of man and society. In order to provide a philosophical framework for our words, we have extracted some of Dei’s ideas in which he ironically responds to those who would argue that a philosophical reflection “becomes fastidiously metaphysical, dispensable, when it tries to

We will approach questions of social pain: how it manifests itself in the postmodern culture as part of a rationality crisis; and how the denial of social pain, be it under the acceptance of anomie, injustice, impunity or indifference, contributes to reproducing it. These aspects of the crisis lead us to meditate on ways to overcome social pain, and on the meaning and acceptance of suffering as a genuinely human road for the regeneration of a lost good.

Why from Latin America? We will briefly revise the reasons of its delayed arrival at modernity and how these ‘disadvantages’ became advantages for overcoming its limitations. History, as Carlos Ibarguren recalled [1978:17] quoting Huizinga, ‘. . . is the spiritual way through which a culture gives an account of its past’. Along the same line of thought, Dei [2002: 19] connects history and the future because they are ways ‘to forge a consistent present and a significant space of identity,’ and because history is not in the past, but rather ‘is basically a source for human transcendence.’

My starting point will be to verify that the crisis of identity which we suffer as a human species is the product of the prevailing crisis of rationality in the modern West—prolonged till the present as dystopia. This is the focal point of Dei’s thought [2002: 80-81] which we intend to highlight. It leads us to what Frankl denominates as “pathologies of the spirit of our time” [Frankl, 1990: 237].<sup>2</sup> These ideas have inspired me to link the logic of the postmodern dystopia to the problem of pain and suffering, to their deep acceptance through the logic of love based on hope, which are man’s true and possible liberations.

## **THE CRISIS OF RATIONALITY AND SOCIAL PAIN**

Man and postmodern culture are governed by the principle of the real performance or efficiency founded on freedom based on having possessions and the power of domination. Freedom and power are the two axes of the diagnosis of the crisis of rationality mentioned by European

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question itself in all freedom and with critical rigor about the meaning of the reality we constructed” (Dei, 2002: 17). The author insists that philosophy deals with “questions”, that is, interrogations of meaning always open to each response given to “new dimensions, significant for the existence of the interrogator” (Dei, 2002: 22-23).

Similarly, Caponnetto, from his double vision as doctor involved in social welfare work philosophically, explains that he has tried to walk through the questions that disturbed him in his medical practice and in daily dealings with patients, moment in which—in his own words—a relationship is established in which the patient is the main character. He is not a philosopher, but a “doctor who looks to philosophy for the answers that medicine, as a particular science, cannot provide, even though it forms the questions” (Caponnetto, 1992: 9).

<sup>2</sup> It is mentioned by Caponnetto (1995).

postmodern thinkers which Dei analyzes, and the crisis of identity that we suffer “as the human species” [Dei, 2002: 74-84].

Dei says that European philosophers who explain the crisis in these terms are ethnocentric, because they judge things in terms of the vulnerability of their orphan identity, which lacks a fundamental reason. The crisis of European rationality is the effect of being uprooted because, as an instrument of domination, freedom based on having causes a de-centering of the conscience of the world. Some postmodern thinkers believe that we experience a threat to human freedom. In fact, they only explain the one type of freedom, that of having, which is threatened in its foundational power of domination [Dei, 2002: 74].

Postmodernity is the name of the crisis in this type of society wherein a specific kind of reductionist rationality is the model. It is an endogenous phenomenon—a European crisis—but at the same time its powerful planetary effects establish a new and subtler discourse of power. This rationality is not without certain scientific-technological charms. Yet it has left aside some moral commitments involved in the metaphysical constructions of modernity, which worked as the legitimization of the universal values of ‘progress’, ‘freedom’, ‘civilization’, ‘supremacy of the spirit’, ‘well-being’, and the ‘display of Reason’ [Dei, 2002: 84]. Some of the basic paradigmatic values of modernity at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century turned into their opposite: from faith in man and in progress, there was a move to the lack of faith and of utopias, to uncontrolled wars, to domination by force, nihilism, hedonism, consumerism, and a culture of images and of subjectivism [Cruz, 1996].

Dei asserts that post-modernity is a dystopia, meaning that it is the final point of the project of modernity. He explains that post-modernity “is a continuation of the meaning of modernity” [Dei, 2002: 75-76] and that there is also an internal bond between modern utopia and postmodern dystopia.

The postmodern dystopia could provide a critical way for humanity to develop a more lucid conscience, continues Dei, but this is not what we presently experience. We see, rather the universalization of a more cynical rationality. Men operate without the “inefficiency” of a moral conscience.

Another voice is that of Pope Benedict XVI [2005]<sup>3</sup> who condemned what he called the ‘intolerable satiety’ of many nations and many individuals that carry an immense load of humiliations. Opposed to the traditional biblical satiety of food and years, which was considered a sign of the divine blessing, is the huge majority of those overwhelmed by humiliations, of the disdain of the arrogant, of the conceited and immoral who, vain in their success and filled with their own sense of wellbeing, challenge God by breaching the rights of the weak. Those who are in need of a divine intervention and trust their cause to the Lord will see He is not

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<sup>3</sup> In the General Audience on June 15, 2005, Benedict XVI commenting on *Psalms* 122, “The Lord, hope of the people”, recalled that the relationship with God is an exchange of love glances. Zenith.org. news. Vatican City.

indifferent; He does not dash their hopes. We will address this matter at the end of this paper. How is it possible to analyze, based on social categories that the contemporary state of mind experiences by some people as ‘disenchantment’ and by others as a satiety of humiliations?

### **SOCIAL PAIN AND GLOBAL PATHOLOGIES**

The concept of social pain originated in psychoanalysis and in the clinical experiences of people treated for collective traumas. These may be massive uprooting as a consequence of wars, refugees, undocumented migrants and similar problems. They manifest the contrasts in and between societies where the crisis of coexistence reaches alarming levels. However, as we meditate deeply on this topic, we perceive that social pain is an inherent characteristic of the whole postmodern society, which in turn exacerbates the contradictory dynamics and paradoxes grounded in modernity. We will return later to this idea.

From the sociological point of view, Durkheim was the first to notice that the development of the modern society was generating a negative emotional state in communities. For the founder of academic sociology, it was not true that the industrial society was generating a more integrated and better society; on the contrary, it showed a growing state of collective uneasiness. A key concept introduced by Durkheim is that of social anomie, which can be defined as the ills suffered by a society because of the absence of moral rules. This is caused by economic imbalances and the weakening of its institutions, which entail a low level of integration.

In his well-known study on suicide, he observes that “in our modern societies anomie is a regular and specific factor in suicides; one of the sources of the annual contingent of suicides” [Durkheim, 1995: 277]<sup>4</sup>. But the most interesting aspect of his contribution is his diagnosis of modern society where the gradual increase of the observed suicide rates points to an increasing feeling of sadness—up to pathological levels

The predominant suicide in modernity is the “selfish suicide”. This is a product of a lack of meaning or of a reason to live. In “anomic suicide”, suffering emerges because of the weakness of the individual’s bonds with society, which is a consequence of the state of social disorganization. Neither of these existed in the Middle Ages, when guilds or the Church were important institutions that for the individual provided a sense of belonging [Durkheim, 1995:214]. These institutions have now disappeared or are no longer influential in people’s lives.

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<sup>4</sup> A recent study of the University of California has even demonstrated via experimental research that social pain is similar to physical pain in its neurocognitive function, since it alerts us when we have suffered any damage in our social connections, allowing us to follow the steps to recover from the inflicted wound. Social exclusion, sadness and intense solitude seem to share the same neurological paths as physical pain (Eisenberg, 2003).

We begin by locating the notion of social pain in the concept that originates it: pain. There are three dimensions of pain: physiological, psychological, and social. Pain is a phenomenon experienced by every human being together with death. It is a personal experience that differs in each individual [Lewis, 2001].

In the first dimension, physiological pain alerts the body to an injury and it has a neurocognitive function. Pain is not an organic function, but the consequence of the injury of a function. There is no sense in our organism specialized in the detection of pain; we suffer with our whole body, psyche and sensitivity. In some cases it warns us of a danger, or of a risk, or illness, but that is not always its function and even the warning is not always immediate. There are even sick people where pain is silenced who have no sensitivity and others, such as hypochondriacs, who suffer pain without a pathological basis [Le Breton, 1999].

Pain is not only a stimulus perceived and transmitted towards our brain by the nerve fiber. Its psychic dimension is an event perceived by an individual who has a history of previous experiences in which his/her whole personality is at risk and who lives under certain cultural patterns.

Finally, the social dimension of pain appeared first in psychoanalysis. It uses the concept of social pain to draw upon the theory and epistemological basis of the discipline in order to observe the social conditions that originated the trauma. Freud's studies on hysteria in 1895 had already broadened our understanding of the dimension of pain to reach the cultural meaning of an event suffered by a certain personality<sup>5</sup>.

The kind of pain in which we are interested here is in personal and private experience, from losses or threats of losses of our social bonds, such as the loss of people, loved ones, goods, functions, employment. How can we understand the intelligibility of pain and suffering caused by violence, migrations, wars and its impact on children and women? Or the institutional violence that takes the shape of abandonment and impoverishment of the services and responsibilities of the state? [Ulriksen of Viñar, 2002].

Phenomena such as intolerance of differences, abuse of power ("mobbing" or labor harassment, domestic violence or conflicts with neighbors, among others), family conflicts due to unemployment or a parents' absence due to migrations or wars, are all phenomena of social pain. In these, the person does not appear only as a product of his own past or of his psychic structure alone; rather, they are rooted in the social dimensions of subjectivity [Berk, 2002]. Other authors have studied social pain from the perspective of the suffering caused to the individual in

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<sup>5</sup> As with Psychology, a theoretical and epistemological space should be opened for sociology of social pain to contribute its theoretical perspective and work methods. The work of sociologist and anthropologist David Le Bretón is essential, as is a reading the Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* by John Paul II (1984), which Le Bretón has thoroughly analyzed and used in his writings.

ideological and political contexts in which some people subject others to violent and destructive aspects acting as "radio-active nuclei" [Gampel, 2002].

In all these cases, the socio-cultural structures do not fulfill their protective function and the sense of abandonment is transferred to interpersonal bonds, even reaching the limit of dehumanization and pure violence [Sztompka, 1995]. These situations of pure violence (such as indiscriminate urban attacks) are signs of a rupture of the primary social bonds and prevent the construction of a personal and community identity. The culture of abandonment prevents the individual's identification in that people cease to consider one another as fellowmen, as Hobbes points out [Franco, 2002].

The French psychoanalyst, René K aes (2002), is specialized in the relationship between the psyche and institutional relations, such as those of the labor world. He has made critical observations on the notion of social pain, but uses the term 'global pathologies' to refer to this matter<sup>6</sup>. Among the global pathologies he mentions are, the psychic and physical sufferings caused by: a) the organization of labor that disqualifies and excludes vast numbers of people; b) pathologies that arise around political refugees, people without legal personal documents, those who request asylum, and many others that have almost no possibilities to be integrated into the community and c) unemployment, which is another global pathology. In contemporary society, a job not only is linked to subsistence but is also a way of being perceived by the rest of the society. Not having a job causes social pain because the person feels useless and disqualified.

In our opinion, these are very valuable approaches to the problem of pain, but we believe it is necessary to avoid the sociological bias that could be implicit in some of these visions. When a sociological view prevails, "the meaning of the *logos* disappears, the kingdom of the spirit disappears, and so does the possibility of fulfilling values and exercising a responsible freedom" [Caponnetto, 1995:137-138].

## THE MEANING OF SUFFERING

In 1929 Freud wrote, in his article "The Uneasiness in Culture":

Today human beings have mastered the forces of nature so much that, with their aid, it would be easy for them to exterminate one another, up to the last man. They know it; and this is the origin of the contemporary restlessness, of their misery, of their broken-heartedness [Freud...].

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<sup>6</sup> The term pain most closely linked to the body "would show the body in its most biological entity". While pain does not admit symbolization, "suffering, frustration, uneasiness, can be symbolized."

The anguish described by Freud as "cultural uneasiness" corresponds to the desperate man of contemporary existentialism: Arrogance is the root of desperation... [Caponnetto, 1995: 150-151]. The desperate man that emerges from the crisis of humanism trusts only the power of reason, believing that he is the center of attention and the axis of all appraisals. Frankl places the attitude of the desperate man against the attitude of one who offers to assume the sacrifice: the *homo patiens*. This man does not take reason to be the only way to find meaning in life and suffering, but rather "opens himself to the trust in the supra-sense, hidden and ineffable. . ." [Caponnetto, 1995: 153]. In a physical or moral dimension, suffering is a *universal* reality. All men, at all times, have the common experience of suffering pain in body and soul.

Second, suffering is a *human* phenomenon, because, although animals know pain, "only man knows that he suffers when he suffers".

Third, it is a *subjective* dimension as "a personal fact, locked inside the concrete dimensions of man; suffering seems almost ineffable and not transferable [...]"

A fourth dimension shows suffering as an "objective reality". It should be dealt with, meditated upon and conceived as an explicit problem. Therefore, "basic questions should be asked about it and the answers sought..." [John Paul II, 1984] <sup>7</sup> "To suffer", explained Le Breton, "is to feel the instability of your own personal condition in a pure state, without being able to mobilize defenses other than the technical or moral defenses".

*Salvifici Doloris* is even more precise: who suffers? Man suffers because of a good in which he does not share, from which in a certain sense he is cut off, or of which he has deprived himself. He particularly suffers when he ought—in the normal order of things—to have a share in this good and does not have it [John Paul II, 1984]. The reality of suffering is inseparably tied to evil. Man suffers whenever he experiences any kind of evil [Pope John Paul II, 1984]. This takes us to another question about the essence of evil: what is evil? And another problem follows: why evil?

Pope John Paul II (1984) asserts:

This world, at some periods of time and in some eras of human existence, as it were, *becomes particularly concentrated* (in italics in the original). This happens, for example, in cases of natural disasters, epidemics, catastrophes, upheavals and various social scourges: one

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<sup>7</sup> There is no room to deny or reduce this reality; pain is not reduced to a mere feeling of the body's machine. Nor is there room for the Cartesian dualism that splits body and spirit. Man is a person: a unit of body and soul. This implies three aspects: he is a subject, who exists for himself, and not in another; he is an individual, undivided substance, and thus, complete and separate; he has a rational nature, that is, the person is the support of a rational nature [Caponnetto, 1995: 114-123].

thinks, for example, of a bad harvest and connected with it—or with various other causes—the scourge of famine. One thinks, finally, of war. I speak of this in a particular way. I speak of the last two World Wars, the second of which brought with it a much greater harvest of death and a much heavier burden of human sufferings. The second half of our century, in *its* turn, brings with *it—as though in proportion to the mistakes and transgressions* of our contemporary civilization—such a horrible threat of nuclear war that we cannot think of this period except in terms of *an incomparable accumulation of sufferings*, even to the possible self-destruction of humanity.

In this way, that world of suffering which in brief has its subject in each human being, seems in our age to be transformed—perhaps more than at any other moment—into a special "world": the world which as never before has been transformed by progress through man's work and, at the same time, is as never before in danger because of man's mistakes and offences [Pope John Paul II, 1984].

In view of the undeniable reality of pain in its triple dimension, physical, psychic and spiritual, it is necessary to ask about its meaning. Why do we suffer? Every time men have suffered in their body, mind or spirit, they have asked themselves that big question: Why this pain? Why me? The meaning of suffering is inside the horizon of man because only he is able to overcome any kind of conditioning. The human spirit has autonomy and freedom as basic components that constitute the basis of an "unconditioned man" [Caponnetto, 1995: 123].

In the depth of his thought about the *homo patiens*, Frankl discovers that man can transform his suffering into a value, and Caponnetto points out that this possibility "summarizes the meaning of every meaning"—the radical character of the human existence. But to reach this "supra-meaning" an act of faith is needed; the ultimate meaning escapes our possibility of understanding. That is the center of Frankl's 'pathodizee': the only possible attitude faced with the final meaning of suffering is that of Job's in the Old Testament, which consists of bowing before the mystery [Caponnetto, 1995: 123,142, 149].

It is necessary to distinguish between unconscious suffering and suffering with meaning, which occurs when you accept suffering for somebody else, that is, a sacrifice which is the kind of suffering that possesses the fullness of meaning [Frankl, 1990: 246]. To fill pain with meaning it is necessary to transcend it. The hero and the martyr are the archetypes that capture in their existence this superior meaning of sacrifice.

It is also worth distinguishing between necessary and unnecessary suffering, stating in the first place, that the necessary suffering is the one that has to be faced with an attitude of transcendence. It is the opposite of masochism, which consists of supporting what is avoidable or, as Frankl called it, “an unhealthy exhibitionism of self-compassion”. Nothing is more remote from this than the traits of the hero, the martyr or the penitent [Caponnetto, 1995: 149].

Let us now return to the initial ideas of this paper: man’s extreme questions leave ‘an open door to transcendence’ through which the shadow of the Absolute is projected. Therefore, there is an iron dilemma: either man is understood from himself or he is understood from God [Frankl, 1990: 274]. Far from “the winds of a radical immanence and a devastating secularism which seem to raze everything”, we affirm the core of man’s radical transcendence: man can be understood as a creature only by imitation of God; and his suffering can only be understood from God [Caponnetto, 1995: 155].

Perhaps only the religious formula is able to provide a meaning to pain, writes Le Breton. He adds that, from this perspective, it is understandable that the offering of one’s own pain may reach in many cases the meaning of a free offer of love. To suffer for others could be the decision of a free will, which offers the most valuable thing owned: oneself.

In Le Breton words: “Pain is a wild sacrality”. Why is it sacred? Because it forces the individual to experience transcendence, it projects one outside of oneself; it reveals the otherwise ignored resources in his heart. And pain is wild because it breaks man’s identity. It does not leave him any choice; it is an acid test with a substantial risk of burning. Suffering is experienced as a misfortune where man gets lost entirely as a person, where his dignity disappears; but it is also an opportunity through which another dimension of him is revealed: that of the sufferer and this kind of man watches the world with much more lucidity [Le Breton, 1999: 274].

These reflections lead us to the following point in which we face the extreme questions of transcendence and the confrontation of suffering through love and hope.

## **THE RESPONSE OF HOPE AND LOVE TO SOCIAL PAIN**

Here we take up the subjects of hope and love outlined in our diagnosis of the crisis of rationality and the despair of men in the world today. When Dei states the problem of freedom and power in the postmodern society, he wonders what kind of freedom and, in consequence, what kind of power leads to the postmodern pathos. His answer is that “It is only the freedom of having and the power of domination which can bring disenchantment and despair to the world and sink man into an indefinite state” [Dei, 2002: 77]. The *páthos* of post-modernity is that freedom has chosen its own death: the impossibility of finding meaning. Therefore, Dei points out, post-modernity is not the assumption of a crisis, because if it

were, its effect would not be superficiality. The pathos of postmodern culture is not tragic, for it does not want transformation; it is only contingent as the exaltation of the current joy. The postmodern man is without roots, without the capacity to account for the universality of his presence in the world. He does not expect, and has no hope [Dei, 2002: 75-76].

But, how is that possible? Man, thus situated in the world, rejects the capacity to feel. He mutilates himself because, by refusing to talk about pain, to accept the reality of suffering, he tears off an important part of his humanity. This is the tragedy of a civilization: By losing the meaning of pain, by denying, hiding or disguising it, the civilization disconnects itself more and more from the deepest meaning of life, which it exchanges for entertainment. Since pain is aesthetically ugly, we do not mention it. Nevertheless we cannot but refer to and face its unwanted effects: violence, injustice, neglect—to sum up, evil.

We recall here Susan Sontag's work, which explored the relationships between the news in the media, art, and the way in which we understand the representations of violence and suffering. The suffering most often deemed worthy of representation is that understood to be the product of wrath, human or divine. Suffering induced by natural causes, such as illness or childbirth, is scantily represented in the history of art; pain caused by accidents is almost not represented at all, as if suffering caused by oversight or misfortune did not exist [Sontag, 2003: 51]. Sontag follows the evolution of the iconography of pain from paintings by Goya to the images of the destruction of the World Trade Center to wonder what the effects on spectators are. Do images move him, cause his outrage or make him insensitive? "What does protesting pain, as opposed to acknowledging pain, mean?" She wonders. And she responds: "To designate a hell, is not, of course, to tell us anything about how to extract people from that hell, how to moderate hell's flames. Still, I would like to suggest that it is a good in itself to acknowledge, to have enlarged, one's own sense of how much suffering caused by human wickedness there is in the world we share with others."

In our image culture, one is permanently affected by collective and traumatic events that have blurred the limit between being the main character in a tragedy and being informed of it. In that peculiar combination of inter-subjective spaces in contemporary culture, these main emotions take place: the emotion arising when faced with danger or violence will be the "ego alert" of anguish or terror. Facing fanaticism, anguish and terror disappear. Traumas of social pain are overcome from two axes: the "uncertainty principle" and its conscious correlation, "perplexity". To sum up, today's man can face social pain with paralyzing anguish or terror, fanaticism or perplexity [Lutenberg, 2002; Puget, 2002]. In Sontag's words, today's problem is that due to the excess of images to which we have access, people are disappointed or skeptical when shown evidence of what human beings are capable of inflicting on one another.

She states “. . .the degree of ignorance or amnesia is a moral defect” (Sontag, 2003: 133).

[...] There is too much injustice in the world. And remembering too much (old time affronts: the Serbians, the Irish) makes us bitter. To make peace is to forget. To reconcile is to have faulty or limited memory [Sontag, 2003: 134].

At this point in our reflections, we wonder, whence will spring the hope to live? What words should be uttered to those who come to us with the question ‘Why me?’, ‘Why do I have to suffer?’, ‘What for?’ John Paul II (1984) states that these questions are indeed difficult:

When an individual puts them to another individual, when people put them to other people, as also when man *puts them to God*. For man does not put this question to the world, even though it is from the world that suffering often comes to him, but he puts it to God as the Creator and Lord of the world.

And it is well known that concerning this question there not only arise many frustrations and conflicts in the relations of man with God, but it also happens that people reach the point of actually *denying God*.

Hence, the importance of considering the question of the meaning of suffering and pondering the answers, because it is a reality rooted in mankind itself. Again, John Paul II (1984) says: “Man can put this question to God with all the emotion of his heart and with his mind full of dismay and anxiety; and God expects the question and listens to it.”

Thus, suffering belongs to man’s transcendence; it is one of those issues in which man is to a certain point destined to better himself, and in a mysterious way he is called to do so. But, at the same time, as Le Breton points out, it is also a situational fact that may be isolated in an individual that suffers it, but modalized by the “social, cultural, relational matter” that impregnates this suffering. It appears all of a sudden, as an invasion and interruption of every day life and, very often, destroys our family and social relationships due to the feeling of incapacity and indignity before the others. Pain threatens our identity because it may even make us unknown to others. He who does not suffer, cannot incorporate the pleasures of the others, he excludes himself and is excluded. He may even, Le Bretón says, question the intensity of his pain or his good will to get better. “The initial solidarity becomes distrust and sometimes, rejection.” [Le Bretón. 1999: 191].

Claudel [1959: 304]<sup>8</sup> magnificently explains that pain is similar to grace because it is a free choice, and both separate us from the world. But we cannot avoid either of them; it takes us by force. Perhaps for this same reason, assumed suffering is one of the sources of solidarity and empathy. It awakens us from an irresponsibility that destroys us as individuals and as a community, and helps us recover the ability to feel and to love. “Implicitly”, adds Le Bretón, “the word suffering expresses a demand for love, a calling to strengthen bonds of affection” [Le Bretón, 1999: 176].

*Salvifici Doloris*, from a Christian perspective, presents the idea of the mystery of the transformation that takes place in existence when suffering becomes love.

Suffering, as it were, contains a special *call to the virtue* which man must exercise on his own part. And this is the virtue of perseverance in bearing whatever disturbs and causes harm. In doing this, the individual unleashes hope, which maintains in him the conviction that suffering will not get the better of him, that it will not deprive him of his dignity as a human being, a dignity linked to awareness of the meaning of life. And indeed this meaning makes itself known together with *the working of God's love*, which is the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit. The more he shares in this love, man rediscovers himself more and more fully in suffering: he rediscovers the “soul” which he thought he had “lost” because of suffering. That is the creative, regenerative power of the good the sufferer possesses with a sense of transcendence, because like Christ, man can do something with this pain. That is the salvific meaning of pain.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> It is mentioned by Caponnetto (1992).

<sup>9</sup> Thus starts *Salvifici Doloris* (SD) “In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (1). These words seem to be found at the end of the long road that winds through the suffering which forms part of the history of man and which is illuminated by the Word of God. These words have as it were the value of a final discovery, which is accompanied by joy. For this reason Saint Paul writes: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake” (2). The joy comes from the discovery of the meaning of suffering, and this discovery, even if it is most personally shared in by Paul of Tarsus who wrote these words, is at the same time valid for others. The Apostle shares his own discovery and rejoices in it because of all those whom it can help—just as it helped him—to understand the salvific meaning of suffering. We reproduce here the words of SD on this issue: “This is an extremely important aspect of suffering. It is profoundly rooted in the entire Revelation of the Old and above all the New Covenant. Suffering must serve for conversion, that is, for the rebuilding of goodness in the subject, who can recognize the divine mercy in this call to repentance. The purpose of penance is to overcome evil, which under different forms lies dormant in man. Its purpose is also to strengthen goodness both in man himself and in his relationships with others and especially with God. But in order to perceive the true answer to the “why” of suffering, we must look to the revelation of divine love, the ultimate source of the meaning of everything that exists. Love is also the richest source

The man who suffers needs God's intervention. In a general audience in which Benedict XVI (2005) particularly greeted pilgrims from Spain and Latin America, he commented on Psalm 122, "The Lord, hope of the people": he takes the words of hope so that in that dialogue in which the suffering man questions his Creator, he may trust that the Lord's hands will open to shower gifts of justice and freedom. In this context, then, we may ask about the source of this hope. There are only two possibilities: either man is alone and naked in his existence, or he is in God's own image. Depending on the response of whoever ponders these matters, he may have to conclude that, either he talks to himself or he talks with God. Or perhaps, we think, there is just one option, and perhaps, blinded and arrogant, he may not realize that every man's dialogue with himself is the dialogue of a soul with its God.

## **CONCLUSION**

We began our reflections with a view to reaching the ways in which social pain may be overcome, that is, by providing a transcendent meaning to suffering as the authentically human way for regenerating the lost good and salvation. We finish with reasons that support our deep conviction that Latin America is the continent of hope and the source of transcendence. These configure it as a significant space which, from the foundation of its culture, born out of the salvific hope, is projected as the road for the only "possible utopia".

Why from Latin America? We will briefly review how the reasons of its "delayed" arrival to modernity and post-modernity are advantages that allow it to overcome its limitations. Which is the pathos of man in the Latin American culture? How is the crisis of values experienced by those who are, and have been, heirs of those who, in other times, have dominated using the logic of instrumental reason and its instruments of control? Social pain acquires here its own colors, the particular within the universal, because as the historian Enrique Zuleta Alvarez writes:

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of the meaning of suffering, which always remains a mystery: we are conscious of the insufficiency and inadequacy of our explanations. Christ causes us to enter into the mystery and to discover the "why" of suffering, as far as we are capable of grasping the sublimity of divine love. In order to discover the profound meaning of suffering, following the revealed word of God, we must open ourselves wide to the human subject in his manifold potentiality. We must above all accept the light of Revelation not only insofar as it expresses the transcendent order of justice but also insofar as it illuminates this order with Love, as the definitive source of everything that exists. Love is: also the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given by God to man in the Cross of Jesus Christ."

We are in America as part of the historical development of Spain, which extended to the New World with such peculiar forms as biological and cultural crossbreeding, the extension of the Christian religion, the recreation of the Spanish language, and the foundation of political and cultural institutions rooted in the Hispanic tradition. We are neither Spaniards nor natives: we are *Hispano-American*, that new human genre in Simon Bolivar's words within which Argentina shows a specific way which, with its changes and shades, consolidates through history [Zuleta Alvarez, 1995: 14].

While the formal birth of Argentina as a sovereign nation was in 1810, as a civilized community it is a historical extension of the Latin American world that comprised Spain and the rest of America from 1492 onwards [Zuleta Alvarez, 1995: 17].

A key and primary fact in the history of our culture is the serious conflict posed between the validity of the proper cultural forms of the traditional Hispano-American society and those of the program of modernity and progress fostered by liberalism. The new project was seconded by romanticism in literature, positivism in philosophy and science, and liberal ideas: an Anglo-Saxon version in economics and a French version in politics [Zuleta Alvarez, 1995: 18-20; Scenna, Miguel Angel, 1976]. Cosmopolitanism was a value driven by the ruling classes and intellectuals, who imposed the ideals of progress and the new social and political model of a liberal organization on a society which until then had been "Creole and traditional" [Zuleta Alvarez, 1995: 19]. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the practices and beliefs of Hispanic America have been questioned. By denying the past, these counter-traditions have led to the current uneasiness.

In that century, a strong criticism of Spain arose based on the attacks of Brother Bartolomé de las Casas. It originated in England and the Netherlands and was spread by France, and later, by the United States. From there it extended throughout Latin America, promoted by the needs of the wars of emancipation. When the liberalism of the Anglo-French culture was consolidated, countries which had gained their independence organized under that cultural framework [Zuleta Alvarez, 1995: 53-54].

This collision of cultures can be exemplified by some of the spiritual attitudes they valued. Among them were such values as war, heroism—so necessary at the early stages of the conquest—together with generosity and love of work, which history records as qualities acknowledged in the first Spanish soldiers. The cultural heritage of that heroism would be a spirit of adventure and adjustment to adversity which, even to date, is recognized in our peoples.

Another root emerges from the values left by the spiritual conquest that unified the New World in the faith. Mankind in the 16<sup>th</sup> century did not

live in a void or drifting world, but in one firmly grounded in religious beliefs. Above all, he was concerned about the salvation of his soul and his eternal fate, amid tiring trips and extreme dangers. Finally, the Indian social legislation, with its subtle attention to the common welfare, is to the welfare of the white, the native and the black people. This made many provisions for the protection of the Indian workers. These were true social rights quite ahead of many current provisions, such as the protection of women in hazardous work conditions or the protection of pregnant women [Ibarguren, 1978: 58-78].

As an example of an existential embodiment of the Argentine man—local within the universal—we choose the figure of Discépolo.

Like the great prophets of the Old Testament. He does not denounce the inversion of values that fosters chaos. . . His work always calls for the search of the lost path, because he notes that the basic bonds that support the possibility of man's belonging to a community are disarticulated. Hence, the need to restore cosmos and the ensuing denunciation of the distorting parameters of an actually significant order, that suffocate every expectation and ridicule all hope [Dei, 1995: 30].

Dei writes that he chose Discépolo to celebrate “the transparency of an agonistic search of meaning from such a peculiar contingency which nevertheless has been able to embody universal values” [Dei, 1995: 9]. The will to live developed by Frankl and the meaning of pain as expressed in the anthropology by Le Bretón or by the Christian spirit by John Paul II are expressed in the life and songs of this poet and philosopher of Buenos Aires, of America and of the world. Discépolo shows in the lyrics of his tangos the stress between “waiting” and “absolute hope”, and embodies that conflict in the Argentine man and his own experience of pain, separation and uprooting. He responds in his poems with an intimate dialogue, a personal encounter with the living God, naming Him, invoking Him, as Job in the Old Testament, to know: why this pain; how can all this injustice be tolerated; why does evil exist?

Dei points out that the tango may be seen “as a poetically coded inventory of historical questions that have besieged *theodicy* (original emphasis), as a reflection on the relationships of God and the world...” [Dei, 1995: 57]. And the poet's answer is the search for hope, the encounter with Love “as a place to settle”. The ground of the true human Life is “the God of infinite love” to which Discépolo gave testimony both in words and in silence [Dei, 1995: 69].

#### *America: Continent of Hope*

Two peculiar features in history support our vision of the continent

of hope. Hispano-America is the spiritual daughter of Europe following Western thought as it evolved from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but intellectual currents suffered a metamorphosis—Hispanicized in its adjustment to the American environment which “smoothed and mitigated the impact” [Stoetzer, 1982: 152].

In some way, what had happened in previous centuries in the Hispanic world was repeated in the territory of the new continent. Spain and Portugal participated in all the manifestations of the European spirit in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, in the eras of Romanticism and Positivism. But these currents reached the Iberian Peninsula and its extensions in America, always a little late, and they remained there longer, while the rest of Europe had already changed its trends.

Thus, when the rest of Europe chooses the route of Renaissance and Humanism, Spain stays faithful to the medieval spirit, deeply rooted in the Re-conquest.

For this reason, the Conquest, that is the continuation of the Re-conquest, takes place in medieval times, when Europe is already in the midst of the Renaissance [Stoetzer, 1982: 143].

The second characteristic, as Stoetzer states, is that the Hispanic world was never hostile to foreign influences—provided that these currents could be incorporated and absorbed by giving them a Hispanic and Christian shading. Foreign currents were modified when crossing the Pyrenees and the Atlantic, losing their purity and never arriving at their destination in their original form. They were personalized, hispanicized. “The Spanish genius has always tried to harmonize and reconcile extremes of tradition with progress, of faith with reason...” [Stoetzer, 1982: 144]. Therefore, it is possible that Latin American may also “personalize” post-modernity, upholding its own foundational identity and illuminated by the only possible hope: the Love of God.

To ignore history is like the psychological trauma of forgetting childhood, which is essential for the development of personal and community life. This ignorance explains the deep lack of balance and deterioration in which our cultures live: between an imposed modernity not fully assumed, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the impact of resisting post-modernity coupled with constant unexpected disputes within the parameters of either the former or the latter [Ibarguren, 1978: 27]. America is the continent of hope, and its voice will be heard when it recovers its foundational cultural identity. Thus it will be able to project its hopeful existence and inspire renewed ways of social coexistence.

These pages have responded to an invitation to philosophical reflection “situated in the landscape of our vital experience” [Dei, 2002: 17], framed by the specific knowledge of the disciplines we develop, and

open to questions about our identity as Argentinians and as Latin Americans. We are not philosophers, but have drawn on philosophical reflections in order to uphold that “attitude or disposition” which will enable us to open to the human questions and ways of confronting social pain in the future.

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## CHAPTER IX

# QUESTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY IN CONSUMER SOCIETIES: CRISES AND PERSPECTIVES IN CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINA

*JOSÉ LUIS IPARRAGUIRRE D'ELÍA*

### INTRODUCTION

Consumption as a human activity has transcended the procurement of goods and services to satisfy needs, and has become the axis around which contemporary subjectivity is structured—a subjectivity that increasingly consists more of lifestyle and choices of social identity. Consumption is one of the more visible facets of the process of globalization which permeate one single set of values, models and narratives constituent of local, regional and national identities. The values underlying globalised consumption patterns and goods bring about questions of personal interactions which respond to a logic of relationship that lies at the heart of the ontological identity crisis of the human species. Consumer societies are structured from the “fetichisation” of the whole social realm and leads to a destruction of the social tissue beyond repair and an unavoidable state of ontological discontent.

Constructing subjectivity around the so-called consumer societies paves the way to a state of ontological discontent made possible by the existential emptiness of the project upon which it is erected. Argentina lurched along the road towards the irremediable destruction of its social tissue and was pushed by the end of 2001 to the abyss, approaching institutional and financial crisis. Although this prevented it from descending into the inevitable discontent of mercantilised post-modernity which awaited the country at the other end of the journey, this crisis engendered other painful experiences—some phantasmagorical, others not—which were more immediate and acute.

This chapter first examines the link between consumption and subjectivity, inasmuch as we consider it crucial to understand how identity is formed and how interpersonal and social relationships are structured in contemporary societies. The next section deals briefly with the main theories of subjectivity since the Middle Ages. Some languages—Spanish and French, for example—have adopted the expression “consumption society” whereas others—English and German, for instance—contain the expression “consumer society”. Are these two expressions indistinct, or are there two tacit ontological points of view underpinning them? The third section attempts to answer this question. Section four analyses the influence

and relative importance of consumption activities in the structure of contemporary subjectivity. Section five discusses of the patterns of interaction and the rationality paradigm which underlie consumer societies. The sixth section closes the chapter with some thoughts about the feasibility of constructing an alternative model of human interchange.

## **SUBJECTIVITY**

According to Ortega y Gasset, modernity began with Descartes. In line with this, Thomson (2000) asserts that we owe to Descartes the self-conscious reflection upon the sources of thought—one of the pillars of the modern period. This centeredness of scientific and philosophical thought around the subject and away from the object suggests a subject capable of knowing, independently of the natural and social environment. If, following Hall (2004), the difference between the concepts of subjectivity and identity is that the former implies a certain degree of self-consciousness about identity, then Descartes introduced subjectivity as a question of philosophical concern.

Locke presents an unfaltering optimism with regard to the quest for human perfection by the use of reason, but at the same time exposes the limits of such an endeavour, namely, those limits of human agency. Thus, the philosophical treatment of subjectivity incorporates thinking about the limits of “subjectivisation” itself—which generates Locke’s political (and practical) philosophy. Kant followed this modern ideal of a rational agent at the basis of subjectivity.

Hegel inscribes the self-conscience in each particular historical era. Identity then ceases to be universal and becomes contingent upon particular social and historical forces, as the result of a struggle for dominance. From the encounter with these forces, a process of confrontation, rather than of mutual collaboration and validation, takes place. The confrontation originates in the fact that encountering the other implies encountering oneself: in the other there lies the self. This dialectical tension is then reinterpreted by Marx in the context of class consciousness and of the “conscientisation” of class relations in capitalist societies as producer of group subjectivity. Hence, social existence would determine this “conscientisation” and, therefore, subjectivity.

Nietzsche opines that subjectivity is a construction, a result of a set of voluntary decisions. Consequently, Nietzsche invests the concept of agency with a stature heretofore reserved to divinity, as alone capable of constituting identities.

Lacan relates the development of subjectivity with language or the “symbolic order” in general. The encounter with language helps overcome only partially the effect of discovering the self (the “mirror” stage) as it begins the fragmentation of the hitherto solid belief in the unity of the self and pretensions of agency and of self-sufficiency. According to Lacan, each person identifies with themselves in language, but only at the expense of

losing themselves in it to become one more object. However, language and symbols in general provide an illusory dominion, an *illusio*, or as Lacan puts it, a “mirage”, because the symbols in which the subject is immersed present a shifting, broken and fragmented image, sometimes not even fully constituted and regressive. There would be no unique or unifying positive principle from which subjectivity could come about. Thus subjectivity is intrinsically fragmenting and fragmented.

Foucault proposes a constructivist view of subjectivity according to which it is the result of discourses forged by power, which is historically specified, with the final aim of controlling the subject, or more subtly, their self-control.

For postmodern authors, in contemporary societies there exists a plurality of subjectivities that make it possible for the subject to shift from one subjectivity to another. Hence, subjectivities are temporary identities which do not imply and even less so institute strong solidarities or long-term identifications. The affiliations and modes of representation are multiple and would transcend geographical and class barriers (even while incorporating them).

## CONSUMER OR CONSUMPTION SOCIETY

Offe (1985) affirms that consumption has replaced labour as the key vital interest. Many authors have described such a process in many different ways: “orientation towards work and expenditure” (Cross), “consumer’s attitude” (Bauman), “lifestyle as a project” (Featherstone), “the culture of contentment” (Galbraith), etc., but possibly the most widespread description is “consumer society”. However, the title of this section raises the issue of distinguishing between consumer and consumption society.

Baudrillard titled one of his most famous books “*La société de consommation*”. In French, Spanish, and a few other languages, the expression “consumer society” is literally translated as “consumption society”—*consommation* being French for consumption. However, the title of the English version of the book is “The consumer society”<sup>1</sup>. This distinction is relevant insofar as the expression “consumption society” is centred upon a practice whereas “consumer society” underlines the intervening agents.

Two alternative approaches are Cortina (2002) and Carretón (2000). Cortina coins the expression “consumerist society”, against “consumption society”, for this author asserts that the former term reflects

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<sup>1</sup> The book was originally published in French as ‘*La Société de Consommation. Ses mythes, ses structures*’ (Paris: Ed. S.G.P.P.). The Spanish version was published in 1974 and titled ‘*La Sociedad de Consumo: Sus mitos, sus estructuras*’ (Barcelona, Ed. Plaza & Janés) whilst the English version was published in 1998 and titled ‘*The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures*’ (London, Ed. Sage).

the superfluous consumption that legitimates the policies and the economy upon which the productive system of advanced capitalist societies is based. Thus understood, this approach begs the question of who defines what is superfluous and what is not.

Garretón, in turn, identifies two central axes in contemporary societies, which this author dubs “post-industrial globalised societies”: consumption and communication. Garretón adds that the model of modernity identified with such a societal type in countries like Argentina presents a bias towards consumption and the media culture. However, we understand that the second axis results from the first one: communication serves consumption inasmuch as consumption is the main source of accumulation and reproduction of economic and political power. According to Sartori, “homo videns” is the individual who consumes images rather than the one who elaborates thoughts. What these images transmit is the ideological message of the superiority of a certain lifestyle. What these images bring about is the consequent drive towards acquiring that lifestyle.

The defining feature of consumer societies is not the level of consumption from a micro or macroeconomic point of view. In fact, the notion of consumption upon which this categorisation is based differs from the habitual definition in economics. According to Kreps (1990), for example, the central character in microeconomic theory is the consumer—the consumer being an entity that chooses from a given set of feasible options. In turn, the macroeconomic perspective defines households as consumption units because they would spend their income in consumption goods and services. Consumption, instead, has to be understood as a structured and structuring system according to the terminology introduced by Bourdieu (2000); what is being structured around consumption is contemporary life.

The United Nations Population Fund quoting the Worldwatch Institute of Washington, DC affirms that there exists a new social class: “a global consumer class”. This encompasses about 1,700 million people nearly half of whom live in developing countries (for example, 240 million in China) (UNPFA, 2002). This global class is defined not by the quantity of goods and services their members consume, but by their adoption of the same diets, means of transport and communication, and lifestyles.

## **THE SOCIAL IMAGINARY IN CONSUMER SOCIETIES**

The brief outline of different theoretical currents on subjectivity presented in Section Two enables the establishment of the following concatenation: Hegel-Nietzsche-Lacan-Foucault-Post-modernism. This nexus, beyond conflicting views on numerous aspects, presents subjectivity as a historical construct derived from the social imaginary and discourses prevalent in a certain social and historical moment. Subjectivity, then, would be historically constituted: identity and memory would intertwine—the latter nurturing the former.

The main thesis of this chapter is that contemporary subjectivity is structured through the discourse that institutes the Market and the set of values and logic derived from it. In this, consumption is the structuring axis. These values and this logic are structured around binary oppositions, as structuralist linguistics maintains. Amongst the principal words with positive value we find: global, free choice, individual, productivity, active and consumption. Those notions are presented as the positive pole in a dyadic relationship. Thus, global is opposed to local with its negative connotation of backwardness; free choice stands against programmed or dirigisme; and consumption is pitted against privation.

The structuring archetype of contemporary subjectivity is that of individual consumers (narcissist and individualist) who exert their free will and freedom to choose, thanks to the produce derived from their economic activity in the Market. Around this archetype subjectivity is forged according to the ever changing items to be consumed. (The demur that only what is being offered can be consumed and hence the freedom of choice is constrained and the feasibility set is biased and predetermined is dutifully omitted in the mythical identity elaborated).

The act of consumption in itself is not as relevant as the process of identification with a set of values which is supposed to be attainable only by actual acts of consumption. For this reason, even many of those who are not part of the “global consumer class” can be incorporated into this category insofar as their expectations and behaviour and their value structures are ruled by these values prevalent in consumer society.

Consumption goods and services transmit social meanings and therefore radiate a particular message with which consumers individually identify. The emphasis on the individual is a distinguishing feature of current marketing strategies: “because you deserve it”; “we thought of you”; “be yourself”; etc. More and more goods and services are purchased seeking out the meanings they convey rather than non-symbolic considerations; for example, fizzy drink sales are increasingly driven by the quest for the images attached to them than for their thirst quenching capacity. It is not that goods and services are ascribed to those meanings upon which subjectivity is constructed; rather, it is the whole set of existing social meanings. Hence the linguistic role that consumption plays in consumer societies.

### *The Consumed Fruits of Consumption*

One Argentinian song goes<sup>2</sup>:

“One is a handful of labels, // a shop window, a theatre set, // a mere character in an operetta, // a consumed fruit of consumption.”

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<sup>2</sup> “Parábola de Uno Mismo”, by Alberto Cortez (1986). Translation by the author.

Social psychology assumes that human beings are “needy beings” (Pichón Rivier, 1972), which leads them to constitute their subjectivity from actions that transform reality alongside other human beings. In other words, subjectivity is the result of a relational social praxis that intends to modify (or in some pathological cases, merely adapt to) the reality of the world. However, consumer societies generate needs that by definition cannot be satisfied and close spaces (particularly political ones) of social transformation. Therefore, the subjectivity that emerges in consumer societies is one of unconnected human beings, isolated, exposed and vulnerable. Consumption consumes, that is, destroys completely; consumers transform themselves into fruits of consumption

### *Consumption and Society of the Spectacle*

The main features of consumer societies are the fetichisation and mercantilisation of the social realm. Like a contemporary Terentius, nothing human is strange to consumption: everything is consumable, even weeping, as we see with the new market niche that has opened in China. People can go to a cafeteria to shed tears where even onions and handkerchiefs are provided [Irigoyen, 2004]. (Though we must hasten to mention that the mercantilisation of weeping is not entirely new, as can be seen in the practice in certain societies of hired mourners, which seems to predate modernity). But what are new are the dynamics and the values. Gouldner (1978) explains that “the meaning of the ‘public’ develops alongside the socially emergent idea [towards the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries] of the ‘private’” (Gouldner, 1978: 136). In the “private realm,” it is allowed to say what was hushed in public. In consumer societies, the private realm is increasingly commercialised, e.g., TV programmes such as ‘Big Brother’ emerge from this logic. The owner of the weeping bar comments that on running a marriage agency he discovered that “many of his clients had an intense desire to weep, but that they could find neither the right moment nor place”. Even something as intimate and “private” as weeping now needs a public realm.

This bar is but an entrepreneurial response to the transformation of contemporary society into a society of spectacle [Debord, 1967]. Debord [1967: Tesis 36] asserts that in a society of spectacle “the tangible world is replaced by a selection of images which exist above it, and which simultaneously impose themselves as the tangible par excellence.” And, as González Requena (1988) argues, in a spectacle-based society, the senses most related to intimacy, that is, taste, smell and touch, play only a secondary role. In fact, in consumer societies, spectacle becomes simply consumption. This is why weeping loses its intimate and private character and becomes a public image which, like all else in these societies, needs to be consumed in order to convey a message: weeping turns into a consumable spectacle.

During the 1990s in Argentina, the imaginary of consumption as the main defining element of identity (and the myth of the perfect market from which it stems and to which it offers itself as a legitimating discourse) converges with another image: that of the “viveza criolla” (i.e. pulling a fast one in the Argentinian style)<sup>3</sup>.

#### *Mythical Character of Consumer Societies*

As mentioned in the Introduction, globalised consumer societies have a mythical character; this now calls for elaboration. According to M. Eliade (1992), the main function of a myth is to reveal and structure exemplary models of rites and significant human activities; in other words, myths have a moral component. Pearson (1991) identified twelve mythical archetypes (in Jung’s sense) prevalent in contemporary societies: the Innocent, Orphan, Warrior, Caregiver, Seeker, Lover, Destroyer, Creator, Ruler, Magician, Sage and Fool. It is tempting to associate the figure of the Orphan accompanied by the Fool with Argentina’s recent financial and institutional debacle. However, it is more useful to identify the prevalent myth before the collapse. Our hypothesis is that the prevalent archetype in Argentina during the 1990s and until the 2001 crisis was that of the “vivo” (i.e., “the cunning, guileful one”)

The rent-seeking culture introduced after the first experiences of mass financial speculation in the late 1970s, instituted in the collective unconscious the archetypal character of the “vivo”. The essential element operative in this myth, as a politician and trade unionist once famously let slip, one can never get enough “dough” (“brass” for British readers) solely by working. Serious money, in other words, can only be made by means of speculation, deceit or graft. Freire Pombo (1993) argues that by the end of the 1980s in Argentina the “chanta” (i.e. scamp) gave way to the “trucho” (i.e. phoney). In our opinion, there is a common element to these two concepts: deceit. The “chanta” lies; what is phoney is false. Lies and falsehood are two varieties of deceitfulness. The “native” way of pulling a fast one is what Jorge Luis Borges accurately assimilated to dishonesty<sup>4</sup> and corresponds to the resulting force of both components.

All this takes place within the market framework as a perfect mythical constructor of social behaviour, within which competition becomes a key value. Far from either ascetic Puritanism or crass exploitation, the Viveza adds a third vector that informs social behaviour to face (rather than to accept) the rules of the markets. Whereas, according to Bell (1996), Puritanism exalts work, frugality and temperance along with sexual repression and a prohibitionist attitude towards life, the exploitative model,

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the “viveza criolla”, see Mafud (1984) and Aguinis (2001).

<sup>4</sup> “[In Argentina...] Dishonesty, it is well known, enjoys widespread veneration and it is known as ‘viveza criolla’”. In: *Nuestras imposibilidades*” (Sur, n. 4, November 1931) (Translation by the author).

on the contrary, is based upon the logic of social Darwinism as the main legitimising discourse which incorporates a trickle-down effect as palliative. The *Viveza* does not fit into any of these two logics of action. It rejects both the culture of work and effort united to patience and frugality which translates into savings, but at the same time it lacks the capital needed to implement the exploitative model.

To live/survive in the globalised consumer society, the Argentine resorts to the autochthonous, to what they consider exclusively theirs -“*lo nuestro*”: the *Viveza*. Aldo Ferrer titled a book “Living with What Is Ours” (Ferrer, 1983). But what is this except the autochthonous, the archetypical *Viveza* “*criolla*”? The adjective “*criolla*” would invest the *Viveza* with a certification of authenticity which is paramount to the mythical discourse and the imaginary upon which it is structured. In this sense, during the 1990s Argentinians lived with what is “theirs”—a period over which the *Viveza* had a true Weberian ideal type: the President. Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem embodied the mythical figure of the *Vivo*. If Juan Domingo Perón instituted the imaginary of the upward social mobility of the working class in power (the President could not be but the “first and foremost worker”), Mr. Menem incarnated the most “*vivo*” amongst the “*vivos*”.

Barros (2003), whilst writing about the imaginary until 1991, states that Mr. Menem instituted the imaginary of (financial) Stability. Mr. Menem came to power before the time established in the Constitution due to the mid-1989 hyperinflation episode and his 1997 re-election is usually ascribed to in the so-called “instalment-vote” (“*voto-cuota*”). According to this it would be possible to extend the imaginary of *stability* until his time. Yet we understand that such strategic behaviour by the electorate responded more to the goals underlying financial stability than stability as a goal or value in itself. The main goal behind financial stability was to get closer to the sirens’ songs of consumption patterns and lifestyles that the “First World” was sending. In this, Mr. Menem stated that Argentina had already become part of that world.

It is important to highlight that a myth is not simply the discourse that structures the thread of significant acceptable patterns of behaviour; it is also the expression of the imaginary in the sense introduced by Castoriadis. It is the historical and social institution of meanings and structures of interactions and representations of images and objects to which significant contents are ascribed. Therefore, the imaginary is instituted, but it institutes as well. The “*Viveza Criolla*”, as social imaginary, institutes patterns of behaviour ultimately opposed to a globalised consumer society. It goes against the grain of values required by the production systems of central and peripheral economies. Neither as worker-producers nor as consumer-citizens do the “*Vivos*” have a place.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Neither is functional for globalised consumer societies, but expanding on this goes beyond the scope of this paper.

It was precisely the myth of the “Viveza criolla” that was smashed by the crisis. According to Ortega (1914), myth gives way to the process of facing reality. Even though this is a healthy process and the principle of reality often follows the debacle of a mythical apparatus, we cannot rule out an alternative consequence of such a fall, namely the emergence of another myth. This is what happened in Argentina after the 2002 crisis: the locus left empty by the shattering of the image that dominated the 1990s was occupied by a new social image: that of the Victim, which provokes pity.

A cartoon<sup>6</sup> captures the new image of the Victim. The strip shows a dialogue between an Argentine citizen and a foreigner which takes place abroad over the last five decades. In the 1950s, making oneself known as an Argentinian prompted associations with beef or tango; in the successive decades, with Perón, or Maradona. Nowadays, it is followed by “I’m sorry”.

### **CRISIS, DISCONTENT, LOSS, AVERSION AND COGNITIVE DISONANCE**

Jorge Luis Borges, in two of his poems, *Adam Cast Forth*<sup>7</sup> and *El Desierto*,<sup>8</sup> projects an ambivalent feeling and attitude toward loss. In *Adam Cast Forth*, Borges, convinced of having experienced the existence of a better past in his “I know that it exists” (presented under the metaphor of the Biblical paradise), asserts that “it is a lot to have loved, to have been happy, to have touched the living Garden for at least one day”. In *El Desierto*, in contrast, the author reckons that the rose he was allowed to see before his confinement in the desert “is now my torment”. That is, the remembrance of something better, preferable to what life is at present, is a source of contentment in the first poem but of affliction in the second one. “Not being any longer” (or having or being able, etc.) only hurts in the second poem; in the first one, remembering what one once was (or had or was able) provokes complete satisfaction.

Borges, in the first case, finds consolation in remembering, even though he denies a new opportunity to himself, a mythical return although the poet knows that Eden exists he adds what he also presumes to be true, namely, that is “not for me”. Therefore, the contentment in *Adam Cast Forth* does not stem from the hopeful actions of those who seek to recover what they have lost. On the contrary, the author experiences contentment despite the self-negation of such a possibility. The memory is enough to generate joy. This is the same Borges who wrote “I am he who does not know another consolation than to remember the time of joy”<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> By the Argentinean cartoonist NiK and published in La Nación, Buenos Aires, in 2002

<sup>7</sup> Included in the book *El Otro, El Mismo*, 1964.

<sup>8</sup> In the book *La Cifra*, 1981.

<sup>9</sup> In the poem *The Thing I am*, included in the book “Historia de la Noche” published in 1977.

In the second poem, however, the torment is caused not so much by the conviction that there is no possible return from the kingdom of darkness but by the remembrance of brighter days. In this case, the memory is the punishment. This corresponds to the complement (rather than antithesis) in the following assertion by the same poet: “forgetting is the only vengeance and the only forgiveness.”<sup>10</sup> Apparently, these poems expose two contradictory attitudes: contentment and sorrow. Thus, a comparative reading of both poems reveals that discontent is not the only possible state that could result from a collapse. Remembering that one was once standing could also become the fountainhead of consolation.

Christian Ferrer describes contemporary Argentina as a “stump hurting of herself.”<sup>11</sup> An amputation is not necessarily followed by the psychological condition known as ‘phantom pain’. However, it is often the case that a related condition is developed—the ‘phantom limb’, which may be accompanied or not by (phantom) pain. The phantom limb is a cinesthetic hallucination by which the patient feels the absent limb; it is felt as present and also moving. This perceptual process has some beneficial side effects; for example, it contributes to a quicker adaptation to an orthopaedic prosthesis. On the contrary, if it is accompanied by phantom pain, usual complaints include cramping, burning or shooting. In some severe cases, it could produce profound personality alternations and a psychological rejection of the artificial limb and affect the person’s entire personal health situation after the amputation. The stump is what aches, of course, but the pain is felt as originating in the absent limb. Therefore, the “living memory” of an absent limb may develop into a positive rehabilitation support or a painful experience—into the Garden imprecisely remembered or the tormenting Rose in the desert.

Both poems by Borges present a qualitative distinction that does not lessen their impact; in fact it provides an interpretation of the different attitudes they comprise. In the first poem, Borges was cast out of Paradise; in the second, he plunged into Hell. According to the Bible, life on earth is something like the intermediate stopover after the expulsion from Eden, and Hades is a possible final destination, but not the only one: the heavenly realm is given as an alternative. Economic psychology has developed the prospect theory in the centre of which there lies the concept of “loss aversion”<sup>12</sup>. Loss aversion refers to the tendency to prefer avoiding losses to obtaining gains (in other words, human beings would respond more to a loss in their wellbeing than to an equivalent improvement). For example, the

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<sup>10</sup> In the poem *Fragmentos de un Evangelio Apócrifo*, included in the book “Elogio de la Sombra”, published in 1969.

<sup>11</sup> In “En la Frontera. Globo y Nación”, guide 1 to “Malestar en la Subjetividad Contemporánea”. Master in Contemporary Practical Philosophy. Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.

<sup>12</sup> See Kahneman and Tversky (1984), or Novemsky and Kahneman (2005).

psychological effect of losing one hundred dollars is greater than that of finding one hundred dollars.

In both poems, the poet experiences a loss: going from Paradise to the earth or from the earth to Hell. Following the ideas of economic psychology, the expulsion from Paradise and the plunge into Hell do not produce the same psychological burden, even though both were of the same magnitude. The second passage—that from the earth to hell—has a greater effect! Of course, according to Christian eschatology, confinement in Hell implies the utmost loss and in this case, prospect theory would not apply<sup>13</sup>. However, the key point is that considering the main tenets of this theory, the 2001 political, institutional, economic and social collapse of Argentina would have exerted a greater psychological effect than returning to the situation prior to the crisis. Recovering from the critical minimum and regaining the pre-crisis situation would not re-establish the level of psychological wellbeing present before the crisis. In such circumstances, the memory of having does not provide consolation; on the contrary, it rubs salt in the wound.

On the other hand, social psychology has termed as ‘cognitive dissonance’ the mental state that arises when persons find themselves doing something that does not fit into what they know is right or worthwhile, or stating something that contradicts opinions defended before. There are four mechanisms to cope with cognitive dissonance:

- the rejection of the dissonant behaviour, opinion, attitude, etc. (e.g. the smoker who quits smoking);
- the inclusion of additional consonant elements (e.g., smokers who convince themselves that smoking calms them down);
- the minimisation of the importance of the dissonance (e.g. “anyway, the risk of lung cancer is low, the peril lurks far down in time, and we will all die some day...”);
- giving greater importance to existent consonant elements (e.g. high appreciation of the pleasure of smoking).

Wicklund and Brehm (1976) argue that the reduction of cognitive dissonance can take place only when the dissonant elements are united by means of the personal responsibility of the individual who experiences the dissonance. Furthermore, the ultimate cause of dissonance lies in the personal responsibility for the unwanted consequences when the individual realises the problems that lie ahead if he or she persists in a given attitude or behaviour. This individual responsibility for the damage (the damage to oneself and to other people) is the cause of cognitive dissonance, which gives way to any of the four above-mentioned response mechanisms.

It is worth noting that Freud (1929) considered that there are three sources of suffering, two natural and one social. The two natural causes of

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Kahneman (2002).

suffering are the supremacy of nature and the decay of our body. According to Freud, the attitude before these causes is the acceptance of the inevitable—not a debilitating acknowledgement, but a ‘coming to terms with’, that leads to healthy coping. The attitude before the third source of suffering is completely different given the refusal to accept its origin: the lack of understanding of why human beings cannot regulate their relationships. Freud contends that we absolutely refuse to accept such incapacity; this is what emerged all too clearly in the financial and institutional collapse in Argentina. According to the psychologist, Hugo Pisanelli, Argentina suffers from “post trauma stress”<sup>14</sup>. We understand that this stress arises as a result of the high cognitive dissonance created by the 2001 crisis.

The author of the popular tango, “Chorra,” affirms that what annoys him most is having been so foolish<sup>15</sup> (“gil”). This “hunter-hunted” situation provoked a high dose of cognitive dissonance. The ultimate source of such cognitive dissonance lies in the fact that all people in the 1990s in Argentina could very well and intimately recognise themselves as co-responsible for a looming and unavoidable crisis. It is not relevant whether such an acknowledgement was objectively justified or not. The crucial element is that it was believed to be so. “He is a thief but a doer” was the slogan of a political campaign in San Pablo, Brazil, some years ago. It could as well have been used for the 1997 presidential campaign in Argentina, because the social imagery was placed behind the “do” in the “doer” an implicit “let do” translated into “let (us) buy in instalments our consumer dreams” And, in coming closer to fulfilling the consumer dreams, consumers who ephemerally and deceitfully were making the most of what consumer society had to offer, were, like Icarus, themselves consumed.

What was the response to the huge cognitive dissonance produced by the 2001 crisis? The intrinsic logic imposed by the imagery of the Viveza led to the understanding that “others” had been more cunning (“vivos”) than we had been. It is not by chance that in Argentina the question, “Do you think you are smart?” (“¿sois vivos?”) is an incitement to fight, because in the motherland of the “Viveza” people respond with violence if someone pretends to be more cunning than oneself. The “vivo” is the person who cons a “gil” (*foolish*) one. The crisis reflected, as in a ruthless mirror, the Argentine’s own condition of “fools”. The anger of having been so foolish pierced the whole contemporary Argentine society with the advent of the crisis. However, the coin of anger has pain engraved on the other side. And if pain is not accepted, cognitive dissonance steps in. In Argentina, anger gave way to the dissonant and accommodating category of the Victim, who begs for compassion.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview to Hugo Pisanelli and Ana Quiroga by Sonia Santoro. *Página 12*, 27 January 2003. Buenos Aires.

<sup>15</sup> “Chorra”, tango de Enrique Santos Discépolo de 1928.

If there is a “vivo”, it is because there is also a “gil”. And in every act of consumption propitiated by a subsidised exchange rate (that is, every “smart move”—“*avivada*”) there was also, deep within the conscience of Argentine consumers, the acknowledgment of being part of a macabre mechanism that could not last. Such a dyad would produce a narcissist wound in those who enjoyed the nectar of consumption in the 1990s when the crisis came about, because it swept them into the dissonant pole of the fools. Thus, the dyad, smart-foolish, gave way to the dyad, victim-victimiser. The new imaginary adopted the passive role of the victim whence feigned innocence can be claimed whilst banging the pots<sup>16</sup>. This is the new form that contemporary self-deceit adopts; it paves the way to missing once again the Orteguian opportunity to face up to reality.

What about personal responsibility? Cognitive dissonance was processed by placing responsibility on the others, the “all” who were exhorted to leave the country (“*que se vayan todos*”—“go away, you all”). As Freud pointed out, we cannot accept the pain caused by the incapacity to govern or manage the social affairs of the public realm. “*Que se vayan todos*” has to be understood, then, as “go away you (the others)—you who caused this critical state, for we had nothing to do with the process that culminated in the crisis; on the contrary, we are the Victims, you the Victimisers”. Those we exhort to leave are not smart (i.e., Vivos) because we are not “giles” (foolish). They are victimisers, corrupt thieves, anything but “vivos” (which relates to Borges’s definition included in footnote 5 above).

This has allowed a vast number of Argentinians to shift from the category of “giles”—one pole in the dyad of the mythical imagery of the Viveza—to that of “victims”. Thus they distance themselves from any vestige of personal responsibility and from the source of the greatest pain and anger: their own reflection in the cruel mirror of reality lacks any “viveza”. The discontent in contemporary subjectivity assumes the false notion of being a victim of a con trick. Argentinians were accomplices of such a treacherous plot, but they do not recognise themselves as such, because it is too painful to accept. They knew about the costume jewellery behind the glittering 1990s, but they preferred to “keep on taking part” (as a catchphrase of the day went). However, when it was all over, they avoided the painful and dissonant process of taking responsibility for their actions. Instead, they artificially generated the bitter taste that comes from realising

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<sup>16</sup> Beyond the Presidential Decree N. 1570/2001, which imposed transitory restrictions to withdrawals and transfers from bank accounts (measures popularly known as the “corralito”), the first pot-banging protest was prompted by the President’s announcement on TV of a state of siege after a day of riots and pillage. The pot-banging has been detached from the “corralito” by Cheresky (2002), Dinerstein (2002), Galafassi (2002), Seoane (2002), and Briones and Mendoza (2003).

that one has been a victim of fraud. The anger and pain of having been so foolish has metamorphosed into the fake pain of innocence debauched.

The piercing "I'm sorry" in the comic strip unspeakably places Argentina among the recipient countries of international charity from the paradisiacal "First World" whence it has been cast forth. In this respect, the Ministry of Outer Relations, for International Trade and Cult explains on its website that:

The situation of our country during the decade of '90... has been determined by the evolution of the macroeconomic indicators used as parameters by the international organisms and donor countries, which caused Argentina to cease qualifying for several cooperation programmes... In the current economic and social situation, the Chancellery has embarked on the task of explaining to the international community, donor countries and multilateral organisations, the recent changes in our everyday life with the objective of forcing a revision of the criteria which constrains the access by Argentine institutions to those sources and, thus, to the possibility of responding by those means to the necessities that arise<sup>17</sup>.

Therefore, the Argentine government embarked on the task of explaining to the rest of the world what, *prima facie*, is incomprehensible and is reflected in the following official figures by the Ministry for Social Development of the country who until recently "belonged to the First World"<sup>18</sup>: that by the second semester in 2004 9.398.000 people (24.6 percent of total population) lived in poverty, of which 3.515.000 (9.19 per cent of total population) were indigent. In the former "barn of the world" during 2004 1,115,000 households received food aid<sup>19</sup> under the National Plan of Nourishing Security which was entitled, precisely, "the most urgent hunger".

Returning to Borges, Argentineans cannot enjoy the memory of 'having been' because by means of a prolonged act of *Viveza*, being and having could never have happened. Once the fruit of such a smart move ran out, they proceeded to distance themselves from any co-responsibility, transforming the crisis into the remains of pillage perpetrated by 'others' who are now summoned out.

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<sup>17</sup> [http:// www.mrecic.gov.ar](http://www.mrecic.gov.ar) [Retrieved on 30 August 2005]. Own translation.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.desarrollosocial.gov.ar/notas/nota6.asp> [Retrieved on 2 September 2005].

<sup>19</sup> Argentina. Ministerio de Desarrollo Social. Informe de Ejecución Presupuestaria 2004.

## **LOOKING AND THE CITY IN CONSUMER SOCIETIES**

### *Looking in Consumer Societies*

It has already been mentioned that González Requena makes use of the spectacular and the pre-eminence of sight to analyse the commercialisation that turns something as intimate and private as weeping into part of the public space. In turn, Lowe [1986] argues that in the contemporary epistemic order (which according to this author corresponds to that of the electronic culture), knowledge is reduced to language (in the sense of Saussure) in contraposition to speech, that is, the set of binary oppositions and differences without identity with a totally arbitrary relationship. This relates as well to the argument already presented above that conceives consumption as a language structured around binary oppositions.

Debray [1987] suggests that human societies have gone through three stages (“media-spheres”) which have overlapped, in the sense that they would currently coexist: the logo-sphere, centred upon the word, the narrative, the descriptive image and the Ideas of the Platonic cave; the grapho-sphere, centred upon the stationary image of objects measured and mathematically operationalised; and the video-sphere, since the arrival of TV. (It is worth noting that this classification broadly corresponds to that of culture or periods proposed by Lowe: oral, typographic and electronic).

Debray proposes that before the video-sphere, we lived “in front of the image and now, in the visual realm” [Debray, 1987: 23] and that currently the “I look” has been substituted by the “I understand” [Debray, 1987: 300]. Being “in” the visual realm means that each consumer is a main character and not simply a member of the audience in a spectacle relationship, but without ceasing to be a spectator at the same time.

Consequently, following González Requena (who in turn follows Lacan), the consumer, the main character in consumer societies, attempts to seduce the Others, to appropriate the Others’ desire, but at the same time is seduced by them. Consumers in a consumer society cannot help being spectators. The trendy café or shopping mall are places “to be seen”, that is, places to seduce, but also “to see”, that is, to be seduced. There is a new configuration of the economy of desire according to which the reversibility of roles characteristic of the carnival model has given way to the concomitancy of roles: consumers are simultaneously members of the audience and main characters in a spectacular relationship. In those places “to be seen and to see,” consumers precisely and at the same time see and are seen; they consume and are consumed.

### *The City in a Consumer Society*

According to Silva [1992], a city is more than a constellation of physical, architectonic and urbanistic features: it is a symbolic network

under construction, whose meanings are being permanently negotiated. Thus, a city is the stage par excellence where spectacle relationships take place in a consumer society. Given the concomitance of roles mentioned above, the city is the shop window, but also the pavement. Like a Moebius strip, both sides conform to a continuous whole. Consumers are, at the same time, in the shop window and on the pavement. This is a feature specific to consumer societies: the limits of what is within and what is without are blurred.

However, the city also becomes a show in itself. It is no longer a question of the grandiose buildings of the past. Nowadays, the show is given by a mimesis between architecture, urbanism and consumption culture. The references to lifestyle have permeated the buildings in the public space: even apartment blocks constitute public spaces in this scoped culture where everything is consumable. In Middle Haven, England, for instance, Wil Alsop has designed a champagne bottle-shaped hotel, a toaster-shaped theatre and an apartment block that resembles a Prada skirt [Financial Times, 21/7/04: 5].

The city is the great stage on which consumers are both characters and spectators. But the city shows itself too. The city seeks to capture our attention, but not by means of what goes on in it. A famous tango tells about a teenager who was not allowed into a bar and peeped in at what happened inside through the window.<sup>20</sup> Now, the bar is all that remains. It does not matter what goes on inside, e.g., a champagne bottle shaped hotel; the hotel has stolen the show. True of old European cathedrals which are empty of prayerful believers but brimming with passing tourists, it is true also of such modern temples of observation: museums. It is not as important to look at the exhibition that is in the Guggenheim in Bilbao; the museum itself is the exhibition. The city exhibits the museum.

Therefore, the city has also become a fetish; it has also been reached by the structuring logic of consumer societies. The city in consumer societies is the place where consumption takes place, but it is also a place that is consumed. Consumers are consumed in the consumption that takes place in a city which at the same time offers itself to be consumed. The city in a consumer society is less a place to dwell or work than one to look at others and be looked at by them. Increasingly it becomes an additional object of the looking.

#### *'Looking' in Buenos Aires after the Crisis*

'Looking' in Buenos Aires before the 2001 crisis was centrifugal; hence its paradoxical tradition: on the one hand, the great city on the bank of a river that turns its back, but on the other, a city that looks exclusively abroad and forgets about the rest of the country, the "interior". This outward look was translated into a mass encounter thanks to a cunning, smart

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<sup>20</sup> "Cafetín de Buenos Aires", by Enrique S. Discépolo.

exchange rate policy move of the 1990s. At the same time, the outward look fuelled new consumption impulses that fed back the vacuity of the subjectivity of a consumer society.

The crisis brought down the curtain on the Margarita Islands<sup>21</sup>. After the crisis, Buenos Aires stunned the show put on by a new army of social actors: the scavengers (“*cartoneros*”)—baptised as “urban recuperators” by the inevitable official euphemism<sup>22</sup>. Each evening, this anonymous and faceless mass of human beings invades the city to search through the rubbish for anything saleable (about 430,000 tons of newspaper and cardboard alone, Zlotogwiazda, 2004, or food scraps) puts on the most visible exhibition of the piercing pain of ‘not being’ any longer.

With respect to the new spectacle of the scavengers, the Ombudsman of the city of Buenos Aires stated in 2002:

In our city, thousands of people have been forced to develop survival strategies based on a primary classification, collection and sale of domestic waste. Thus, thousands of men and women armed with their tools—their carts—scavenge amidst the rubbish looking for cardboard, glass, metals or anything saleable with which to eke out a living. It is hard and excruciating labour in almost sub-human conditions, but this is the main activity for most of the dwellers of the shanty towns and deprived areas of our city. . .

In the same document, the Ombudsman refers to this new “tool”:

The dispositions that ban in our country the circulation of non-motorised vehicles and rubbish scavenging were passed in the spirit of preserving the free circulation, good health and environment of the inhabitants of Buenos Aires. Far was it from the councillors to hamper, alter or restrict the right of the poor to work. It is apparent that there is a clash between those dispositions and the current socio-economic situation.

This acknowledgement of the clash between the legislation and the current socio-economic situation stems from the fact that the “not being any longer” is always accompanied by the need to acknowledge a setback. And this recession is always painful insofar as the ideal of progress, impregnated

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<sup>21</sup> In 1998, around 4.6 million Argentineans went on holidays to Margarita Island, in Venezuela, spending over 5,000 million dollars. Source: “Viajes al exterior: se gastan 5 000 millones”, *Clarín*, Buenos Aires. 20 June 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Ley de Recuperadores Urbanos 992/03. Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires. See Schamber y Suárez (2002).

with negative polarity, is anything related to retrocession. The crisis first produced a retrocession in the social practices and later in the legislation. What was far from the minds of the councillors four decades ago was that at the dawn of the 21st century thousands of people<sup>23</sup> had to enrol in this army of scavengers for whom even a special train has been especially dedicated.<sup>24</sup>

This is the spectacle that remains to be seen when the final curtain is drawn down on the crisis; this is the only postcard that can be sent from the infernal desert where roses do not grow. But the pain of the absence of progress is attenuated due to the collective transference of responsibility for the crisis to an identified and plural social actor identified as 'the others'. We refer here to the concept of transference as it was developed by social psychologist Pichón Riviere:

[...] the manifestation of unconscious feelings that aim to a stereotyped reproduction of situations characteristic of passive adaptation. This reproduction contributes to the resistance of change, the avoidance of a painful acknowledgement and the control of basic anxieties (fear of a loss or attack) (Pichón Rivière: 193, own translation).

This definition presents one of the most remarkable elements, already highlighted, of consumer society, namely, passivity, and an element that the crisis has prompted and which has already been highlighted: the avoidance of a painful acknowledgement. Consumer society imposed a logic of social action inscribed in a social image with a tacit passive (or flexible) adaptation. At the same time they knew quite well that they were digging their own graves while they tried to get along by rationalising that at least they were not out of their depth. Those practices emptied the members of that consumer society of any substantive identity and led them to define themselves as individuals only in relation to their conspicuous consumption patterns, imitative of a stereotyped "First World". The spectacle left by the 2001 political and institutional crisis could not become a mirror of reality. On the contrary, it had to give way to a process of social transference of responsibility to an anonymous and shapeless "Them All"—the Others. Thus, the painful acknowledgement of, and owning up to, responsibilities was avoided.

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<sup>23</sup> According to official data, by 31 December 2003 there were 8,153 "urban recuperators" registered, of whom 1,313 were below 18. About 87 per cent of these scavengers used a push cart. (Defensoría del Pueblo de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. Resolución N° 3321/04, 6 July 2004). However, the Ombudsman estimated in 2002 that the number of scavengers oscillated between 20,000 and 50,000. (Defensoría del Pueblo de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. Annual Report 2002: 45).

<sup>24</sup> The film "Tren Blanco", by Nahuel García, Sheila Pérez Giménez and Ramiro García (2003), tells about this train.

## **CRISIS, MIRROR AND NEW IDENTITIES**

Why did the 2002 crisis in Argentina not turn into the foundational element of an Ortegian project? Was it perchance inevitable that a process of transference took place before the piercing reflection in the mirror of the crisis? This was partly a consequence of an exteriorisation of guilt, but its imaginary character turned it into an impossible riddance of pestilence. The desire not to recognise themselves as “giles” creates in the Argentine collective unconscious a unitive identity feature as “Victims” of a pluralistic “Other”. This symbolic locus of the “other” stems from the crisis which operates as a mirror reflecting back a dissonant image. Due to its dissonance, this image is rejected and thus transferred into the dyad of the new imaginary: Victim-Victimiser.

The consumer society is structured around the generation of an unconscious desire in each consumer-citizen to define oneself as subject based on acts of consumption—“I consume, therefore I am. . .whatever I consume”. This image (related to a deep crisis of collective identity translated into countless foreign cultural references and the simultaneous rejection of anything autochthonous) comes to an end with the crisis—with the wake-up call after the dream of belonging to the First World. Such image and crisis of national collective identity is rooted in the archetype of the *Viveza Criolla*.

The *Vivo* is opposed to the *Gil*, but the *Gil* is a victim of the *Viveza*. Therefore it seems that no transference has taken place, if the role of *Gil* is transferred to that of the victim. However, the key point is that the post-crisis transference to the role of victims and concomitant rejection of the reflected image of *Gil* goes together with a rationalisation of its inherent values, in particular, the central value in the Argentine symbolic-cultural realm: the *Guile*. The smart person (*Vivo*) beguiles. A paradigmatic example is the “Hand of God” goal by Diego Maradona against England in the 1986 football World Cup. This is the apex of Argentine *guile*. Not only does every Argentinean want to be reflected in this mirror, but the whole was reflected until it broke into pieces in 2002. This was the most Argentine goal of them all, even more than the one scored by Maradona in that match. The same player, in another World Cup, after another example of *guile*, claimed that his legs had been amputated. He did not see it as a self-amputation; they were amputated by others. What happened was not a consequence of his addiction problem which he had to assume and come to terms with as the first step towards his recovery; on the contrary, he placed himself in the role of a victim. There is a parallel between the results in both football events. On the one hand, (in the first World Cup, Argentina became Champions—partly because of the ‘Hand of God’)—but in the second, they did not get through the second round due to the symbolic amputation) and the fall from the years of glorious consumption into the pot-banging protests on the other.

The crisis gives way to a pluralistic other, unnamed and faceless, an imaginary and imagined scapegoat, who amputated the legs of the best football player as well as the soporific consumerist wellbeing. This pluralistic other is enough to expiate the collective psychological guilt. But this is at the expense of avoiding the healthy acknowledgement of any personal responsibility for the crisis. That would make it impossible for history to repeat itself. This impossibility is unconsciously sought, because underlying this history of the tragic, lonely and sad panhandling end there lies the future mythical return to the times of consumerist voracity enjoyed during the nineties.

### *Alternative Spaces*

After the initial (and for many, initiatory) pot-banging protest<sup>25</sup>, the crisis brings about the “*Argentinazo*” (North and Huber, 2004), that is, a repertoire of collective actions of resistance or social activism that has upsurged since 2002. This takes three different forms: neighbourhood assemblies<sup>26</sup>; factory recuperation; and road-blocking picket lines<sup>26</sup>.

The neighbourhood assemblies started off as spaces of discussion and participation, aimed at finishing “passivity, justified by the fact of being victims” (*Colectivo Situaciones*, 2002: 167; quoted in North and Huber, *op. cit.*). The assemblies lost momentum and were disbanded because many of those who attended them had no political interests or experience and felt that they had been co-opted by left-wing cadres or Peronist patronage. As North and Huber argue, “Perhaps, the failure of the assemblies to develop is more a reflection of the extent to which the hopes and dreams of the people did not go beyond an explosion against the economic crisis and the prescriptions by the IMF, and towards a broader ideological critique of neo-liberal capitalism and alternative credible plans”.

As factory recuperation about 130 firms in receivership were re-opened by approximately 10,000 former employees. The low numbers involved, in addition to the weak economic viability of many of these ventures have been two constant features of the social intervention of factory recuperation.

Picket lines started as road blocks, but soon turned into an urban social protest phenomenon with its own, albeit non-consolidated, goals. Thus, the “picket line movement” atomised itself into several internal lines and groups most of which fight for social benefits and to profit from the spoils system. Nonetheless, these social actions and new social actors are to

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<sup>25</sup> Between December 2001 and March 2002, there were 2,014 pot-banging protests in Argentina [Ovalles 2002]. See also Peruzzotti (2002).

<sup>26</sup> A nationwide survey by Gallup in March 2002 found the following percentages of adherence to the three collective actions mentioned in the text: neighbourhood assemblies, 77 per cent; pot-banging protests, 70 per cent; and road blockades, 40 per cent. *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, 15 April 2002.

a large extent a consequence of the crisis. After their initial upsurge they were either disbanded or they dwindled in their importance insofar as gathering forces of alternative political and social projects. What lies at the heart of this weakening is the withdrawal of the middle classes from these spaces of social participation to which they had contributed immediately after the crisis and in a more limited pre-crisis *vita activa* (Arendt). They were limited because they lacked an essential component: action in the public realm. Such a withdrawal obeys the comfortable but deleterious preference for the cult of postmodern consumption and the petulant dream of the “give me two”<sup>27</sup>.

### FINAL COMMENTS

“Not being any longer” has produced a muscular strain, a discontent in Argentine contemporary culture and society. “Not being any longer” is reflected in images of the most urgent hunger and urban armies of scavengers that strike a painful blow. In a different context, this ‘not being any longer’ could have given way to contentment in remembering a glorious past, but not in Argentina since 2002, because the 2001 crisis was the logical conclusion of the instauration of a consumer society during the 1990s which implied the fetishisation of the social realm. This fetishisation emptied subjectivity of its content and therefore subjectivity became defined exclusively in terms of patterns of conspicuous and imitative consumption. During the 1990s, the different social identities and, consequently, the social imagery were structured around this tautological praxis which can be summed up as “I consume; therefore I am. . .whatever I consume”. This praxis created a deep dissonance with the frustration of the subjective project inherent to any consumer society rather than contentment in what had been enjoyed in the past.

A defining aspect of the Argentine way of life is the *Viveza*—trying to achieve goals and objectives by means of cunning, smart moves and guile. The *Viveza* implies the existence of the foolish. What makes Argentines most angry is to recognise that they “have been so foolish.” That is why Borges points out that for an Argentinean it is less important to be known as an immoral person than as a fool. The crisis uncovered the mirror of the cunning-foolish dyad, but provided the most dreadful reflection: that of the Argentines in all their lack of being ‘smart’. They had been living ‘their way’ during the 1990s, knowing that it could not last because the process was based on a supposedly cunning kind of exchange rate policy prestidigitation. But the crisis undressed them in all their foolishness.

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<sup>27</sup> Between 1979 and 1982, the exchange rate policy made it possible for thousands of middle class Argentines to travel abroad. This period is known as “Give me two”, expression that refers to the excessive purchasing power these tourists enjoyed abroad.

Before such a reflecting image, there are two options. Either the problems are assumed and responsibilities owned up to, which constitutes the first step towards a moral, institutional and psychological healing and development. Or the eyes are diverted towards an imagined and imaginary object onto which the anger is discharged. The latter took place in 2002 when the suffering caused by the acceptance of their own incapacity to regulate social and personal relationships made thousands demand that “they all go away”. The necessary participation in the exchange rate guile during the 1990s created cognitive dissonance when the crisis broke out. The crisis, therefore, brought about an unconscious transference of the role of fools reflected in its mirror into the role of victims—innocent and defenceless, deserving compassion and charity.

Consequently, a historical opportunity to grow was lost. We do not mean grow in the economic sense; but rather as individuals and as a people who assume their responsibilities and limitations and who face up to the problems and seek to solve them altogether. This lost opportunity portends a future crisis. There is pain in this author as well, who is convinced that it is only by facing up to the problems and jointly trying to solve them that a new and healthier identity can be forged in Argentina.

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**CHAPTER X**

**THE NEW RATIONALITY  
IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIETY**

*ANDRÉS RODRÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ*

**INTRODUCTION**

For a long time I have been reflecting on the way *organizational thought* has become the backbone of our lives in these last centuries. It orients the conformation of our thought, our emotions and our life styles; it has become a central element of the dominant paradigm that illumines the reality in which we live.

Shaped instrumentally in organizations, it has had its powerful allies in the fields of epistemology, economy, religion and politics. All of them have created of convergent forms a reality and logic from which the speech of the “truth” has been elaborated that has crossed all possible spaces of thought and experience of human beings. This language of control, together with the domination that has rocked the human being, has joined itself to him and he has become accustomed to it. Simultaneously, it has been restricting for him, limited and linked as it is with the multiple fears produced by the system, real or imaginary. Those who locate themselves outside the settled status are suspect, watched, threatened and mortified.

This context of organizations (political, unions, industries, services...) where most of the human practices are developed is the place to observe the type of relations that have been constructed on false foundations. We must shed light on these issues in order to come to a better understanding of human beings today. They are more vacillating, freer of labels, perhaps more fragile, but certainly more authentic in the construction of a new way of being human. This way could be described as ‘quixotic’, in the laborious search for dignity, identity, and freedom. It is conscious that existence begins and ends, like man himself, in a fragile boat that sails on the open sea and in the middle of a strong urge to confront and to surpass the others that constitute one’s historical frame.

In this sense, I share with professor Dei (1995, 137), the idea that far from postulating the utopia of a perfect society, we want to locate ourselves in the concrete tension of this same existence. We want to achieve greater lucidity regarding human life without the rhetoric which encourages us to hope that life necessarily must have something more. Therefore, in this chapter we shall consider some major impressions of human nature that were (are) operative in the last and present century. Both centuries are

bound by the power and great influence of organizational thought. We will begin our reflections by considering two fundamental premises:

*First premise:*

The human being, in the logic of competition, has ended the 20<sup>th</sup> century, without clear horizons for his existence, without consciousness of the principles nor of the processes that constitute them, without roots or the capacity to give an account of his passage in the world, without his own identity. He is able to be dominated and trapped and caught by the culture of consumption and the uncertainty of circumstance and contingency. The phenomenon that has governed and consolidated this model of man has been the organization, the organizational thought and technocrat-ism as an ideology of control and human domination.

### **ORGANIZATION AS STRUCTURAL AXIS OF SOCIETY AND HUMAN BEINGS**

I am referring directly to the theoretical assumptions and logic of the 'critical stream', because I consider these at the heart of an understanding of the human being, which has allowed him to elaborate a speech oriented to his emancipation and recognition as a person while living positively in a global world. This initially positive view, however, can digress into a more restricted one wherein 'globalization' begins to take away this freedom and conceives man as a mere useful instrument, without identity and humanity

In the process of the development of modern society, there have been two simultaneous projects based on very different axes: order and control as opposed to autonomy and freedom. Thus, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a consolidated society designs itself or will be catalogued as an organized society or a society of organizations. Similarly, individuals will define and recognize themselves as 'organization' men. This trend began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Organizations are, for very diverse reasons, one of the phenomena that have greatly influenced the configuration of the contemporary world, individual and collective behaviours, and present day lifestyles. From this perspective, we can say that all the processes of social interaction have shifted and have been influenced and penetrated by the dynamics and development of organizations. The central actors in the contemporary society, the instruments that we use to obtain personal goals, social, political and economic are the organizations which we create.

Under this approach, organizations are the characteristic scenes of the modern world resulting in industrial and technological revolutions made by human beings; they are vehicles of the rationalization that has been responsible for unprecedented 'progress' in one part of the world, but that contributes to misery and poverty in many other parts.

The companies and management also produce people—workers, clients, as well as citizens—with peculiar capacities. That is to say, they create and they promote needs, desires, beliefs and identities. They create publicity and other forms of consumption marketing, maintain and reinforce stereotypes of class, confront identities and shape a precarious self-esteem. They promote a well-known life style of materialistic selfishness and over-develop aspects of life relative to private activity. But the companies also will have to assume some responsibility in unemployment, in the ecological pollution and disasters, with associated physical and psychological problems in the quality of life of the workers [Alvesson and Wilmott, 1992, 5].

Without a doubt, conceptions of organization have been changing through time. Thus, they can be seen as rational systems, that are naturally created and constructed to obtain certain goals, like natural systems that struggle to survive in a context of great uncertainty. In addition, we can see them as closed, self-sufficient and relatively isolated systems or as open systems, constituted, influenced and penetrated by the surroundings.

Also, the operation of organizations, has undergone deep changes over time, affecting structural aspects, the guidelines of what constitutes legitimacy, the value systems that regulate their dynamics and its incardination in the social system, the concept of one's work, and the relation to both the external and internal surroundings. Organizations and the ways they operate have had tremendous influence even on culture and the planet itself.

In this contemporary framework of 'organization' the very notion of 'society' itself has been fashioned. In the first place, organizations require conformity, obedience and subordination to the goals they establish. This, in turn, requires specialization, which is a particular demand of modern organizations upon individuals that then determines the ways these individuals socialize in society.

Secondly, in this context, the one that always and exclusively decides on strategy and purpose is management. To carry out this strategy and obtain its purpose requires that everyone else simply follow along. Hence, we must consider whether it is legitimate to maintain this asymmetry or, on the contrary, to tend by means of the democratization of its structures, to balance such relations in a reasonable and ethical manner.

Thirdly, the organization is the main agency of control and discipline in the present society via the way it determines forms of thought and the development of certain lifestyles; it is a power oriented to the domination of the human being. In fact, the political nature of literature in the field of organizations has been constructed on the prevailing values of rational direction alone—a kind of rationalism. This has legitimated the acceptance of authority and obedience, without allowing space for questioning why some interests are more legitimate to defend and to promote than others (Hardy and Leiba-Ó'Sullivan, 1998).

Moreover, the ethical and moral foundations of so many 'organizations' are not built upon solid foundations rooted in the logic of respect for family life, social education, and just labour education. On the contrary, the values on which our 'society of organizations' is sustained are related to competitiveness, money, prestige, power and self-recognition. That is to say, instrumental values, that we use only when they serve our immediate and fleeting aims, mindless of how these might hurt others.

In addition, this web of logic is difficult to escape, because our own identity as people and professionals is developed upon it. It is a logic installed in the society and adopted by organizations characterized by competitiveness, lack of solidarity and consumption. It maintains, fortifies and reproduces the disease of the system and, therefore, facilitates perverse and insidious values. This legitimizes a bad exercise of power, expressed in multiple forms that penetrate the social system and its power.

The increasing complexity of these modern societies produces generalized mechanisms of legitimacy that do not demand the direct participation of the people affected (Habermas, 1976). For that reason, modern societies are a more or less diffuse networks of instruments in which those generalized mechanisms take shape. Their legitimacy is based on a pretension regarding economic reality.

### **THE ORGANIZATION AS INSTRUMENT OF DOMINATION AND UNDEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION**

Following the thought of Foucault, it is correct to interpret the evolution of the capitalist society as the formation and development process of a "society to discipline". From this perspective, when we speak of "being able" in the organizations we are speaking of the exercise of *control*. This is so important in the society and the present organizations that it is necessary to consider it as the essential problem of both:

[...] The dominion power is the common denominator that moves the relations in our society and, through more and more subtle mechanisms, forms the horizon of daily life, science and policy [Dei, 1995: 90].

Nevertheless, it is preferable to speak in general of mechanisms of coordination than of control mechanisms, a terminology more compatible with the assumption of a consensus on power:

We must recognize that while a century ago the historical scene was occupied by political, ideological and intellectual actors; at the present time these begin to be scarce... Now the concern is how to reconstruct social control on economic activity [Touraine, 1994, 2].

In the Weberian tradition, legitimacy is the fundamental mechanism of a non-coercive recognition of power. Traditionally, the legitimacy of the power takes place from other instances—religious, traditional, etc., but modern organization societies have developed auto-legitimacy mechanisms, like the legal system that is adjusted in its development to its own principles. Therefore, no longer can we apply that opinion formulated by the oft remembered and forgotten Montesquieu:

So that one not be abused by power, it is necessary, by the disposition of things, that power stops power [1970: 167].

A legitimate power does not exist until all other powers are subordinated. This includes the economic power which dictates its norms and establishes its strategies using the organization as an essential instrument whose influence crosses all the phantoms of society, beginning with its own members. The most significant product of any organization is its members. From multiple free contracts, social relations, to the personal identity of the managers and of the workers, all are productions and reproductions of the organization (Deetz, 1992, 27).

This analysis defends the perspective of radical organization, for which the concept of control is the main nucleus of theory. This supposes a set of mechanisms and practices (bureaucratic, normative engineering control) that cross over all the processes of work and, therefore, the whole framework of behaviours at the different levels of the organization and extends to the full scope of society.

However, from an individualistic viewpoint, the preoccupation with efficiency has concealed the domination. In addition, an unconscious blindness has existed before the real phenomena of subordination, submission and dependency visible in the organizations but masked in a contradictory and complex system of relations. The dominant paradigm of the theory of the organization has considered society as a mere multitude of individuals interacting in order to satisfy their needs (Jackson, 2003).

The new modes of management of the organizational network, have replaced the old hierarchies, are smoother, more subtle, but equally as constrictive as those of long ago, because by eliminating the visibility of the hierarchic power, it is more difficult to resist.

On the other hand, the social system is limited by the authoritarian character of the organizations and by the weakness of its participative and democratic mechanisms. In addition, many of the recognized individual rights for society are denied or restricted in the organizations, although these develop a great capacity to symbolize procedures and to provide structures of thought to people in order to explain the established form:

Therefore, the organizations strategically are in continuous interchange with their employees and the numerous groups in their surroundings with those who goods, services,

money, experiences and meaning interchange. Meaning and symbols as with material goods [...] [Watson, 1994: 111].

Under this prism, the organization as an historical product and, a matrix of the capitalist society, presents or displays a strict configuration of property rights. However, a characteristic element of this logic that is at the base of organizational thought is to justify non-democratic institutions. Liberal thought moves in a permanent dialectic between a radically possessive individualism and reasons that surpass individual rights in the state.

This way, from a political point of view, the organization is neither democratic nor pluralist. The shareholders have expropriated the political rights of the workers, although actually they have lost control over the benefits of the managers. Nevertheless, calm reflection does not have to hide the character of the organization as an institution of human beings. It is this character of social and political organization that one must take to question the legitimacy of the internal authority and the need for democratic rights in its ambit.

*Second premise:*

It is urgent to infuse into organizations and organizational thought the logic of democratic relations wherein people are considered as citizens and as free to construct their own identity—professionals in a more open society.

## **THE DEMOCRATIC PROJECT**

Clearly, according to the economic rationality that prevails in organizations, a world of obligatory work is being created that produces too much, uses excessive resources, compensates one unfairly and endangers the global ecosystem on which we depend to survive. From this approach, only one economic democracy can channel the economy towards a human goal in which people control capital, instead of letting it control them, as usually happens at the present time [Potterfield, 1999]. A first step towards transforming this situation would be to make the social source of the authority explicit and establish limits to its exercise. This would be by means of really democratic institutions through which the conscience of members, with respect to their respective organizations, could be expressed.

It is logical to think that these behaviours can occur only in an open system—flexible, transparent, cooperative and shared. That is one that would protect and make such democracy feasible, making good use of power in legal terms. Nevertheless, it would imply that the individual, even to be individual, to survive, has to depend on the organization which, in the end, is the one that provides his sustenance. For that reason it would force

the top level of the organizations to recognize moral responsibility and to assume the socialization models which they have been imposing [Hatch, 1997].

It is necessary, therefore, to promote a democratic policy in organizations, as suggested by professor Ibáñez [2005, 180] following his reading of the work of Rorty. That is a policy that is inclusivist in the sense of recognizing the existing diverse alterities (workers, suppliers, consumers, environment) and that excludes discrimination, imposition or manipulation.

In this sense, the main question we must raise about the new paradigm is whether the application of democratic principles that promote human rights is really possible in present 'organizations'. This author thinks it is, if employees are enabled to have some *direct* right of control on the authority that they obey, as well as the right to participate directly in the process of adopting the decisions that affect them. In this way, organizations would gain democratic legitimacy and the workers would gain the capacity to decide on aspects of the work that affect them. It would suppose an effective change in the structure of power in the organization, as well as recognition of the worker as a citizen.

In order for this conception of inalienable rights to work in organizations, it must be recognized that organizations are *human* institutions, which must first be ruled by human/democratic principles. Secondly, the personal rights of the workers cannot be alienated in the work contract. Thirdly, the organization is a system distributing power. It is a political organization, and the authority within it cannot derive its legitimacy solely or directly from property rights. Finally, the property, management and control within the framework constitute different and separate elements of the organization.

These four points would help provide the qualitative jump society needs in order to insert the logic of democratic relations into organizations so that the people working in them would be considered free citizens bearing rights. However, this requires a different paradigm which will not only affect the scope of organizations, but all aspects of our professional, personal, spiritual and social life. This paradigm shift would require serious reflection on that which is really important for human life, which in turn would help us to identify life's important problems and provide guidelines for dealing with these challenges. However, when introducing a new paradigm, one must be on guard against turning it into "the paradigm", the only way to do something, the only truth.

Therefore, society has to stimulate the existence of foreigners in its midst, and listen to their views, because the people who create new paradigms, generally, are not members of the already settled community and are not vulnerable in the same way as those who are settled; they do not have anything to lose in creating new paradigms. This means that if we wish to find new paradigms in the present society, we must look beyond the center, towards the periphery, because the new rules are written almost always in the margins. We must be brave and patient, since in the beginning

the new paradigm will not be so effective in producing change right away. This is the reason why it is absolutely necessary to have great confidence in our own judgment and convictions about the values we wish to see cultivated. The discovery of the new world, viewed from Latin America, shows the tenacity of those who carried it out. This illustrates clearly the need to believe in being able to change something, even though the solid evidence encouraging our success is sometimes hard to see.

People can choose to change their rules and regulations; human beings are not genetically programmed to see the world in but one way. One can choose to see the world in a new form, and if this is shared by broad sectors of the society then it will probably be able to hold fast and consolidate the dominant paradigm.

This will begin when one becomes aware of the fragility of one's own nature, its provisional state and the need for solidarity and cooperation to create spaces of freedom and shared responsibility. There one is recognized and respected by the other; all and each one can maintain their dignity independently of their origin, colour or religion, simply because they are men and women who work together in a community. They suffer and laugh with the others, and are humans who live and inhabit the same planet, together as a community. This differs greatly from the conditions determined by post-modernity—what Sennet (1998) calls the *new capitalism*—which have caused mass depersonalization. There economy trumps policy, and, therefore, policies are inhumane and the work place is not a community of persons. This leads to political, economic and psychological diffusion as Sennet states [Ibanez. 2005]. In this sense, the problem of our time, as Giddens forcefully reminds us, is that:

[...] Democracy is in crisis because it is not sufficiently democratic [...] [1999: 87].

This author suggests the need for a re-democratization of democracy, that must begin by the democratization of people to allow us to live together, following the principles or ideals of justice expressed by the political liberalism of Rawls (1996). This requires people who are honest and virtuous, but such people are difficult to find today, because of the loss of virtue, about which Alasdair MacIntyre (1995) writes. This diagnosis is shared by Amitai Etzioni (1997) when considering that breaks in the traditions and social ligaments risk creating an ethical emptiness. This is expressed clearly in the loss of moral values, because a good society can only be conceived according to what it considers to be social virtues, as much as individual rights. In his own words:

[...A] good society requires a balance between autonomy and order [Etzioni, 1997: 67].

In this sense, Etzioni reflects on what is agreed upon as a communitarism perspective that does not have to be understood as a socioeconomic doctrine. Rather it is a social philosophy oriented to assure the fulfilment of the moral values necessary to live in society. It is a unit of interaction of the values acquired collectively, which means that the individuals are not objects, but carry on stories acquired in long life traditions:

[...] the community offers a normative foundation, a solid starting point, a culture, a tradition, a feeling of property and a place to engage in a dialogue morally [Etzioni, 1997: 325].

With this, we are engaged in the phenomenon of multiculturalism. We have to assume that the multicultural society is not a paradise, nor a project, nor an original act, because societies are multicultural independently from their inhabitants. For that reason, the problem is not how to create a multicultural society, but how to organize multi-culturality. For a long time, this has been evolving in the most dynamic zones of the planet and will extend rapidly and more to other emergent zones. Without a doubt, this implies, as Finkelkraut maintains, a change of mentality on the part of the privileged people in the so-called first world:

[...] ignorance will be overcome the day in which, instead of wanting to extend their culture to all men ... we learn to celebrate the funeral of universality; in other words, when so-called civilized men get down from their false pedestal and recognize with humble lucidity that they also are a variety of natives [1987: 61].

Nevertheless, an excessive ethnocentrism has existed, defining the organizations and society, mainly in the West, from the viewpoint of a specific culture, namely, the Anglo-Saxon. This promotes imitations of the contents of our reality, through conforming political creeds and economic institutions. But without considering the culture, traditions, and historical peculiarities in which our Latino American reality has been formed, organizations have been developed within an a-historical framework. This is being maintained by the dominant line of literature in this field and is being legitimized by the respective societies. On the other hand, and indeed by this dominant literary tendency, a separation of labour and non-labour has taken place which, in my opinion, has caused both to be considered artificially independent. This derives also from a benevolent eclecticism, as from those in a sectarian fanaticism. In this sense, Gabriel García Márquez, in the inaugural speech of his seminar: "Latin America: the Vision of the New Generation", organized by the I.A.D.B. and UNESCO in Paris, in March, 1999, commented:

We finished being a laboratory of insolvent illusions. Our greater virtue is creativity, and nevertheless we have not done much more than to live reheated doctrines and other people's wars, this inheritance of an unfortunate Christopher Columbus who found us by chance when he sailed looking for the Indians.

We have to initiate a process of radical deconstruction of whichever beliefs, prejudices and false perceptions live in our minds, if we aspire to the dignity of a human being in any context whether labour, social or multicultural.

### **IN SEARCH OF A PROJECT OF ORGANIZATION AND SOCIETY FOR MAN: THE HUMAN BEING'S ASPIRATION FOR DIGNITY**

In this line, we have to sketch balanced organizational models of society which will help to create greater and greater authentic well-being for more and more people.

For this, we will have to begin to question the theories and schools of thought from the scientific community and the institutional language that accompanied them. These have been sustaining and legitimizing the values that fed them and the human profiles moulded in their ambit. But do they respond to a desire to improve our knowledge about human behaviour in organizations? Do they provide these with the guidelines needed to obtain a greater level of well-being? Or, on the contrary, do they respond exclusively to implicit or explicit demands of the organizations to obtain greater levels of competitiveness and yield on their investments?

Also we have to question whether organizations and society have really identified and defined the most pressing and fundamental problems of today's world. The deeper epistemic problems still have to be better defined and understood by those who operate from within the logic of 'organizations'. In addition to these problems of an epistemic character, we must reflect on the diverse aspects of the individual/organization relationship, among which we would emphasize the following:

1. Is it necessary to work so long in order to be available to the organization?
2. Must human beings, in this unceasing race of the market, be treated by society like merchandise?
3. Is there a strict need to plunder and mistreat Nature in the voracious manner of recent centuries and thereby endangering the life that maintains us?
4. Must the quality of life be degraded in the name of ever greater commitment to the organizations for their projects? Is it reasonable to follow the "sprint" logic that the present society imposes?

5. Does the organization not have to maintain the citizenship rights of their workers?

6. Are the relations between employer and employee such that the employee's dignity is respected?

This last point is crucial and fundamental because, as it is usually said in Hispanic countries, if the person does not have dignity, then they are practically nothing. Dignity is the essential condition in order to be recognized and to recognize the others; that is, to live in society. As Professor Mires maintains:

[...] To have dignity is enough for simple existence as a social and legal person. This makes it possible for me to resort to a superior instance, when I feel that my personal dignity is endangered or is on the verge of being so [2001: 79].

The dignity of the person is threatened whenever one's freedom tends to be denied or rejected, that is to say, whenever it is made into a thing or instrument. Organizations institutionalize the instrumentalization of the people, which simultaneously is legitimized by the social system:

Little by little we began to fear that the man becomes, in one way or another, the object of a patent, although only through its genome [Edelman, 1999: 65].

It is necessary and urgent to go in search of a new project of organization and society in which dignity emerges more as a valued good. Money, science and consumption are the essential components of today's utopia. These three elements are developed in a wide and complex network of organizations of all types, which offers to provide everything to the human being, to cover all needs, satisfy all desires, and fill all hopes. Nevertheless, all this can become counter-productive if it begins to prevent one from developing one's own identity and capacities, that is to say, one's humanity or one's own unique capacity to grow and blossom freely in ways helpful to the whole society. Unfortunately, in most organizations, the human being's dignity is not central to the inner workings of the organization. In this brief story, told with great simplicity and clarity, Octavio Paz expresses all that I have been saying:

Memory that late, as it heard a slight noise in the fourth neighbour to me, I asked aloud: Who walks that way. And the voice of a servant just arrived in town answered: It is not anybody, it is me [1993: 55].

Or with what terrible crudity is this witnessed by a survivor of the 1994 massacres in Rwanda:

Simply I mean that it is no longer human. . . I repeat it: they cut and they mutilate Tutsis to eliminate what is human in them and thus to be able to kill them more easily [Hatzfeld, 2001: 126].

Such regressions of humanity are possible because we have already resigned ourselves to the trivialization of social justice and structural violence and do not know how to recognize the old abuses under new facades. It is possible to conclude, after a brief historical overview of the question, that the concept of humanity has changed today; the sense of community in many parts of the planet is no longer strong; many people do not see themselves as part of a whole, but as associations of independent people. This transformation, although it does not annul the social hierarchies, does modify, in depth, the inequality we see:

One speaks, but it is clear that it also could be the other that is understood. It occurs that none exerts authority in the name of an intrinsic and essential superiority [Gauchet, 1980: 95].

Dignity is, first of all, dignity before others. In other words, I can have it with me, if I have it before others. Human dignity, therefore, must be an unavoidable reality in the context of the organizations and scope of any society. It implies recognizing the other as person in the fullness of one's rights. To be at that level of reality, it is necessary not only that the pertinent laws exist, but that they be internalized in human beings as essential to coexistence, and this by means of ethical discussion and the customs or communicative interaction, as Habermas would say [1996: 258].

## **THE UTOPIC ASPIRATION**

Some attempts have been made during the last century to place the control of the means of production directly in the hands of the workers. They thought that the workers could take control of industries and direct them themselves, mould relations of cooperation and solidarity, and reorganize the methods and the work loads, so that the work would be a source of satisfaction. They thought that the workers could direct themselves, neither through representatives nor controlling governments, but in a direct way by themselves. But this idea is already dead; no one believes at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that direct self-government of the workers can work in contemporary society.

Self-government on the part of the workers has not been more than an ephemeral vision during local revolutionary processes. It is more a

promise than a reality, except briefly as a form of governance. It was diluted before its start, due to the pressure of adversaries, the weakness of its theories, the exigencies of the situation in which they existed, and the technical and organizational necessities required by a complex modern society.

Also, such futurologists as Peter Drucker, Daniel Bell, Alvin Toffler, Tom Peters, Charles Handy, Peter Senge or Bill Gates, have created fantasies in which they propose that people could be happier, richer and more intelligent if the world were organized in such-and-such forms.

But if we survey only the surface of human history, there has always existed, on the part of some at least, the certainty of having found the way to make human beings happier. This appears in: *The Republic*, *The City of the Sun*, *The New Atlantis*, *Utopia*, *Cristianopolis*, *A Brave New World*, not to mention capitalism, Marxism, anarchism, cooperativism and so many others. All of them plead for a better world, more and more transparent and democratic. All aspire to carry out an ideal organization of society and knowledge. However, when such utopias were attempted, they generated insufferable, even undemocratic, forms of social organization, and squashed knowledge.

From a less radical and more gentle perspective, different forms of industrial democracy have been tried throughout the previous century. Nevertheless, after evaluating these experiences we can say that a system of formal industrial democracy is today assumed in a general manner to be able to offer mechanisms that protect the rights and interests of the employees—otherwise such a system would not be democratic. Without doubt, a great part, not to say all of the experiences of industrial democracy, arise from the influential studies of Professor Mayo, from the 30s to the present. These show a great place for capital with high economic, political and social yield; yet on the contrary, they suppose a progressive loss of the collective power of the workers.

In any case, we will have to begin searching again, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for ways of being authentically human, with the dignity of persons, citizens and members of a planetary (global) and even more multicultural community. Hopefully, this will be another utopia in the course of human history:

A new and destructive utopia life, where no one can decide for others the way to die, where love and happiness are truly possible, and where those condemned to one hundred years of solitude have always a second chance on Earth. Humans now consider utopia a fable that we have created, [but] we still feel it is not too late to undertake the creation of a contrasting utopia (Gabriel García Márquez: *Speech in the Swedish Academy*).

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## CHAPTER XI

# NAME, FLESH AND HEART

*RICARDO OSCAR DÍEZ*

### INTRODUCTION

Each age and each person must face their own challenge: to build a New World that will be better than the one they have received. At the beginning of this 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is our turn to rescue the possibilities offered to us by our rich, though complex, heritage, to adjust to the changes, and to achieve some growth and improvement. Proposing something better, that would also imply true growth, can be expressed, understood and interpreted differently. For some, it can mean increasing the amount of wealth, for others, greater knowledge; to some, greater comfort, to others, a more representative power. All these differences are rooted in “ideas and beliefs” (Ortega y Gasset, 1959) that manifest very diverse internal worlds, that are difficult to communicate effectively to one another due to language, perception, and expectations. Such disparity can lead to exasperation and finally to an abandonment of deep reflection, which ultimately ends in simply pursuing those immediate and somewhat superficial and individualistic accounts of what constitutes improvement and growth. But any genuine improvement and growth must not proceed along these lines; on the contrary, there must be both an individual and communal search and agreement on what it is that needs to be changed and what it is that needs to be preserved or reinterpreted.

In order to answer these questions we need to take account of the most immediate singularity of each person, the heritage received as one’s own in language, flesh and that centre which Saint Augustine calls the *heart*. The challenge is to show how the particularities found in one’s personal nucleus relate to and are able to promote more unity and charity among human beings at large. The consideration of concord must take precedence over conflict in order to renew the bonds of charity, which are the only bonds for real growth and improvement. It is in the unity of the heart that the world will best be able to achieve the harmony and unity that it seems perennially to lack. For the purpose of promoting this human harmony, then, let us now consider the idea of heritage in the context of the notions of language, flesh and heart.

#### *Language*

In terms of heritage, the first thing received from a cultural heritage is a determined language by which each person can engage in dialogue and other relations. We include in it the corporeal gestures that, along with the

word, configure the ambit of mediation in which something is communicated. When it comes to written language, three steps that synthesize the text and make the use of language possible and meaningful: a) the mediating word, b) the reference to the real, and c) the chiasmus between things and words.

a) The mediating word: The word constitutes one of the most important elements of inter-subjectivity. Its interpretation is the first task of thought and sensibility; it is the first factor in receiving what it offers. The dialogical relation allows one to separate what is heard from what is pronounced. Building thought starts in the received sign and leads to the given word. In medieval philosophy this movement has been specified by the following names: *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio* and *contemplatio*.

*Lectio* can be compared with what today is called hermeneutics. Here, interpretation supposes traversing the text in all its senses. Speech incorporates both the image and the event as signs ready to be read. Diachronic and synchronic readings attempt to reveal the reality that is evinced in what is said. In the *lectio* the four senses that the medieval thinker assigned to the Scripture are interrelated: 1) the literal or historical; 2) the allegorical; 3) the moral or existential and 4) the anagogic, eschatological or mystical. Not to stop here, let this word of Augustine from Docia be enough:

Littera gesta docet;	The word teaches the facts
quid credas allegoria;	the allegory what you will believe
moralis quid agas;	the moral, how you will act.
quo tendas anagogia.	The anagogy, what you will hope.

—[Mujica, H. 1986: 120]

The *meditatio* or *ruminatio* consists in ruminating, masticating slowly and patiently the nourishment received from the *lectio*, tasting and relishing what the word had left. The continuous passing from the whole to the part and from the part to the whole by the memory in the caverns of the heart engenders the development of the meditation. The sense given by the text constitutes an encounter with Truth. Tasting this concord explores the sweetness received and faces the consequences of that gift. This constitutes the proof by which thought knows.<sup>1</sup>

The *oratio* consists in expressing what has been tasted; which has savour and therefore, knowledge. By this action the word expresses itself to God and to one's brother. It is the answer to what it has received and

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<sup>1</sup> The Anselmian proof of the existence of God tries, through its speech, to encourage the reader to try that sweetness, trusting in his word: "Ask and you will receive in order that your joy be complete". This biblical quotation leads the senseless person to the chosen one.

commits the one who pronounces it. Act synthesizes form and content in a determined manner, and action models and modulates the personal reality according to the receiver's interpretation of what had been expressed. The responsible answer, its content and gratitude, differs according to the existential proximity between the one who gives and that one who receives according to the gesture of the opened hand.

*Lectio, meditatio* and *oratio* lead to *contemplatio*<sup>2</sup>. This action exceeds what is strictly human when what is expected to be seen is beyond human possibilities. To contemplate God is the concrete hope of the medieval monk who used this methodology. His heart, eager for the divine, passed along the way opened by the word that expresses and convokes the thinking expected. Those who dialogue follow the same path and in the same direction: to contemplate the Truth that is manifest in things.

b) The reference to the real: The word pronounced refers to the one who is listening and leads him to think "what is it". When we express something, what is spoken always falls upon something, which, in a certain way, the interlocutor can establish by inspection. The word can also "mean to be what it is not or not to be what it is". When used in this way it gives being to nothing or removes being from what actually is. This constructs the lie because the truth is spoken only when the expression speech is used to "mean to be what is or not to be what is not", according to the affirmative and negative ways that human language points what is being said (Anselmo, 1986: II, 132-138).

To lie is to make use of the language motivated by strange interests that must be justified by an ideology, whereas speaking the truth is an answer to reality presented in this unique thing. The word that expresses truth has meaning according to the sense given by the real, which justifies what had been expressed. The concrete is the reason that life precedes the advent of talk and thought: existential temporality manifests an anticipation of reality. To be born contributes content that language signifies and that thought later elaborates. Nevertheless, the concrete existent does not keep its singular shape either in the universality of the word or in the abstraction of the concept. The singularity of the thing represents both a possibility and a betrayal which are able to be expressed better with a chiasmic figure which links the singular and universal.

c) The chiasmus between things and words is illustrated well by the following quotation from J. Greisch:

Here appears a capital stylistic motif: the motif of the crossing, in other terms the 'chiasmus'. We consider it as the real Heideggerian reply to the Hegelian dialectic and its mode of expression in the speculative proposition.

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from don Guigo to brother Gervasio about the contemplative life.

Because of this, the confrontation between Hegel and Heidegger responds to an internal necessity. Heidegger cannot avoid finding himself in the way of the Hegelian phenomenology, taking into account that this is his own way of thought. But in the heart of the encounter a chiasmus is opened... which is the scripture of the difference [237].

Beginning from the “Letter on Humanism”, *kehre* is shown as one of the dominant themes of Heideggerian thought. Note that, on the one hand, the third section of *Being and Time*, which was to be called *Time and Being* has not been published [Heidegger, 1951, § 8: 50; Heidegger, 1966: 24]; and, on the other hand, from the conference of that title, we see that the chiasmic figure is a constant concern of the German thinker. This restlessness impelled Jean-François Mattei to recognize in the French translation of Heidegger more than 220 ways of chiasmus [1983: 51]. This shows the importance of this figure which is also frequent in ancient and medieval thought.

In this light, we ask: In what does the chiasmus consist? Can it be associated to a new way of thinking or is it used only as a literary style? Is there, in Hegel or in Heidegger, an independent way of expressing the thought and reading of reality that each one performs? As the answers to these questions exceed our purposes here, I will only say something about the chiasmus between things and words. As it is not possible in these few lines to show the influence of this figure in the history of philosophy, I will only pencil in its direction. The image is composed of two contrary extremities and a harmony that relates them. The relation prevents a definitive rupture and makes it possible to sketch an agreement. Here the singularity and permanence of the figure depend on the concordance between the difference of the language and the reality that thought must contemplate in its mobility<sup>3</sup>.

Philosophy uses language to develop its reflection on the real. Logic, as an aspect of the *logos*, is a mediation that opens the possibility of a new reflexive expression that is speculation, addition, or *mimesis* of what is. Conceptual speech is the construction of thought in which the rhythm of the real resides. The movement of the philosophical word gives mobility to the thing and creates a separate categorical world. The reflected being

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<sup>3</sup> I owe this reflection to a book of St. Anselm called *De grammatico*, which in its three last chapters draws the chiasmus between words and things. It is also a decisive text for understanding the celebrated “ontological argument” of the existence of God. He writes it after the *Proslogion* and the dispute with Gaunilo and in his speech he assumes, for the first time, the form of a dialogue, making the text eminently pedagogical. cf. *L'oeuvre de S. Anselme de Cantorbery*, Cerf, Paris 1986, and T.II.

always represents something posterior to what is and seduces the thinker with the temptation of perceiving themselves as reposing in a constructed world. When that seduction is culturally allowed it enables thinking in an ambit where one who thinks feels assured as if dominating the concept. At the same time as this reduction, however, voices begin to arise and explore new aspects of the *logos* in a desire to return to things in themselves. These ambiguous initiatives know better what is unfitting than what is creative, which is why they turn critical in the first place. Today we understand better the need to build a grammar which puts man more simply before these second logical intentions.

Such grammar would teach a better usage of language and assume the disposition (*Stimmung*) that expresses the Heideggerian formula: *poetically inhabit man*. To be disposed to listen to the poetic means to make use of language to examine the logic, without losing by that the *logos* which thought requires for a certain systematisation.

In the metaphor of the mirror, to perceive the human finitude is to understand that the image reflected is never perfectly finished, that it is no more than a necessary and provisional reflective construct. This is where the figure of the real is at one and the same time disfigured, acquires shape and is deformed, presents itself and hides, is amazed and darkened; that is where something is represented according to the "categories".

The finitude of speech is manifested and imposes the need for constant correction. In this work, the search for meaning imposes a decisive obedience binding it to the thing. Each element of grammar constitutes a contribution that points by signs to what is. At least in Latin and Spanish grammar, it is possible to perceive a centre referred to as substantive. Between the more elemental forms of our language, the name is the grammatical centre expressing more clearly what it is: the word that "by itself" explains and points to the real. It is not the same with adjectives; these point well when accompanied by another fact. When saying "white," it is necessary to see things of different colours, to be able to detach one of them and to understand what needs to be signified. Vision must accompany the adjective in order to point correctly. The verb, on the other hand, constitutes a name simply as a verbal function, but only as a participle. When saying "beat it," we need to add another sign so as to be able to understand to what the action must apply.

Many beings are distinguished concretely. Language gives names to those to which it is linked because they have a special significance that sometimes is written in capital letters. The proper name mainly refers to one who could narrate his life. In him, the word and the thing are identified in one unique existence that has the experience of identity and "sameness". Life is narrated "to" and "with" the others with whom he establishes a relation. To know the name of someone else is to know him and accept the narrative that engenders cordial links that configure the world and express themselves through a world of words, symbols and gestures between those who are named.

By the name, the thing acquires word and the word signifies the thing. It is the point of convergence where reality and language unite. This denomination resumes and centres the plurality of words in the existential ramble of life. Opposites, configured in the existential unity of the named, constitute the narration that rambles between the language and what has been lived. The name is the point at which the significance directed to the thing and the sense corrected through our vision cross one another.

The image of the mirror can help. What is seen is always the same and inverse. The figure changes from right to left; they invert because the rays cross. The name constitutes in the image the point where the rays of light and its reflex are centred. It is the surface of the mirror that must be constantly polished so that the reflection can answer better to what it has seen. In the name, the movements directed from the thing to the word and from it to the thing again cross each other. Movements of sense and significance that centred in the name configure the chiasmus. The figure is immediately literary, but is not exhausted in a purely linguistic construction.

The movements between things and words cross. The crossing is due to a point of inflection that inverts the real in a comprehensible sense. This is done by a world of words that returns the significance when it points to what is being interpreted. Every language has an ontological constitution and each reality its narrative. In their crossing it is necessary, in the first place to search out what is received as interpreted and to risk an interpretation which, when it touches the truth, becomes creative. In reality reading implies finding the narration that constitutes one's own identity. The uniqueness of life permits a universality of language which builds one word which, however, must constantly be corrected.

### *The Flesh*

In a more intimate sense language is the flesh that we carry in our own body. As material beings, we have in our corporeity the "beginning of the individuation" that prevents us from being someone else. The body is different from incarnate reality because it shows itself to the perception under the exterior form of an object of the world. The corporeity appears and is seen; it can make us believe that the human body is one object among others, another presence in the physical world. Each thing is a body; it is something individual that acquires concretion and situation by its material according to the place it takes up here and now in the cosmos. But each person is also *flesh* that makes him concrete and situates him as unique, irreplaceable and unrepeatable. It is incarnation that configures him as a person.

The object is concretized, as it were, among others; it allows one to differentiate in one's reality the being of the not being. What a certain thing is always remains limited by what it is not according to its own finitude: a limit that is gestated by its hierarchy allowing it to distinguish a more and a less that makes comparisons possible. Differences that concern being

culminate beyond being in a Being, whose non-Being cannot be thought, for non-Being culminates in nothingness, whose being is absolutely impossible to conceive. Concretions fulfil the act of being with certain content or attributes that configure it as such and give to the finite a determined form in the hierarchical order that we call world. Recognizable determination permits one to detach the significance of the name in a concept.

The situation of a physical object is always spatio-temporal. Movement is tied to the spatial continuity through motion and space; as homogenous, it allows for displacement. The body does not possess its own place; because of its mobility it is displaced without a fixed residence. The space occupied is indifferent to it and its only restriction is the impossibility of being in two places at the same time. Human desire tries to remedy this restriction by reaching the desired place more quickly each time, or by seeing an entire image of what occurs in differently occupied spaces. Time accompanies the corporeity through an order we call succession, as is proven by the movement in space. The instant is the ambit of a now that arises from a before and afterward is called to become. This is a passage without distinction, a transit which differentiates the past from the future, what has already been from what still is, what has not yet happened by presence. Nobody can be delayed in time; the only thing possible is transit, without any centre. In the undefined temporality of a body everything that occurs is the same: a thing can act over another with greater or less strength, but nothing happens because the event is not essentially human.

Unlike corporeity, *flesh* constitutes the characteristic form of man. Incarnate being is perceived in different affective tonalities such that, whether we want to or not, we suffer. Hunger, thirst, joy, sadness and other vital tones configure our daily suffering. They affect us so deeply that what we are and do depend on our affectionateness. History is narration that remembers those affections personally and socially. Historicity configures "*ipseity*" because it makes each one to be what each one is. To be free of affective tonalities is impossible because subsistence depends on how the needs of one's own flesh are fulfilled as manifest sufferings. Human life is a constant call to fulfil the basic necessary needs of the incarnate being; this is simply the condition of all human beings. The goods and necessities that fulfil this condition are there for all people, and *the* decisive ethical duty is to make the basic necessities of life available for all people.

Because man is flesh, he is concrete and situated in the world differently than other objects in the cosmos. Certainly, the conditions of corporality can be applied to the human being, but in this case the distance that incarnation introduces is not seen. Saying that man is body makes him a thing among other things, but it is among them not as just another object, but as someone who inhabits, a restless someone between stilled things. Language distinguishes the common name from the proper name and allows the corporeal to be seen under a new light as *flesh*. If singularity is, contrary to individuality, the way of incarnation, it cannot be confused with corporeity because the body, in a strict sense, does not *feel*. Only flesh feels;

it is impaired according to the affections that affect it and cause suffering. One takes charge of life to satisfy the needs that disquiet daily living, the affections that resent flesh .

The characteristic of the incarnate being is to feel, since the feeling means that someone can be affected and suffer. Objects of the world can do many things, but they cannot feel. The animal is assigned a feeling by human projection, but it cannot be affected or feel or suffer *in itself*. Only man feels the affection in his flesh, not because the object is being affected, but because he feels the strength and movement of the other in a particular and unique body, mine. In itself the objective is indifferent to my feeling because things do not feel. To feel is a privilege of my corporeity which being flesh is exposed to being *affected*, to feel by its incarnate status. Objects can interact but do not feel affected, only flesh has the privilege of feeling and being impaired. Even more, it suffers and carries the wounds of impairment. Affections configure the narrated history of the one who constructs its identity through the live memory of the signs that one carries in one's flesh and shows in one's face.

The incarnate being, contrary to mere objects, can despair in his impairment, feel desolated, destroy and want to run away from what is hurting him. He can also glimpse something that allows him to convert his interior life, to change public life, to pass from the vice of hatred to the goodness and generosity of love—the ambit which the lover inhabits open to an unlimited “spaciality” and temporality.

The “spaciality” of the incarnate being must be protected against the bleakness of dis-love; this special protection is the abode that *flesh* needs because the desert and the prison are hostile to it. Home is inherent to incarnation as a place where the cardinal poles of existence are centred, where the existential thistle configures, the ambit where this man and no other inhabits together with the beings dear to him or her. Affection changes the strange to the familiar, the inhospitable to protection, and the foreign to one's own.

The place of love restores a centre in which we cannot remove to a distance, an ambit where preoccupation and surrender of oneself and others differs considerably from the way other things relate in the world. Even if the circumstances impose distance on one's beloved it will still be the “there” where we inhabit. “There” is impossible to replace by any “here”, at least, until the “here” is transformed, with time and new loving encounters, into a “there” that will build a new space of encounter, a new form for the intimacy of love. But this new “here” does not replace, so much as amplify, the “there” which the heart inhabits. Memory will keep alive the distant place where the lover inhabits in loving proximity.

Time also acquires an open significance when it loses the monotony of succession and becomes an event. What happens is everything that modifies the flesh, which suffers by restoring affective tonalities. To be impaired and to build are the possibilities that life offers through the happening. Those moments are remembered as times of pain and love

according to the tonal form they had and the consequences they awoke in each one, effecting history that builds the other's "historicity" through one's own contribution. Nothing is the same to flesh; the daily is valued in its different tonalities, in its "multi-tonality".

Here we note an important distinction. On the one hand, we have pushed forward in human language; on the other hand, we have glimpsed flesh as something affected by life. On this depends affection that constitutes a new word because it entails learning the meaning of suffering, joy, pain and the like. The condition of possibility of every word that man uses to express himself, according to the philosophy of language developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, presents three essential notes which belong to the "appearing" of the world.

- The word is pure exteriority: it is other to us, different to the things that name and speak.
- What is named is indifferent: facts and things are on the same level in the objective order.
- The word is incapable of establishing the existence of something, of creating. It is limited to seeing things pass, like a traveller observing.

The human word talks about the other, that is, about what is indifferent and over which it has power. The designation of a reality is empty of signification and incapable of producing anything. According to M. Henry, considering this language as the only thing that exists, as all that men can speak, is an ingenuous belief<sup>4</sup>.

Another word is possible. Life is not just one thing; it cannot be taken as an object, as simply another *thing* in the world. The word of Life is a revelation, a self-revelation where what is revealed and *revelation* are the same things. Life talks of itself without any distance from the one who lives. The word where *living* is experienced is unimpeachable. The one who endures experiences the suffering of life, while learning what that means. It is not mere talking about something, but has to do with action, that is, with actively identifying what has been said through suffering from the expression of the one who suffers. "To talk" is suffered in the affective tonalities of life, and no one can get rid of this vital substance because it constitutes the power with which the self-revelation of life is experienced.

Revelation is a more original word; it is engendered in intimacy and its essential notes, contrary to the language of men, can be synthesized in the following way:

- It is the word of truth. As it does not have distance it cannot be a lie. The truth or falsity of a statement always refers to the thing that appears and indicates. A man can say I suffer and not suffer. But when the suffering happens, it is not he who talks, but the suffering talks in his flesh, and that

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<sup>4</sup> For these distinctions to Henry Michel, 2004.

experience is a testimony of what he suffers. The self-revelation of life in its tonalities is the truth of life that a man receives silently and hears while learning from his experience.

- What is going on through the one who suffers is not indifferent to him. The one who lives experiences it in a pathetic way; life talks to him in immanence. The interior ear is the felt reality that affects the flesh that suffers.

- Life does not talk of someone else, but of itself. Its word recreates and establishes individual existence. It does not look from outside and, because it is interior, it modifies the person.

The word that something communicates is heard with the interior ear, it is interpreted by the intellect and shows where one must look in order to see what is talked about. The revelation of life is heard with the interior ear; it affects and is suffered as an intimate teaching configuring history. Both words are unified in the heart.

### *The Heart*

From the time of Augustine, this carnal organ has been the symbol (developed philosophically) to represent where the cultivation of soul we call *culture* germinates. It is the mind recollects the seed that is received through those who had been sent, the missionaries who expose it through their words (seeds) which mediate it as an exterior grace. The seeds are received in the heart; the will assents through the interior master that manifests the truth of what had been received. Between what the intellect receives and the assent of the will, lies the cultivation of faith that bears fruit. This fructification turns into seed again, so that by feeding others they can accomplish the cycle in a new heart.

But agriculture is not an exclusively human duty. Those who had been sent offer a seed that does not belong to them; the truth that they transmit in its limited receptacle is a gift that the heart receives from the exterior. What to do with what had been received depends on the way in which the land is arranged for the reception of the seed. If the land is not prepared, the seed does not penetrate and dies; if it grows together with other bushes, it can be drowned by them, just as in the Gospel parable about the one who went out to sow seeds. This teaches the gratuitous reception of what is called germination. If the land is broken and cultivated by the plough and the soil is fertilized, the heart turns into good land that receives the good seed. Preparation does not depend exclusively on man, but on the interior master that teaches kenosis, namely, that suffering and pain which prepares the coming. Intimate grace touches the heart and allows the fecund union between the received word and the truth in which the heart rests. When this encounter happens, germination starts. To germinate requires time and space to reach maturity. Waiting unites with the initial trust so that charity finally can appear. Germination requires the care of the soil through

the conservation of what had been received. As a result the gift of heaven can be united to the contribution of the land and together they can produce one *hundredfold*. Caring is essential to the donation because what had been received in the intimacy of life requires maturing until it can serve as nourishment for a new seed.

The heart must keep what it had received, so that in bearing fruit it can donate gifts to others that will, in turn, be accepted or not, according to the preparation of the land. Cultivation leads to concord when we encounter hearts that share what it brought to fruition in them. The image allows one to indicate the steps from the initial germ to the harvest by seeing life as a way of grace following upon grace; this requires the care needed for cultivation.

This image explains the need for new birth. Though one is born according to the sequence described by biology, this does not say anything about the essence of birth. The objective sense of birth must be modified in terms of an entirely new intimacy of the heart. When the heart is not cultivated it is land where many kinds of plants grow: some accidentally useful as food, but others harmful to health. These can even kill, which is why they are bad for men. Evil can grow in the human heart, and intellectual improvement or the moral teaching is not sufficient to remove it. In order for evil to be removed, it is necessary to suffer in the flesh the rupture of the surface to be cultivated. Only the pain of the plough can remove the poisoned bushes that carry death and live in us. Life teaches us to suffer the pain and allows us to rebuild the land uncultivated through new growth.

The eradication of evil requires a new spiritual birth which does not follow the patterns of external natural birth, but of internal divine birth. If cultivation depends primarily on the one who sows and not on the land, then the response on the part of the one (the land) being cultivated and prepared through suffering should be one of gratitude. To cultivate implies to be born again in the intimacy of the heart. One is born to what is produced in one; one is born to a germ that grows as a plant or a fruit; birth fulfils not the circle of nature but of the sower. That is why “The apostle calls men who surrender to that culture *God’s field*”<sup>5</sup>. In this cultivation, according to many medieval thinkers, the seed is the word of God, not in his exteriority but in its meaning, because “the word without its meaning is nothing to the heart”.

The cultivation of the human heart establishes the wisdom upon which culture is generated. In culture, good things can spring forth from that which was once barren, and, from the cultivated soil, good food can emerge that will nourish human beings. The new seeds are distributed and shared in concord, whereas, if we offer others seeds from a non-cultivated field, evil forces the appetite and engenders discord. Such discord does not ultimately

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<sup>5</sup> St. Anselm, *De Concordia praescientiae, et praedestinationis, et gratia dei cum libero arbitrio*, Q. 3, chapter IV, p. 255 BAC.

stem from an economic or political system, but all economic and political systems are rooted first in the heart. If the heart is good and has been reborn by divine cultivation, then the systems established will also be good and fruitful. According to the medieval monastic teachings, justice is defined as the rectitude of the will conserved by itself.<sup>6</sup>

In cordial intimacy, rectitude is the truth the mind recognizes in the reality of word, thought and good actions. That is to say, thought, being and acting have an intrinsic truth that shows itself as straight or correct through right action. Whereas the straightness of a physical line can be perceived by the eye, virtue and right action are perceived by the eye of the mind or the heart.<sup>7</sup> The perception of the intellect, as a cordial organ, discovers the meanings that inhabit each reality, whether they are acted out or suffered in personal life. The will also has its correctness or incorrectness that the mind can judge when acting according to good or evil. The exteriority of a fact allows one to judge the rectitude of the intimacy. Rectitude of the will is conserved not by the will but by rectitude itself. That is to say, it is not the case that rectitude is absent from the will when it performs bad actions *because* it performs bad actions, nor is it the case that it is present in the will when it performs good actions *because* it performs good actions. Rather, justice is done only when the action conserves rectitude by rectitude itself. This goes beyond merely wanting or *willing* right action to demanding and achieving it. In this case, the fact responds not to the one acting but to what the correct action demands. The active moment does not rise from intrinsic truth in the heart nor from the interior master that teaches the best way of acting. Such action rises in a heart that has been born again and seeks concord.

Every action between men can provoke concord or discord according to the way in which one acts and another receives the just or unfair action. One can accept the unjust action of another in such a way as to suffer the injustice; this can in effect *undo* the injustice and overcome the violence associated with it. If we speak about justice with respect to the possession of goods, for instance, we notice that a good and generous action meets the basic needs of the one who lacks these. Injustice is manifested in the immoderate possession of goods in view of the lack suffered by others. Goods offered in fair or unfair action brings as a first consequence concord or discord. When an action is fair it responds to the other's needs with one's own goods, making it possible for the other to satisfy their needs. In essence, unfair and unjust action seeks only to satisfy one's own needs without seeing those of the other; in this unjust excess, loneliness and violence emerge.

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<sup>6</sup> St. Anselm, *De Veritate*, cap. XII, "Iustitia igitur est rectitudo voluntatis propter se servato".

<sup>7</sup> St. Anselm, *De Veritate*, chapter XI

But nobody can, by himself, work for concord. Only with a loving motive directed towards fulfilling the needs of the other, by giving from one's own self, can evil be prevented from growing in the heart. If one is moved by the needs of the other, one can then offer what one has and what one *is*. To give things and life is, in this sense, characteristic of the one who lives and only this leads to a real encounter. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to understand that life is a gift. This is the importance of donation as exemplified by the incarnation of a God that offered his life for men. This example enables us to see that the best way of living is *giving*, because love demands the divestment of one's self. This can be achieved by the one who knows about the promise that turns suffering into glory and death into resurrection.

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## CHAPTER XII

# IBERO AMERICA: HISTORY AND DESTINY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE 21st CENTURY

*HORACIO CORREA*

History is none other than the uniform repetition of the same:  
if what we want to say is: there is nothing new under the sun,  
only the old inexhaustible power to transfigure the origin,  
only then does this affirmation express the essence of history,  
history as the advent of something that has never ceased to exist.  
—Martin Heidegger

## INTRODUCTION

The understanding of time that we have inherited from the Judaeo-Christian West has emphasised division. Other cultures, such as those which were conquered in our continent, understood time as a unity. Past, present and future represent a unity, just as in the Christian mystery of the Holy Trinity, wherein the three persons form a unity. Hegel retrieved this from the historical European collective unconscious, moulding a unity of his three-moment dialectic, instead of excluding them as did Marx.

The trace of Marxist philosophy in this aspect of the comprehension of dialectics has deeply penetrated Latin American intellectuals: Colorbreeds says that “the structure of utopia is dialectical, and therefore dual (...). The image of reality is contra posed by an image of an alternate ideal that is usually an open criticism or a pretence (...). Utopia is the dream of the oppressed or of those who make their cause opposing power” (2004: 30). Rationalism and Utopia have influenced the concept of man in the history of Ibero America, fragmenting time. It has all been affirmed with conviction in the search of an absolute utopia led by Enlightenment rationalism, thinning and confusing the concepts of authority and *tradition* (as in Heidegger and Gadamer). However, and with tragic consequences for Latin America, historical reality affirms that dialectics is not dual, but always one, as is affirmed by religious concepts from all over the world: Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, Ying and Yang, Divine Breath, etc. These divinities represent Taboo, Utopia and Myth, which contain the logic of archetypical human behaviour and represent a gravitational force in the unified field of the operation of reality.

Reality is not dual, but one, and quavers. It is dual only in the comprehension of human beings who rationalize. This is due to the polarity of conscience, which gives origin to a lineal perception of time. Dualism

and its successive philosophical manifestations in Descartes and Marx have made the West proponents of this current of thought. Dual thinking is the basis of involution, which “implies that the energy of an individual is not enough to apprehend a reality, therefore, it begins functioning by inertia. In this, the sense of vocation is substituted by an obligation or need to do something. Creative intelligence stops functioning as such and begins to operate dualistically. The “good and evil” are substituted by “the good *or* the evil”. Marx’s theories, understood as prophetic dogmas, have been well accepted in Ibero America due to the contractive archetype of the continent that has shaped societies of low and limited productivity. Only within this context is “class struggle” feasible and functional.

For that reason, it is necessary to overcome the dualism that shaped the conceptions of time, where the past and the future are opposed instead of complementing each other. There is no bridge, homeostasis or harmony in dualism: It is God or Satan, and those who are with God have to oppose those who are with Satan. Since there is no balance, the two poles are presented as irreconcilable enemies. It is a kill-or-die situation. There is no Divine Breath to harmonize with Ying and Yang. This is the mental dimension that has operated throughout our history.

Rationalism and dualism always drift into absolute utopias that shape ideologies as absolute truths. There is no antithesis in absolute utopia (in the Hegelian connotation of the category) and its rejection of real democracy, where all ideologies live together under the premise that they do not lose their relative nature.

For that reason we should go towards an integral understanding of time: “He who knows the past, owns the future” said the great strategists. To own the future implies making it controllable, projecting the values that come from history and pinpointing the present. When this collides with the future it results in Destiny. This is being “lord of oneself” as said by Nietzsche and building an existential security.

Origin, history and destiny, require heroism beyond a one-dimensional concept of time. To fulfil Destiny is to shape the future with the imprint of our values. American and Anglo-Saxon management have very clearly expressed this concept as “Don’t worry about the future, we can make it”. German intelligentsia also find it easy to understand the dynamics of time: the word *Geschichte* (history) has the same etymology as *Geschick* (destiny). The countries that have developed their own history, along the path of being, have strengthened their tradition. Heidegger called this mysterious force that has dragged along since the origin of time the capacity of people or nations to carry out the unfinished “can be” of previous generations. The Romans called this the attainment of Genius that put men in chains of eternity, as a nexus between origin and destiny. It projected the work of their ancestors and made them stronger and more fruitful in the constant renewal of the seed that shoots forth facing the future.

In order to build an authentic self-history, we have to assume the possibilities of being, which entails a historical concept of oneness. Daniel

Dei explains that “history is less the memory of the past than the circumstance whence the possibility of future history arises (...) History is the ground where the future forged by us can take root. When that future arrives without our digital prints, we stop making history, we marginalize ourselves from it (...) History and the sense of future are entwined to forge a consistent present and a space of significant identity; (...) history is basically a source of transcendence for mankind. Therefore, the consistency of history is not essentially in the past, but in the future that it projects: a spiritual wealth, a fullness of experience, a strengthening the feeling of identity” [1995: 28-29].

In this sense, the freedom of people/nations is directly responsible for the capacity of emptying a *Weltanschauung* into history. Freedom has to be used to mean and/or symbolize a universe of values, of meaning and of strategic direction. For power to exist is history in act; therefore, history is a consequence of the freedom of man. The will to power as noted by Nietzsche, raises the idea of “dominion of oneself”, making power controllable, so that it is oriented towards fruitful deeds for fellow creatures. By being “Lord of Oneself,” the use of power to dominate the other is avoided; as is written in the Gospels, “he, who is faithful in little things, is faithful in all”. This perception of Nietzsche, with echoes in the tragic thought of the Greeks, puts man directly face to face with his existential finitude. This is the first step toward taking over freedom in its ontological dimension, which has been difficult in Ibero America and in the West in general.

Spanish America is in a “*kairos*” without values, shaped by material deeds without strategic goals or positive projects for the continent. Any high strategy<sup>1</sup> relies on values shared by groups of people that carry a tradition which is dynamic and adds new elements throughout time. Ibero America does not get along with its past, because it cannot find the origin and values of its tradition. The elements generate the basic cohesion that allow it to operate in real terms and to apply them toward a utopia. Utopia can be applied only when it comes down to earth and is then corrected by myth, depriving utopia of its intellectual rank of being without application to reality: “all origin is mythical; the origin is the myth itself (...). It is not a regression, it is a comeback, a retrospective and prospective turn; it is the step that precedes any “leap forward” [Mujica, 1995: 20]. People that know their past and origin can control their future. Only those who get along with their past can control the present, since they are sure their future will carry their values and the archetypes recovered from historical residue. China is an example: it holds in its memory the historical residue “to be”, as the Greeks in Delphi affirm. China practices the knowledge of “oneself,” which is the category that Carl Jung called “*selbst*”, the only valid warranty to be with the other.

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<sup>1</sup> The category high strategy is understood as the dynamic of values, visions and leadership.

The Conquest by Atlantic Europe caused the first trauma and the clash or civilizational dialogue was tragic for both: Americans and Europeans. But Americans carried the worst part. Beyond the question of whether there was genocide, there was a clash of civilizations in the Huntingtonian or Tofflerian sense, which is always tragic. And whether it is seen as a clash of civilizational and confessional cosmovisions<sup>2</sup>, or as a clash of paradigms in the forms of productions under the metaphor of “waves”, there was a demographic shrinkage of the indigenous population in gigantic proportions due to three factors: war, cultural unbalance to carry out the construction of effective power, and the multiple unknown diseases that the Europeans brought to America.

The break with Spain, carried out by the Enlightenment minds of the new Ibero American nation-states, was the second trauma. Our thinkers reviled how the Spanish agreed with the idea that “Europe and civilization start beyond the Pyrenees”. There exists a true father-son (land) relationship, between the United States and the British Empire, and as shown in war times, it always demands a greater accommodation imposed by the historical context that they have been allies due to the values that stem from the “British Commonwealth”.

The third trauma has been the two paradigm shifts that have altered world relations in the economic, technological, social and political fields, namely, the industrial revolution as an English phenomenon and the computer revolution (telecommunications and finances) as a North American phenomena.<sup>3</sup> This implies a synergy of imperial forces for the Atlantic Anglo-Saxons: the North American empire leans on the English decline, and the computer paradigm leans and capitalizes on the industrial one, thereby enhancing Anglo-Saxon culture. Atlantic Anglo-Saxons have been the true winners of the “Continental Island”<sup>4</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with duels still pending with Islam and China. The defeat of Continental Europe in the two World Wars and of Russia in the Cold War has crowned this success, accelerating the process of globalization, joined with Atlantic Anglo-Saxon expansion.

These three elements, combined, provoke uneasiness in Latin America, which causes it to deny itself: it does not see itself as either indigenous or Spanish, nor does it consider itself a place of economic or human development. How to solve these pending matters? History is a very exacting judge, avenging itself upon those nations who do not solve the problems related to the construction of authentic history. Such construction

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<sup>2</sup> According to Hegel and Max Weber religion educates civilizations in its most extensive dimension.

<sup>3</sup> In the year 2000, 65 percent of the manufacture of added value, according to NASDAQ in Wall Street, was of North American origin.

<sup>4</sup> Geopolitical term used by Sir Halford Mackinder to name the geostrategic unit of Europa, Africa and Asia.

is always linked to the configuration of a way of existence that Heidegger calls “metaphysical or historical”. Nations that follow the path of being contribute and provide the vocation of History; they do not follow the path of imitation. This is what Leopoldo Zea calls preoccupation with originality, that is, respecting the origin that makes us unique and with a genuine self-history. The spirit of originality of Europe and of our Northern neighbours was to create a self-history from its European past.

Ibero America has insisted on imitating the results of that spirit, and the result has been an underdevelopment of our own mental dimension. That is exactly how the lead thinkers of a civilization explain the origin of the feeling of inferiority. The Ibero American will understand that “besides the benefits created by the European or Westerner, there is no culture, no history, no humanity [Zea, 1957: 17]. It is an attitude that opposes the Yankee Anglo-Saxon pragmatism that searches for the Biblical Eden in “the land of liberty and of opportunities blessed by God”. Europe and its experience in the old continent are useful to modify the tradition and continue History, instead of repeating it. North Americans colonized with the vision of creating a new world, while Ibero Americans transferred the “Old Europe” to America.

#### *The Two Americas*

We must assume the possibilities of the ancestors, without excluding the traditions of the original people and the Spanish, in order to reinforce a new synergy with the Fatherland. This must be united with the experiences of independence of Bolivar and San Martin, and the later contribution of immigration. Regarding the link with tradition, Vasconcelos states that “it is awkward to start our patriotism with the Cry of Father Hidalgo, the Quito Conspiracy, the deeds of Bolivar, if we do not associate it with Cuauhtémoc and Atahualpa. At the same time it is necessary to go back to the Hispanic origin and learn from our defeats, as well as the defeats of the Spanish Armada and Trafalgar” [Vasconcelos, 1948: 19]. Anglo-Saxons, on the contrary, have a unity of Britain, the continent, Australia or Canada. In 1898, when the United States decided to take the remains of the Spanish Empire in Asia and America, continental Europe refrained from intervening in favour of Spain. This was due to the threats to the British Isles, reflected in the duel of the American and German armadas in the Pacific.

1898 is the end of a series of Spanish defeats, which had begun with the defeat of Charles V, and during which Spain had drained itself in search of a strategic vision contrary to the course of the historical tendencies of the moment. Seeing himself as a Christian Prince, Charles V became disoriented before the new paradigm, namely, the “modern prince” of Machiavellian inspiration, which had financial and military revolutionary elements. Modernity was arriving, and with it the construction of the secular European nation states: new imperial experiments arose which were

basically English and French. Four hundred years of Spanish defeat end before the greatest result of modernity: North America, which created a new world and dialectically surpassed the classic European nation state. With this, the a-temporal strategic vision of Charles V was lost, as was much the cultural heritage of Spain and Ibero America, not to mention the economic and moral decline.

Ibero America paid the price of a Quixotic imperial enterprise with “honourable” values but marginal credibility in the world context and its gravitational forces. Descendants of the defeated are part of the archetype of Ibero America, including the defeated of the defeated, which are the original people of America. This is complemented by the double exclusion that is in the Ibero American collective unconscious: the triple historical defeat in the military, economic and geostrategic areas and its self-representation in the collective identity of the last five hundred years. The matrix of exclusion is transferred to all that is natural in it and/or in the results of its crossbreeding with the Hispanic, Lusitanian and Afro cultures. This was a double matrix of exclusion inherited from the foundational myths of the Spanish nation state against Islam, and later transferred to America. Nothing is more indicative than the letters of Cortez, transferring devalued cultural elements from the infidel Moslem enemy to the new infidel/pagan of America, in its description of the Aztec city of Temixtlán: “There is in that great city, many mosques or idol houses” [Cortez, 1985: 67].

This is a heavy burden. Being the sons of defeat, failure disposes a civilization to disorder; it confuses ideas, disorients the course to be followed and creates distrust, which precludes the necessary positive energy to set up a historical process which would revert the situation.

In a second dimension, “Latin America was formed in a Christian European culture that had been in crisis because of modernity (...). The victory of modernity in Europe was also the defeat of Spain that had opposed it” [Zea, 1957: 18]. Sons of the defeated Spaniards came from the south, whereas sons of the Anglo-Saxon victors came from the north. Ibero America searched for solutions in the past because it lacked the spiritual virtues to face the future; North America in contrast, created the future, moulding it according to its new values. The Cosmo vision of the original people was crushed and erased from all that influences power; it survives with the logical results that the defeated suffer as a civilization: a kind of Heideggerian “*Verwindung*”; “*Verwinden*” affects them and confuses their vision.

The strength of Western European culture in its political, military and religious projections caused others to feel alienated: “Alienation caused by a decrease of self-esteem as a result of the crisis between its own cultural continuity and a modernity that was foreign to them. Tribulation characterized by a reductive denial of oneself and its historic past was identified as responsible for all their current ills. This should be replaced by a restructuring of their society and their production resembling the West” [Noufour, 2001: 95]. This self-representation is one of the mental causes of

Ibero American underdevelopment, as noted the Slovak, Peter Belolahvek: “Underdevelopment means comparing oneself with the other and feeling inferior (...) Taking a superior reference allows one to have utopias; feeling inferior hinders catching up with them” [Belohlavek, 1996: 415].

The key to North American self-realization has been the building of its own model. The United States follows the model of the United States, and any other developed country is such because it has built and followed its own model. Ibero America on the contrary, has followed the model of “the other”; before knowing itself, it has “found the other and lost itself”, as Nietzsche put it. The North American utopia has always carried it further—to more and more. In Ibero America, most intellectuals have generated unattainable utopias. Hence, self-esteem diminishes to alarming levels resulting in actions that go from immature opposition to submission or total dependence upon the super powers.

Above all, an excess of critical thinking generates doubt. This is not the kind of Cartesian doubt which can be helpful and convenient for science, but the formidable doubt that creates obstacles on the level of reality. Everything is criticism, from the intellectual academic meetings to the journalistic political media and even in the realm of sports. The distance keeps growing between what is said and what is done; education so distances itself from action that there is a lack of specialists in the basic trades needed in any community. This is particularly significant with the Ibero American moralizing left, which does not believe that anything belongs to them: army diplomacy, leadership, or the traditional religious factors of the nation in which they act. It may offer a face of “moral credibility, but not of efficiency (...); the left lost the war trying to win the paper battle or war of opinion. The left infiltrated the media and North American universities. Those who once used arms to impose the Socialist fatherland now present themselves as guardians of human rights (...). This is but two percent of the electorate, the constant traitor.” [Posse, 2000: 103-107]. In the North, the left unveils the weaknesses of the right, then the right mutates, grows and broadens its visions to satisfy and balance social demands through strategic leadership. This brings added value, creating products and services that are consumed all over the world. It includes those Ibero American intellectuals that criticize it “because only those cultures that achieve their own identity can avoid having a marginal position in the world, increasing [their] value.”<sup>5</sup> The spirit of originality in North America has taken them to historically identify technology with ideology<sup>6</sup> giving

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<sup>5</sup> We not only refer to goods and/or products of the Industrial Revolution, but to knowledge values, religion, culture, education, info, ideology, etc.

<sup>6</sup> North American culture guide criticized by Heidegger, for representing technology in the world “*Ge-Stell*”, opposed to that given by the earth (“*die Heimat*”).

origin to a civilization with technological roots, but without metaphysical roots. This addition to the North American archetype happened between the two world wars. The Hebrew historian, Mosse, says, “interest for technological progress was shared by Europe and the United States. But while in the New World, technology was admired, sometimes constituting almost an ideology that it alone will lead to a better life, it was not the same in Europe. In Europe, technology was feared rather than admired, as shown in German movies [...]. In Germany, more than in other places, it was a stimulus added to the desperate escape of the country towards a new romanticism removed from the industrial era” [Mosse, 1997: 90].

German National Socialism was the political movement that within the European spirit created an effective tension between romanticism (guarding the strong German *Tradition*) and techno-science. This tension that is reflected in architecture and armament technology paved the way for genocide.

In the Ibero American case, where ‘tradition’ is weak, technology enters as part of the ideology of the North. For Ibero America, technology doesn’t occupy the credibility zone generated by the expectations of its people. It is foreign to us, esoteric, far and distant, especially those of high added value that produce goods at the frontier of knowledge. The economies are eminently distributive; excepting Brazil and Chile, that have reached and faced their taboos recording productivity. They do not need to incorporate the learning of high added value goods that include new technology. This is due to a strong archetype entrenched in Ibero American culture: “Wealth is related to what is owned, not to what is produced. Therefore, work has a relationship with the money earned, not with its added value, for work is a concept of effort and not of personal realization. The technologies accepted are the ones that enable making money, by reducing labour” The small spiritual energy of Ibero America eludes its “take off”. It has generated deceitful conceptions about work “Ibero American style” that have been dwelt on by intellectuals, generating more contraction and fallacies that block facing taboos. The right takes technology with the same attitude of “more money, less effort, and less personal and social realization”. An example is Argentina: as it increases its poverty, slowly but inexorably, it has more digital cameras and cell phones than any other country in Ibero America. That is because a country that doesn’t have spiritual maturity to validate new technologies or create its own, needs to add ultra sophisticated technological elements as homeostasis to psychologically compensate for its impotence towards development. And this is not an exclusive attitude of any social class.

It is necessary to validate what is useful in Western technology, to have a national technology that carries our stamp. The success of a Toyota car, of a Leica camera or the software of Windows XP, is that they have their own identity; that allows for world success, given its added value in the international community. Who pays for the benefit received through these goods? Without becoming homologous, Ibero America will continue

its spiritual servitude, since “technique is presented today as a reality and not as an ideology” (Colombres, 2004: 180). This is introduced through education in foreign values.

North America has exploded its ethic, its customs and its habits, mutating towards the logical expansion of added value. It has fortified the archetype as a gravitational force and transmitted it to the next generation. Ibero America instead has produced degenerative mutations, since entropy requires less consumers of vital energy than generative mutations. This involution and decadence of Ibero America is implicit in an energetic and spiritual frame. Ibero America doesn't have the energy needed to apprehend reality and adapt the dynamics to finally influence it. The logic of the Ibero American archetype is that when its basic needs are satisfied, a descending cycle begins, whereas in North America, when its basic needs are satisfied, they actualize their vocation for development through innovation which leads to growth. North America accepts the historical existence of their essential reality, since any development implies conflict resolution. This acceptance is functional and overcomes envy by admiration of their archetypes, such as the Swedish, or even the German and the Japanese, their defeated enemies of World War II. This state of consciousness generates an upward levelling; in contrast Ibero America naturally produces a downward levelling. The shrinking self-esteem has its roots in the feeling of envy towards those who have achieved more and better results: spiritual, intellectual, economic, political, social, and strategic. Envy always goes hand in hand with minimal self-esteem and impotence. This behaviour is common in people or societies too arrogant to recognize that the *other* can be learned from, which in turn would inspire a feeling of admiration that dynamizes the will, the “poiesis” and channels energy.

This is what makes Latin America marginal, and is the reason why it is marginal when it comes to important political, economic and strategic world-decision making. Brazil is the exception here: “[it is] different from Argentina, where nationalism lacks objective support and subsists only in small elites with the utopical tendency of greatness wasted once again in willing submission to Washington (...)” [Bilbao, 2001: 5]. As a result of capitalizing on their historical experience, North America has evolved from a confederation of states into a Federal Union. But in its civic spirit, individuals precede their municipality and these in turn their states, and the states the Union.

It is a Confederation that historically commanded the form of a federation, which shaped men like the Anglo-Saxon explorer, Raleigh, whom Jonson names as the archetype of the proto American. “He was a dynamic man, easy going, very ambitious, who always thought of money, not too many scruples, but with a vision of the future combined with a passion for the new, and nonetheless important, with a streak of idealism that violently clashed with his desire to make fortune” [Jonson, P., 1997: 34].

These values led the Northerners through a process of integration in the North American geopolitical realm, while Ibero America suffered a process of disintegration: “It lost the major battle, the day that each of the republics began their own separate life (...) without attending to the common interest of their race. The makers of our nationalism were the best allies of the Saxons, our rival in the possession of the continent, and we don’t even blush at our disagreements in front of the strong North American Union” [Vasconcelos, 1948: 18].

This is the great historical defeat for Ibero America, of such magnitude as the defeat of Austria and Spain before the rise of France and England, or of Germany in the two World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When the American Union ran the risk of division, its people regained the possibility of *Being* through the “state of resolve” and linked itself to a state of “*yecto*,” solving the conflict of a rational and industrial North and a romantic agricultural South.

Ibero America structured a contractive archetype that produces societies with low productivity; North America, in contrast structured an expansive archetype that produces societies with high productivity. Passing from an entropic culture to one with more energy very rarely happens in history. As Colombres said, Ibero America seems to continue to be the “last wagon of the West”, what Abel Posse described as “historical marsupial”; it seems that this harsh reality will not be modified in the future, given the tendencies cultivated in the historical reality of Ibero America.

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**CHAPTER XIII**

**GLOBALIZATION:  
PARTICIPATION OR CONFRONTATION?**

*CARLOS CASTELLAN*

**I**

Today, Ibero America presents us with a complex reality of two predominant political tendencies: a struggle for power and a battle for consciousness; this can be seen in each country of the region. On the one hand, there are those who are against the increasing processes of worldwide integration that are taking place on the planet; on the other hand, are those who enthusiastically propose to join immediately the predominant flow of thought in the Western Hemisphere. While the latter are labeled “neoliberals” by the former, they describe, at the same time, their opponents as “populists”. For each of them, the other is the incarnation of “political dependency” or the “economic slowdown”, respectively.

As may be expected, from one side come expressions of unconditional encouragement towards globalization, whereas from the other side arises a forthright and even violent opposition that includes the expression of “damn globalization”. As the study of these antagonistic positions deepens, it becomes evident that the confrontation originates in the different ways of assessing the economic impact of globalization in each country, and thus from different ways of assessing the social consequences this economic impact will have. However, everyone marvels at the present possibilities of access to worldwide information in real time.

One wonders how important this debate over globalization is when it is centered exclusively on the economic aspects of the problem. Although these are critical in the short term and come immediately to sight, they may not be the most important aspects of the debate. As a matter of fact, globalization has taken place several times in secular history. If we had to point out a certain date to determine the beginning of the “Global Era”, it would without doubt be 12 October 1492, when one of the most important voyages in history took place. This was due to the brilliant inspiration of Christopher Columbus and to the intentions of the Spanish crown to counter Islam and break the commercial isolation of Europe from the Far East, where the spice trade was taking place. As a consequence of this voyage and by chance, the whole of humanity, not only Europe, discovered that several worlds had lived in complete isolation from the very beginning of their histories.

The shock was so great that those from the “old world” and the natives from the “new world” looked at each other with the same

astonishment that we would experience in confronting inhabitants of an unknown planet. Ontological questions arose about the other, the stranger. On the one hand, they doubted whether those beings covered in metal and riding odd animals were men or gods. On the other hand, they wondered if those men who were “just discovered” were truly human, and whether they had a soul.

The admiration felt by the Venetian, Marco Polo, while traveling through China (which had always remained an open query for Europe from the ancient times) about two hundred years earlier, paled before the impact that the Old and the New Worlds caused one another.

From that point forward and in an accelerated way, the planet began to take shape on the maps and in the minds of men, and became the new horizon to be conquered by the European civilization. For ideological, scientific and technical reasons that are not possible to analyze here, this civilization was the only one able to undertake the task.

It is not our purpose to make a detailed study of the history of the development of this process here, nor even to draw up a scheme of it. Certainly, if it is possible to define a civilization in terms of its unique conception of the world, it is the case that Western civilization was the only one that has developed the capability to become universal, at least from a scientific and technological point of view. It is possible, however, to think also of such other aspects as politics or law that have their origins in the Greek and Roman roots of this civilization.

It is possible, then, to affirm that globalization was not born with the fall of the Wall of Berlin nor with the information technology network, but with the voyage of Christopher Columbus. The present reality is not a fact of the latter part of the twentieth century, but the outcome of processes that began more than five hundred years ago. From this point of view, it would have occurred anyway, independently of the very different ways of government that have followed ever since. It is today a constituent part of all humanity. Hence, it is rather absurd to debate whether to be for or against globalization, but it would also be absurd to remain indifferent and unquestioning before a process of such importance.

Far, then, from assuming the attitude of an ostrich, which hides its head when it does not find a solution to a problem, or facing the matter with the ingenuous enthusiasm with which one usually embraces a new fashion, we should define for Ibero America what attitude to assume toward and within the global world. We should constructively criticize it and be involved in thinking about ways to contribute to it as well.

## **II**

The characteristic of the modern world has been its perception of the other as an enemy; even today, every possible relationship is analyzed from the point of view of conflict. Relations between nations are thought of in terms of a fight against others who want to exert dominance over us or

against those over whom we aspire to exert our dominance, or on the contrary, of cooperation with the nations willing to help us to fulfill these objectives. In today's ally, we can usually see our potential enemy of tomorrow. "Nations do not have permanent friends, but permanent interests" is the golden rule of all good diplomacy. This is clearly the logic of dominion which has prevailed in relationships of all humankind, at least, ever since the existence of the modern state.

What is worse: this also happens to be the point of view from which social relations are approached. Class and sector interests take priority over the needs and interests of the community. Governments seem to respond more and more to such interests, which pretty much contradict their own reason of existing. This situation is expressed in the deepening of the breach between rich and poor in many countries of the region. No matter which one of the two predominant political tendencies rules, wealth tends to be concentrated instead of being distributed. This affects, and will continue to affect, the stability of Latin American countries and the possibilities of the development of their authentic democracy. In view of this situation, it is easy to understand the advance of demagoguery in Latin America, since it is particularly functional in this situation. The result is the replacement of the culture of work by the one of bribe, disguised as social assistance.

The correlative of the bribe is that the poor lose their political independence and their dignity. Their vote becomes captive to those who govern. At the same time, governments squander the national wealth by putting at their own service this perverse electoral machinery that ensures permanence in power, while they disguise their real reactionary essence by means of speeches that seek to stir up the resentment of those who have little or nothing and whom they feign to defend.

Statistics, nevertheless, show the opposite. Poverty advances, in spite of the governmental rhetoric, and along with it, there is growth of misery and ignorance, even in the countries that once led the region in such areas as culture, education and health. The outcome of the deterioration of these central aspects of the life of the nations can only be an exhaustion of the possibilities of social mobility. This is equivalent to saying that the hopes of personal improvement within the democratic system will be lost. In turn, this opens an uncertain panorama towards the future, and implies the possibility of the permanent installation of violent forms, already present in embryonic state in these societies.

This violence does not necessarily correspond to the one developed in many Latin American countries during the 1970s. That was born basically in the middle class and, with all its mistakes (which included crimes), still looked forward to transforming society into one which they believed would dignify people; they destroyed with the idea of building a new society.

At the present time, however, violence hardly has any political aim (in the traditional meaning of the term) in those societies penetrated by poverty, ignorance and drugs. It assumes anarchic ways which prioritize the

resentment of the poor against those who have something. Above all, the possibility of a political or social construct of any type is absent, since the nature of this new movement is essentially marginal. If some of the current variables continue, it is likely that societies will dissolve into antagonistic social islands: rich and poor islands. In a certain way, we would return to the “state of nature”, to the “war of all against all”, as Hobbes conceived the relationship between men before the constitution of society.

One of the contesting movements that grow in strength in Ibero America is the so-called “indigenous-ism” that has a clearly anti-European and mainly anti-American tendency. It is the expression of ethnic groups that have been socially and economically left behind and may be the movement that has grown the most in recent years. However, in its present form, it can be expected to only generate greater disintegration on the continent. Its complaint, based on the repudiation of five centuries of history, is oriented towards the restoration of a mythical golden age, prior to the arrival of the Europeans in America. Let us leave aside the fact that golden ages, anywhere in the world, have been a construction in the present time of an ideal past society that actually never existed. Similarly, in the first century BC, during the crisis of the Roman Republic due to an excess of luxury and corruption, Romans imagined an austere age in which their old leaders gripped the plough, cultivated their farms by themselves, and covered with dust and sweat, ruled the state with the same austerity and sense of duty that they administered their rural property.

Even the expression “original people” is a fallacy in two senses. First, from an ethnic point of view, *Native* Americans have an Asian or Polynesian origin. As a matter of fact, from this point of view, it may be stated that there are no original people on earth because the entire humanity is the product of a very large sequence of population migrations and ethnic mixtures. Second, to affirm the cultural “originality” of the native American people, implies that these cultures remained unchanged in the continent until the time the Spaniards knew them. Nevertheless, we know that all of them have participated in great migratory processes since it is supposed that those that populated *Tierra del Fuego* and the southern islands were the first in crossing the Bering Strait. Also we know that in America, as well as on the rest of the planet, the processes of cultural interchange and generation of new cultures were constant, except for extreme isolation cases.

Finally, the great empires that the Spaniards founded in America at the beginning of the sixteenth century were, in historical terms, recent political and cultural creations. At that time, they were states in expansion that faced resistance from other native peoples which did not want to lose their independence, and they prevailed by the means that empires have used everywhere throughout the world’s history. In the particular case of Mexico, Hernán Cortés and his small group of Spaniards would never had been able to defeat the Aztec empire if it had not been for the voluntary aid of thousands of Mexican natives who wanted to be released from a domination that was bloody and hard to bear.

But even more important is the evidence that shows us that, since the conquest of America, none of the great indigenous cultures have survived intact. What remains today is either a typical syncretistic fusion of catholic religious beliefs with extremely deformed remainders of old native cults, or a conglomeration of folkloric aspects equally contaminated by the European culture. Their languages, in spite of their old spiritual richness, cannot express the technological and scientific terms of modern civilization.

On the other hand, there remain in the deepest Amazonian forests native peoples that have had only slight or no contact with the modern world. Due to their extremely primitive characteristics, it is best to maintain their state of isolation in order to avoid a huge cultural shock that would surely lead to their extinction in a short time.

The positions raised by important native leaders, particularly in Bolivia, indicate a rejection of the foreigner and of modern civilization in general. Expressions like "let us live our isolation" and proposals such as "to base the economy on a system of self-sufficient familiar farms" have come from them. All this is mixed with a dose of socialism or with what could be called *state-ism*, whereby the state controls all public services. All this will possibly result in a great retraction of foreign investments in countries that do not have enough domestic capital to provide for their own growth. That is the reason why, if today they have important economic and social problems, these likely will worsen in the short term.

The "aboriginal" movement, if it continues in this way, will cause great social and political turbulence and even the disintegration of present nations, but it does not provide solutions to the problems concerned with Ibero America having productive relations with and access to the rest of the world which it faces for the future. Nevertheless, this is not to deny the reality of the precarious situation of Ibero America's large indigenous population, nor is it meant to deny the responsibility of government to deal justly with the situation.

The nature of the international relationships, when analyzed without hypocrisy, tends to promote inequalities and to facilitate the development of disintegrating tendencies in the society. As a matter of fact, the political relations among developed and underdeveloped countries are based on declamations: never-ending statements of good will and mutual friendship that do nothing but hide rough economic relationships behind good intentions (sometimes real and sometimes pretended). Under these relationships, the profit motive, no matter what it costs, removes any possibility of frequently declared "mutual advantage" as market laws usually are replaced by bribes and corruption. Paradoxically, developed countries that have strict laws against such practices and which are normally enforced strictly within their own boundaries, often have not permitted their citizens to be judged in those countries where they have paid bribes to state agents with the purpose of obtaining illegal commercial advantages.

In the same way, while they demand the creation of free commerce zones for their products, they maintain a policy of subsidies that prevent

free competition from the Latin American agricultural and livestock farmers. This makes it harder to develop in those areas where the economies of the region are more efficient.

Paradoxically, the United States of America which, because of its position in the world, should exert a natural leadership in the Americas, traditionally has developed policies whose main effect has been to create deep barriers between Ibero American peoples and itself. Few seem to have any interest in studying how the US has gone from being a paradigm for all Ibero American countries of democracy and federalism, to a country that most inhabitants of South America now see as the source of many of their problems. For one thing, its policy has been erratic. From the auspicious motto of the Monroe Doctrine, "America for the Americans", that obtained the approval of all governments and peoples of the continent, to President Theodore Roosevelt's "big stick" policy, which confused the United States' national interests with those of the United Fruit Company, until the beginning of the Cold War, with President John F. Kennedy's proposed "Alliance for Progress" that, beyond the great expectations it generated, ended as a complete failure and fell into oblivion, it is easy to understand why the perception has changed.

Within the framework of the global fight against communism, the United States supported some of the most ominous regimes in the region, such as those of Trujillo and Somoza (among others) which suppressed their people into misery and turned their countries into dens of corruption. In the same way, they encouraged *coup d'etats* that imposed military regimes. And because the US never admitted this guilt, there is wide agreement concerning the hypocrisy of the US, which considers itself a defender of human rights. Even when President Jimmy Carter later became a champion of human rights, many people in Latin America looked upon this as hypocritical, even though his personal and ethical values were unquestionably genuine. Many are suspicious that North America simply changes its values opportunistically according to the international situation.

At the present time, the aim of the North American policy in the region is to fight against drug production, mainly cocaine, which is one of the great scourges of society. But once again, their vision of the problem is partial, short-sighted and destined to fail. This is due to the concentration of all efforts exclusively in the fight against drug dealers and leaving aside the main problem, which is the reason why Colombian or Bolivians farmers find great benefits planting coca instead of traditional cash crops. Instead there is need to study what could be done to change that situation without harming them. Nor has there been an analysis of why the United States has become one of the world's greatest drug consumer nations. There is little analysis regarding the root problems in North American society that are responsible for the high drug consumption, and little investigation into what could be done to change the situation.

What I wish to emphasize is that there are underlying problems with the relation between the United States and Latin America; the solution

to these problems is to be found in overcoming the self-interest with which both regions approach this relationship. Presently, there is mutual distrust and indifference. Nothing expresses better North American feeling towards Ibero America than the statement, "Latin America is the back yard of the United States." I believe that North Americans think that it is an expression of sympathy towards its neighbors of the South. Nevertheless, the backyard is, indeed, the place where we may put up with a certain disorder that would be intolerable in the front yard where the garden is located. The backyard is the place of neglect that no one sees, where we can do whatever we want, because it is our own property.

This phrase entails a mis-valorization of Latin American countries, fully noted in this part of the world, and it hardly helps to achieve integration. Of all possible policies towards Latin America, the United States has for a long time been applying the worst one, considering the region as a mere receptor which should simply accept the strategic decisions of North America, whether these have to do with the war on drug trafficking or international terrorism. This forces Ibero America to either be "with the United States or against it", with the understanding that "being with the United States" means to accept without discussion whatever North America decides upon. Perhaps Ibero Americans could collaborate better with North Americans in finding solutions to these problems if they were treated as brothers and not as North America's backyard.

### III

This raises the question of whether in the past there were better models upon which relationships between peoples were based. If what we hope to find is a model completely opposed to the present one, one in which the idea of dominance is absolutely absent as a basis of international relationships, the answer is inexorably negative. However, if we intend to investigate the possibilities of such development, exploring the existence of a different sensitivity in power relationships, we could identify historical moments that allow a more optimistic vision of the future of humanity.

In 1776 the monumental work of Sir Edward Gibbon titled *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was published in London. The study of the great catastrophe of the ancient world opened with the description of the second century B.C Roman civilization, the era of the dynasty of the Antonine emperors, which the illustrious English historian described as "the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous".

Today, we certainly have many doubts concerning Gibbon's affirmation because, among other things, that civilization was based on the work of slaves. Moreover, the emperors' power was autocratic and Rome, as all empires, was fed with the earnings from the provinces that were dominated territories.

What made Gibbon describe that time so positively? In the first place, there was general prosperity in the old world on a scale never seen before. All cities of the provinces, as well as those of Italy, were booming. The construction of public utilities such as aqueducts, roads, amphitheatres, baths, etc., multiplied. Meanwhile, the cultivated agricultural areas reached the greatest extension ever had in that region—an extension that would rival any similar area today. Roman commerce reached even the most remote places in the known world, and all types of spices and luxury articles from the Far East arrived in Rome. This prosperity was possible due to a long period of internal and external peace; except for the ever dangerous Germanic border, the main threats seemed to be foiled.

Second, the Roman emperors of that period, who constituted an unequalled succession in Western history because of their capacity and vision, established, little by little, the idea of the empire as a great community of different peoples, in which the Romans, as much as those they defeated (mainly the Greeks), had to fulfill the role of civilizers. This culminated at the beginning of the following century with the extension of Roman citizenship to all free men in the Empire.

Third, almost the whole population had identified with the Empire, which was not considered a dominant state. On the contrary, it was seen as a welcoming organization such that old Gaul, the Hispanics, Illyrians, etc. felt and declared themselves to be essentially Roman. Peace and prosperity resulted in the expansion of education, which at that time, reached the highest level of literacy in Europe and the Mediterranean world, and which continued until the end of nineteenth century. These circumstances were also auspicious for the emergence of an entrepreneurial cultured class, which was constituted of the provinces' small aristocracy: the so called *curiali*.

In a certain way the Roman Empire was a closed world, a world unto itself. The societies that were beyond their borders were either so less developed or so geographically distant that all interaction became impossible. Meanwhile, knowledge about them was unclear and almost nonexistent. The Romans used the word *humanitas* to indicate what we call civilization. That word meant the urban life, understood as a network of social and political relationships based on law and whose aim was the good of the community. At the same time, *humanitas* was the opposite of barbarism which was the way of life of those beyond the borders of the Empire. The barbarians included either people that did not live in cities or those who, in spite of living in them, had no developed sense of subordination to law or of the sense of common welfare.

The Roman Empire, at the age of the Antonines, seemed to be a global world in the context of Antiquity because of its degree of integration, communication and development. Within that world, little by little, the differences among dominating and dominated people were disappearing, so that the Empire became a community in which the inhabitants used to name themselves as Romans, mostly in the western region. Therefore, inside the

Roman Empire in the second century, a restricted and semi-closed area of the old world, dominance gave way to integration as a way of relationship between people. Within this political, cultural and linguistic community (Greek in the East and Latin in the West) the great development of Christianity took place, giving religious unity to the empire. In such a way, when the Roman Empire disappeared, the vast region between Spain and Romania continued being identified as *Romania*, an area where Latin was spoken and *humanitas* was a desirable value—and, when combined with Christianity as a foundational element of the civilization.

The second case in Western history in which an empire gave birth to a linguistic, cultural and religious community is obviously that of Spain. With the discovery of America this empire was born, and, at the same time, there began the process leading to globalization. There are both “rosy” and “black” legends about the conquest of America by the Spaniards. Instead of criticizing either or both, our interest is to analyze briefly certain distinctive details of this conquest.

Perhaps it is correct to say that the Spanish empire was the last medieval political manifestation. No other Modern Age state was so strongly tied to religion, and it is precisely in this light, in particular from Queen Isabel, the Catholic, that the decision to support Columbus in his venture should be understood. Unlike the kings of Portugal and perhaps unlike Fernando, also a Catholic, Isabel thought first about evangelization and afterwards, about the economic profits of having direct access to the “Spice Islands”. On November 26th 1504, Isabel passed away and recommended in her testament good treatment of her subjects in Spain and the Indies and not to give up on the goal of extending the faith and fighting against the “infidels” (in this case, the Muslims).

The truth is that during the first years, until the conquests of Mexico and Peru, the *Indias* had no significant economic meaning for Spain. In spite of this, the organization of the new territories advanced; the Spanish policy was to consider the natives as Crown subjects equal in status with the subjects of Spain. This was the policy during the times of the Catholic kings. The American territories were also considered equal with those of Spain: they were not colonies but territories belonging to the Crown: the *Indias* Laws were the most advanced legal instrument of their time and did not leave any doubts on the matter. Never had an empire put such emphasis in the welfare of those it dominated.

Charles V considered it an obligation to gather together a council of the wise, priests and other leading people, in order to consider if the conquest was morally justifiable or if they had to give it up. The opinion was that the conquest was justified only if it was to the service of evangelization. For this reason, the clergy and evangelization had a capital importance in America. For this reason, also, there were priests who assumed the moral obligation of denouncing (sometimes with exaggeration) the abuses of the natives, which were frightful in many cases and contrary to the *Indias* Laws and, it seemed, to all human law.

We must not forget that those priests were a part of the conquest as well and their denunciations were raised before the kings of Spain who tried to end situations of injustice. But their distance from America and the contradictions of a system that, although expected to be human and fair with the natives, entailed at the same time organizing them for productive work which was totally different from their customs. There were abuses to be sure, due to the *encomenderos*; the greed and brutality of the civil agents prevailed over the humanitarian intentions of the kings.

In those places where the natives' lives and labor organizations were in the hands of priests, as in the missions of Argentina and Paraguay, the abusive situations did not happen, and the Indians armed themselves to fight against the Portuguese in the name of the King of Spain. They knew that if the Spaniards withdrew, the conditions of domination would be completely different.

Today it is easy to say that the most humanitarian thing would have been for the Spaniards not to come to America in the first place, but as we have seen, such an affirmation is either ingenuous or completely ideological, because it assumes the existence of a golden age in which situations of injustice in America would not have existed. On the other hand, given the political, economic and technological developments taking place in Europe, it is evident that if Spaniards had not arrived, another European power would have a few years later, which might have resulted in worse abuses.

No matter how hard they try to enlarge the "Black Legend", nobody with good intentions can attribute to Spain the intent of exterminating the Indians. Beyond all the iniquities carried out by some Spaniards in America, it is clear that most of the native losses were due to the propagation of diseases that the conquerors brought with them and for which the natives had no antibodies. Nothing compared with the English military leader in North America, Sir Jeffrey Amherst, who gave Cherokee Indians clothes brought from Europe that were used by smallpox patients with the declared intention of exterminating them<sup>1</sup>.

What is true is that beyond all the negative aspects that certainly may be attributed to the Spanish conquest, Spain also gave the continent a great cultural inheritance. Just as being European is not a geographical fact, but a cultural one as a product of the Roman Empire, being Ibero American is in the same way a cultural product of the Spanish Empire. Hence, in the thought of the Catholic kings and Charles V, as well as with the Roman emperors of the dynasty of the Antonines, we conclude that international relationships do not have to be based on dominance.

#### IV

Scientific and technological development and present economic

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<sup>1</sup> Olarte, Jorge [2004, 93].

conditions determine that the contemporary world moves in an ever more accelerated way towards integration. Indeed, the economy has already taken that direction. Everybody struggles to be integrated into the worldwide market. One who does not understand this fact is destined to collapse; nobody can “live on his own terms” anymore. But if integration is based only on economic globalization, it will be a failure because what moves the economy is human selfishness, as Adam Smith taught.

It is supposed that the mission of governments is to provide for the welfare of the community, whereas the entrepreneurs objective is to generate wealth. Some countries are considered developed because they have managed to combine both interests in a complementary way so that the wealth generated by companies reverts to the economic welfare of the people, and governments have the possibility of offering efficiently, through the collection of taxes, the indispensable services for civilized life.

In the undeveloped countries of Ibero America, this equation does not seem to work in the same way. On the one hand, because in its origin these nations' economies lacked technology, a labor force or capital on the scale of great industry, they were organized to provide raw materials to countries involved in the industrial revolution. Mainly, those countries developed first their internal market and quickly projected to the markets of the world. The difference among the value of their products made a big difference in wealth.

If we face the globalization issue only from the economic point of view, the global economy will not have any other effect than to make these differences deeper—great richness and comfort for some countries and poverty with all its consequences for others. Then world-wide stability and security will simply be utopian goals.

On the other hand, globalized information is another important characteristic of the contemporary world. Today we know, in real time, what is happening in the world. This allows anticipating in an infinitely more suitable way the future scenarios and eases the decision-making process. In addition, it offers cultural and scientific interchange possibilities without precedent in human history.

Nevertheless, the human being is still the problem. In a global world, the concept of community welfare must surpass national borders. In the near future, community welfare will be for all humanity or for none. The experience of the Antonines seems contemporary. The study of the Roman Empire must not be neglected, for “the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous” was followed by one of the most frightful crises that ever happened.

The third and fourth centuries were the time when the great civilization constructed by Greece first and Rome later completely crumbled. Prosperity and stability were replaced by poverty and insecurity. The emperors who were outstanding in their rationality and impartiality were replaced by autocratic tyrants. The state that used to protect and

provide welfare and services for the inhabitants became a voracious machine of resource extraction, always insufficient to satisfy its needs. When the tax collector passed through, the population ran away or was forced to prostitute their daughters or to sell their children as slaves in order to pay the taxes. With the Barbarians at the borders, *humanitas* became but a utopian ideal.

In comparison with the Romans, the Barbarians were few and underdeveloped. Nevertheless, they could penetrate the Empire's borders and finally prevailed. What is pathetic in this situation is that the Roman people themselves, who had lived happily under the Antonines, revolted in Gallia, Spain and Africa, creating anarchic movements called *bacaudae* or *circumcellioni*, whose main objective was to free them from the Emperor's oppression. In some regions, particularly in the Balkan Mountains, Roman peasants went with Barbarians to plunder other provinces of the Empire. Finally, the state collapsed.

We should understand that modern civilization has its own challenges and also its own "Barbarians". If international relationships continue to be established on the logic of dominance, it is possible that we, like the Romans, will end up succumbing to the attack of the modern Barbarians and, as with the Empire, turn our poor people into present day *bacaudae*.

We live in a world whose natural resources are diminishing in relation to the population, a world in which the richest eat in excess while enormous masses live on the verge of starvation. We tend to tranquilize our consciences through the shipment of food and medicines to places where poverty has settled in; but this aid is merely a 'drop in the ocean'.

We need a "revolution". Not another Communist revolution, which turned out to be just another expression of the logic of dominance, but one of solidarity; this means sharing what we have with those that have nothing. This does not have anything to do with "humanitarian aid". If we continue distributing the breadcrumbs we will hardly be able to take somebody out of poverty. What principally characterizes the developed world are education, technology and organization. Its mission in a global world must be to globalize development. Perhaps it is necessary to live more austere to make this possible, to give up something we have in order not to lose it all; in other words, to *really* share. For this revolution to be possible, there must be a revolution in our minds. This means a return to the values that had at times characterized Western thought: the *humanitas*, responsible freedom, and Christianity, not as mere dogma but as an attitude: "to love our fellow human beings as we love ourselves"; we must have as our life goal to understand ourselves in terms of what we *are* and not by what we *own*; we must cultivate a human life oriented to transcendence, towards recovering the family and family values as a framework given by nature. Nothing will change if we do not change and do not assume that valid citizenship also involves being a citizen of the world.

What then should be Latin America's role in this change towards a global world? First, we should heal our own societies, eliminating corruption which produces poverty and oppression. The fight against misery cannot be relegated to misery itself. If we fight misery only by giving food to the poor, we will only achieve more poverty.

The developed world has produced a true revolution in knowledge to which we should adhere if we wish to face the challenge. Our educative standards should be radically elevated. At the same time, we should enable the poorest to have authentic access to knowledge. This will be the most effective way to assure the equality of opportunities. Hannah Arendt in her book *On Revolution*, explained the failure of the French Revolution through the words of Robespierre: "freedom, equality, fraternity? I only see the misery." Rather than a 'reign of freedom', it became a 'reign of terror'. In fighting misery, we must understand that there is not one economy of wealth and another economy of misery, that is, there is not a way that can be successful only in rich countries and another one in poor countries. Since we are so eager to imitate the developed countries, we should start doing what was successful for them, namely, organizing the economy, and we should also adopt its work ethic. We should understand that we are determined by our own successes and failures. If we leave behind the adolescent attitude of blaming others for our problems, we can discover the true root of these problems and find satisfactory solutions.

How may we contribute to a global world? If we first achieve an inner change and retrieve the cultural values of our own civilization, then we might be able to contribute to a global civilization. The battle for family life and the battle for solidarity will find a better framework in Latin America than in the developed world, where the anxiety for material things has strongly displaced spirituality. To remind the developed world of these lost roots would be a priceless contribution to the regeneration of humanity.

We and the developed world should understand that today, more than ever, the truth of those verses penned by the great North American poet, Walt Whitman, need to be heard and acted upon: "All the people in the Earth sail/sail in the same trip/they go to the same destination". It is for each of us to select the port of destination and to fix the course of the ship.

## **REFERENCE**

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## CHAPTER XIV

# THE HUMAN CONDITION IN THE AGE OF TECHNOCRACY

*LUIS ANDRÉS MARCOS*

If we could, in the USA, acknowledge the existence, South of ourselves, of a mature, integrated world, that would help us to moderate the insane madness of our material success... Dear Mariátegui... I am happy you are there, in the great adventure of turning America into a truly new world (Waldo Frank to José Carlos Mariátegui).<sup>1</sup>

How can we make a truly new world? Is this possible, or does this statement even make sense? Furthermore, how dare we discuss today, following Waldo Frank's words, material success? How can the South understand the phrase "mature and integrated world"? And finally, why could the South, its existence acknowledged as "mature world", moderate the "insane madness" of such a success?

All these questions require, not only a new type of discourse, but, more than this, also a new *subject* for this discourse; this subject is not to be *unconsciously* situated in the North, speaking on behalf of those in the South, as has always been the case. Rather, it is necessary to let the South speak for itself (if not Mariátegui, others like him) and have the North, once and for all, become the recipient, as proposed by Waldo Frank. We will have to participate in the light of history by doing it and not just by receiving it [Zambrano, 1989: 15]. Epistemologically, my intention with the words that follow is to pledge my commitment to a discourse from weakness and helplessness, because, as I wish to point out below, these are the "forms of being" from which new discourses can be made today (the others being already made by material success). I understand that this is urgent and necessary in order to shape that which today we call the human condition. The justification is proposed below.

But before developing this justification, I would like to forestall some attitudes that might be called apocalyptic. I am talking about the attitudes of those who think and act according to an end known in advance (success or failure), because they do not consider the different historical situations, such as ours, as another bend in the river of human history. Certainly, the river may seem to flood when waters burst its banks, but

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<sup>1</sup> In Marchena Fernández, J. [1988: 18]. From here on, quotes will appear between parentheses in the text, in the order of: Author, Year, Page. Complete references will be found in the final Bibliography.

even these same rivers regularly return to a safe level. And although, according to one of Kant's pieces of good advice, the philosopher should not adapt himself to thinking according to the "experience built so far", it is not less true that the consequence of this regularity (bursting and returning to its banks) may free us from the absolute certainty of those who think this time has to be the final one. Thinking requires looking from a suitable distance at that which has to be thought, in order to get rid of the blindness caused by the immediacy of our fears. But it is also true that if thinking takes charge of actual problems, inherent in this situation may be the fact that thinking itself cannot say goodbye to a sound uncertainty. This is necessary to set us free from the determinism promoted by some scientists and philosophers who claim, based on their limited knowledge, that what will happen will come in the form of an indisputable fate. Fortunately, for us, we can anticipate it, although, as a "scientific" destiny, we may not avoid it [Morin, 2001]. This alleged anticipative insight might cause us to take stands so radically opposite to those determinations that, as happened (with the Oracle) to Oedipus, we may, by escaping, end up fulfilling it. Those who obsessively repeat the same idea with the intention of defeating it, finally manage to strengthen and confirm what they are fighting against.

Faced with this reality, it must be noted that when human beings are born, they do not bring an instruction manual with them which determines, once and for all, what the human condition is and what acts need to be carried out in the case of a problem. One must learn to become oneself on one's own. This does not mean that the human condition is made in history, but that *its making is history*. In this regard, María Zambrano states:

If man appeared with all his humanity already updated, history would be unexplainable.... History would be meaningless if it were not the progressive revelation of man [Zambrano, 1996: 29].

Although many people know this, it is often the case that many people act as if it were not true and proceed as if they know the full meaning of human nature and the full meaning of history, rather than admitting their own finitude and limitations. In everything human we should accept the Spanish poet's (Antonio Machado) saying that 'you make your own path as you walk'. The fact that the hominid learns to become human is not a path laid out in advance, but its making becomes one with its history.

Therefore, as María Zambrano warns us, both pessimism and optimism, if anticipated in the name of some necessary "scientific" law, "forget the truth of the human condition: that man is a creature in the process of an ongoing birth" [Zambrano, 1996: 127-128]. As a creature about to be born, he must take charge if he wants to be born "human" and face the difficulties that appear in each historical moment. It is on this account of the way in which man, before all else, makes himself, that Zubiri

calls man a “relative absolute”. On the one hand, he is Absolved (*solutus*) of (*ab*) everything that is real, but on the other, he needs it to make himself, and for this reason he is relative [Zubiri, 1994: 51-52 and 79]. In this mutual resistance (resistance is not opposition) one man acquires “*figura*”<sup>2</sup>, while the other acquires reality, since reality is everything that resists (Ortega, Zambrano). It would be appropriate here to remember the Kantian metaphor of the dove, that naively believed flying would be difficult because of the resistance of the air, while in fact, it is thanks to this resistance, that it was able to soar upwards. Likewise, our difficulties in each period end up becoming precisely our possibilities. Bearing this in mind, it will be possible to understand what comes next.

So, by what kind of reality shall man be measured today and what are the possibilities that arise from that which opposes him in shaping what it is to be human? To respond (from a *South* perspective) I will refer to Cervantes’ *Don Quixote de la Mancha*: from chapter XXXI to LVII of the Second Part. In these chapters, Don Quixote and his squire are invited to stay indefinitely at the castle of the Duke. Cervantes describes how the Duke and the Duchess, who had read the First Part of the life of this knight-errant and his squire, receive them in their castle and prepare artificial and fake adventures, similar to those described in the knight’s tales, to mock and ridicule them. Thus, the Duke and the Duchess diligently (artificially) prepared a “knighted” reality:

The Duke instructed that Don Quixote should be treated as a knight-errant, following to the letter the style in which old knights were allegedly treated [Cervantes, 860].

And the reality created to this effect was so convincing that “on the first day” Don Quixote:

. . . learnt and believed he was a true knight-errant, rather than a fantastic one, seeing himself treated just as he had read knights of past centuries were treated [Cervantes, 784].

In fact, in these adventures, things become complicated for Don Quixote. If in the First Part reality resisted his sign system (Luckàcs), Don Quixote had the possibility (though profiting from it was a different matter) of learning and progressing both in the knowledge of reality and in his self-recognition<sup>3</sup>. However, in this Second Part, Don Quixote, the leading

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<sup>2</sup> (It’s Note: “Figura” in Spanish, denotes the idea of shaping—as if from a piece of wood or stone—a sculpture of the human figure, providing a form, a face, an expression of what is human).

<sup>3</sup> For an extended reading of the Cervantes’ novel I herein schematically propose, see my articles: “Siglo XXI: actualización de la herencia filosófica”,

character, fades away and disappears in the similarity with reality. He cannot become anybody because reality does not oppose him, and in it he fades and gets confused. Here, the character is not he, but the fabricated reality [Foucault, 2004: 53-55]. The individual gets lost, scattered among things, himself one of them (apart from the fact he can understand himself as produced). And this fabrication of reality is carried out by technology assisted by industry; that is, by power and wealth. If in the First Part, Don Quixote's program was, just like modernity, freedom, now it is fabricated reality.

I think that a picture of our own world can be seen in these adventures. We have, or are going to have, a reality prepared and produced by man, customized perhaps to the whim of some and the interests of others. The hunger for control and possession that the mathematization of knowledge entails (which started with Bacon and Descartes) has been fulfilled in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the transformations of technology and engineering, so that this situation is no longer a dream. It will not be difficult to speculate that man will have a world fabricated by man himself. "The present world," asserted Max Weber, "is ruled by a technological development that goes hand in hand with Capitalist development, thus insisting on the idea that *technology* is the leading element in our cultural development" [Picó, 2001: 85]. The mere contemplation of the world no longer exists for there is production and manufacture. Reality is now produced; this is what technological engineering does. In Heideggerian terminology, it could be said that we inhabit the world technologically. "The 'technological' management of the economy, whatever the reality of the limitations over which it acts, is in fact a project of society" [Innerarity, 2001: 218]. The question today is who has the power to carry out that project.

The consciousness of a reality built by power has no resources to move away, just like Don Quixote in this Second Part; because when he was deceived, his conscience was certifying that for the first time he was a true knight-errant. On the contrary, in the earlier Quixotic adventures, Don Quixote confronted the reality that accommodated him with his sign system, so that he had the possibility of making progress in his experience, since by resisting him, reality offered a parameter to measure his knowledge. But when he was at the Duke's castle, the reality that confronted him could no longer be a parameter of truth, because it was guided by an artificial and ghostly reality that, strangely, he thought to be true. If this happened in our times, man would no longer have a reality to measure against, and would

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*Argentina hoy, desde nuestra América*, Sociedad Argentina de Filosofía, Editorial Alejandro Korn, Tomo VIII, 2002, 337-345; and "Para una biografía filosófica del porvenir", *La misión de los pensadores y de la Filosofía hoy, en nuestra América*, Sociedad Argentina de Filosofía, Editorial Alejandro Korn, Tomo XI, 2004, 123-131.

run the risk of not knowing himself, thus breaking the Socratic premise: Know Yourself. How to get out of this situation?

By taking technology into account and considering its logic of performance, because, as noted above, the very reality that favors deception also provides the antidote; that is to say, the possibility of overcoming it. The logic of technology is given in the behavior of the machine, but precisely in the machine most similar to man, the machine with the best self-management: the robot. So, before the “imperfection” that throughout history hominids have shown, they have compellingly sought perfection. Nowadays, machines gradually meet this perfection since they appear as a closed system, logically consistent, with perfect equilibrium or homeostasis and feedback (a system is more perfect when it has self-regulating partial systems). Its “autonomy” in management captivates or has captivated the old ambition of a perfect performance. If we add to this the security of its impassibility, we may even admire it as an epistemological subject that provides us with a perfect (because neutral) way of knowing. According to this, it seems we will have to begin changing the idea that man is superior because of his intelligence. Current machines and those announced for the near future, seem to be already ‘more perfect’ than human minds. In his wish for perfection, man runs the risk of trying to make himself just like the machine, and therefore of understanding ourselves with its own laws and internal logic. Some authors are already talking of the “cyberanthrope”: a being midway between the *anthropos* and the robot.<sup>4</sup>

That the machine is perfect means that nothing alien disturbs its operational logic; it does not get confused or nervous, does not blush, does not shake before the unexpected, is not affected by anything, and does not love. On the contrary, man is full of interruptions: he is continuously making mistakes, gets confused, mixed up, under the weather, has faults, forgets things and, to make matters worse, falls in love. The machine performs the de-corporization proposed by Descartes. The *res cogitans* is fed back by itself, unless interrupted. But in the hominid, *res cogitans* (software) and *res extensa* (hardware) are so interwoven that this cannot but give rise to discontinuous interruptions. We are integrated, whole beings, as Miguel de Unamuno might say.

Therefore, we see that what is inherently human is closer to what is weak, “imperfect”, than to what is perfect. Because, in fact, what is more ours, more our own, is what the machine sees as imperfect: errors, oversights, unbalances, the state of being bewildered, noises, interruptions, forgetfulness, etc. In fact, we are not machines, precisely due to our “imperfections”, our weaknesses. What the machine neglects for its operation, is what makes us “work” as human beings.

So, against the perfection of the machine lies the “imperfection” of what is human. The subjective is defined by spontaneity, creation,

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<sup>4</sup> For a specific description of the cyberanthrope. H. Lefèbvre. 1972 *Contra los tecnócratas*, Granica, Buenos Aires.

imagination, fantasy, poetry, and trials, but above all by *conflicts* and *contradictions*. To love them, as one's own, means not to reject imperfection, but to embrace it as belonging to our common human condition, and as that which can lead to our genuine human perfection, which is not "mechanical" perfection. Above all, I wish to point out that this technological time we are going through entails the danger of understanding the human condition in terms of the homogeneous logic of the machine and of acting accordingly. But, in turn, it is an opportunity also because it gives us the possibility of a new understanding of what it means to be human, which went unnoticed in other historical moments. That is what I have been calling "weakness" or "imperfection" (which is not the same as defects), in the above-mentioned meaning. Thus, what appeared as fragility for the machine becomes strength for the human being. It is absolutely necessary, then, to begin loving our weaknesses.

It is still surprising that it was somebody who was considered to be insane, Don Quixote de la Mancha, rather than an expert scholar or philosopher, who decided to become a knight-errant and follow a life program that entailed *assisting the needy and the destitute*. This "life program" motivated Don Quixote to leave his comfortable life in the village and was that which gave his life meaning. Perhaps the insanity that drove him to choose this *radical* life program was what rid him of it the moment he felt the absence of freedom, because in that inactivity he felt responsible for thinking that there might be somebody out there needing his help [Cervantes, 323]. Don Quixote did not wait to act according to *substantiated* discourses about goodness that lacked a sense of urgency. He resisted evil wherever it was, because "the need of the other was for him an unconditional value" [Heller, 1991: 129]. Before the destitute and the weak, there is no question of asking for reasons, but only of helping and assisting.

That is why Don Quixote turned his life into a battle, with all the ensuing consequences, to fulfill this program. Although success was not the specific outcome, his failures brought him closer to being human than any other knight famous for efficient and *perfect* feats. Failure, a consequence of our weaknesses, more than success, forges us as human beings, because it puts us in the places of *suffering* and returns us to the consciousness of our finitude and, thus, to the possibility of *com-passion*. Ciorán so understands when he says that "failure is always essential, it exposes us, allows us to see ourselves as God sees us, while success moves us farther from what is most intimate in ourselves and in everything" [Castro Caverro, 2004:99]. Weakness and helplessness appear as the negative moment of success. It is the inverse system, that is, the limitation of the spell of one's own success and the rehabilitation of the hope and wishes of the weak. "It is necessary," says Adorno, "to establish perspectives in which the world appears disrupted, deranged, showing its crevices and tears, needy and deformed to the same degree as it appears under the Messianic light" [Adorno, 2004: 257].

Which are the meaning and the concrete consequences of the above for our world? History itself and the history of thought have been told from a subject-nation perspective, as it achieved power and control. Perhaps Hegel is more correct in this matter than we would wish, when he understands universal history as passing through states and stages. But if this is so, what has happened has not been a universal history (nor a universal reason), but various collective (national) subjects revealing what is universal from their own perspective and, therefore, according to a homogeneous logic. Following this concept, we should reverse the idea that has been coming from so-called post-modernity, which asserts that it is already impossible to tell a grand narrative, and we should rather think the other way round: that now is the time when a universal history may start, after each nation has told its own. The consequence then would be to try to begin the story of universal history now that we are (or are about to be) in a globalised world. And the subject of that story should be, once and for all, humanity itself, not as ideal epistemological subject, but in its concrete reality [Bessis, 2002]. In this real and concrete knowledge, facilitated by technology, it is no longer possible to forget helplessness, which leads us to consider as uninhabitable a world where there is no matching compassion for suffering. Compassion that is not so much being compassionate for the other, which would result in flimsy sentimentality, but being compassionate with the other in the face of injustice.

It should be noted that not all philosophers have understood this, since some, such as the Stoics, in their attempt to consider knowledge neutrally, have ended up as *im-passible* or unable to suffer. From disinterest (Aristotle), we have moved subtly to the impassible, the non-affected, to that which walks “perfectly”, without surprises or fears, because it does not suffer from anything; this latter is what María Zambrano warns against. “The modification of perspectives is not possible without comparison, reflection, distance and experience of the alterity, something quite different from the generalized indifference or the obsession with neutrality” [Innerarity, 2001: 7]. The subject of humanity itself, therefore, should be understood or treated not from a certain *homogeneous logic* (mechanical behavior), but from what could be called *heterogeneous logic*, which entails the integral experience that exists in daily life:

Which is the object of our thought, wonders H. Arendt?  
Experience. Nothing else! And if we lose the ground of  
experience, then we find all kinds of theories [Arendt,  
1999: 145].

But, what is this experience that exists in daily life? Since daily life is a shared experience of inter-subjectivity, an integral experience is the experience of the global environment, in which all levels are received and to which the different specialties and rationalizations (even of consumption) have access. Just as spirit, mind, matter, language, emotion, etc., concur in

man and are experienced integrally rather than separately according to special sciences or dimensions, the same happens in daily life: problems require a global, integral treatment. That is to say, one problem of daily life cannot be solved by looking at only one aspect of the problem; all aspects have to be taken into account. Thus, decisions are made in a struggle (agony, anguish) among them, that is, in an environment of contradiction, because, as Unamuno would say, it is man as a whole and not each part of him that makes the choice. To do this, he has to make use of a heterogeneous logic (axiological reason), rather than a homogeneous logic where goals are clear and he has but to apply suitable means to achieve them (instrumental reason). Within the area of the special sciences, conflicts should be transferred to technicians (instrumental reason), but in everyday life technicians have to assume the conflicts and contradictions that their own technology may cause in the integral meaning of life. Everyday problems (ecological problems, for instance) are global, and should be treated integrally, not just from the one dimension of what can be effective (Bessis), for it is in everyday life that all the voices are heard. There cannot be one dominant treatment, but there must be listening and reciprocity. It is in daily life that we are forced to agree on disagreement.

A thought of this kind, which accepts living contradiction, cannot be exclusive. Likewise, it is a way of joining aspects that appear fragmented, and thus establishing their identities, as well as their differences. Putting these differences at stake allows us to direct the meaning of each event from the point of view of integral human life. “The revelation of meaning is what should be properly called *experience*” (Zambrano, 1989: 24). Eliminating the contradiction means reconciling oneself with what there is and not feeling and willing to go beyond facts towards another reality (Heller, 199). Irony, humor, not to lapse into solemnity, might nurture this severe contradiction. “The democratic ideal does not mean denying or ignoring conflicts, but making them productive” [Innerarity, 2001: 215].

Just as in one’s personal environment, where success tends to reproduce itself (what lives is what deserves to live) the same happens in the collective environment. The homogeneous logic, which is characteristic of technology “works” in this environment. Just as weakness appeared as the negative moment of success, that is, as its other face, everyday life, with its *heterogeneous* logic, is the negative moment of the *homogeneous* logic of technology.

I pointed out earlier that contradictions produce symmetrical relationships. Certain circles understand such a dialogue in this way. Dialogue is important because it creates in practice what was reasonably denied in theory: the logic of control. The practice of dialogue is an implementation of the symmetrical relationship between individuals and peoples, thereby overcoming the logic of control. For the world to change, first there should be a change of relationships, both personal and among peoples, that is not based on subordination. Otherwise, “In its temptation of

absoluteness, completion and security, supported today by the feeling of infinite power given by IT organizations, it slightly exhausts the radical situations of life, eliminating differences” [Dei, 1997: 85].

The logic of contradiction maintains its hope in dialogue, but it entails a moment of betting and risk. That is the moment of contradiction and, therefore, of conflict. But the logic of contradiction adds that it wants to win the dialogue in the maturity of conflict, as Waldo Frank pointed out at the beginning of this paper. “What we need are ideas to understand these contradictions, not visions of a world without contradictions” [Innerarity, 2001: 148].

In turn, the concrete man—the Spanish philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno, repeated this over and over again, and thus was branded an eccentric egotist—assumes conflicts, or even more, takes them with him, and supports the suffering and the anguish derived from them. Even more, he intensified them, living in contradictions and writing to make it known and to establish, precisely, the meaning of what it is to be human. When this no longer happens, when man no longer lives in conflict or in contradiction, he will simply have stopped being human. He may have managed to become a totally perfect machine; but then he will have solved everything, except his own human condition.

So, this contradictory logic, if it wishes to take charge of the experience that we have called integral, requires a type of language that is not *only* conceptual. Since to be effective all messages have to reach everyday life and be translated into everyday language, a hermeneutics of signs is initially required. Words or concepts bring “significations”, based on connotations to manage the individual’s behavior with respect to their consumption. A hermeneutical work would show the emptiness of technological language. In such a language, “nothing is thought”, that is to say, the signs used do not involve something experimented. They are puns without meaning, because, in them or in their shadow, “it is not possible to think something”, since they are made only to direct conduct. Not being able to think something means they cannot reveal the experimental content to which these words refer [Einstein, 2004, 165]. A decoding of this language from an integral human experience would show the “banalization” of the language used. Technological language lacks the spirit that inspires everyday language.

If what Humpty Dumpty asserted to Alice (*Alice Through the Looking Glass*) is true, that is, that those who have power may produce their own meanings, then the primary task of philosophy today would be to show precisely this. The philosopher, from an experience based on weakness, would have the task of re-signifying those terms to create a world of shared meanings that would put into communication all the perspectives of the integrated daily life. *Cervantinizing*, as M. Kundera would put it, rather than controlling resources, is what is needed, that is, exposing and allowing the polyphony of life to show up. To the signification of the signs that come “empty” from above, corresponds, from below, as a bad check, the return of

the contra-diction. Power dictates and everyday life contradicts. If, due to the mediation of the mass media, technical language is translated into daily life language, it is from this very daily life that the inverse translation shall be made. This is how the philosopher, in turn, helps to favor daily life: by re-creating signification sets accessible to all the members of society because they contain a shared human experience—significations that acquire an integral and human meaning in a sense of plenitude. Reason is the search for shared meanings, and the South still has the material where such integration can be exercised. Though the North might be better prepared for this understanding, in its insatiable ambition for economic success and power, it has reduced contents to pure form. In an integral experience neither is unwanted, though the North should stop thinking that success must imply control.

A totally new world cannot be created in the South nor in any other place, because man cannot simply forget his history; but perhaps it is exactly because of the need we have of understanding the weakness and helplessness of the human condition that the South (and other peoples, too) may act as moderators of the North's insane madness for material success. If we cannot create a totally new world, then at least we should be able to humanely inhabit this world. Those who, due to their conflicts and contradictions, are not positioned within the walls of the system in an absolute way may suffer the disadvantage of not having power, but due to not having to reproduce the system they may, in turn, have the advantage of being lighter and freer to pursue that which material success does not provide. "Belonging to a country too small to do crazy things, said Lorentz, makes me happy" [Einstein, 2004, 38].

In his dialogue, *The Symposium*, Plato thinks that Eros is the one who philosophizes, the true philosopher, and in order to get a better understanding of his actions, he makes him the son of Poros (Possession) and Penia (Poverty). Does Plato mean that, like philosophy, the human condition is also generated not only from Possession (power) but also from Poverty (weakness)? Has not philosophy been too long pondering and discoursing in terms of success, forgetting that it is also the daughter of Penia? Changing these dynamics and doing so from failure, weakness and helplessness is what I intended to do in the lines above. Can thought continue along this same path? If not, it may mean that, after all we have gone through, we are not yet ready to "realize that the adequate perspective for understanding [is to see] that suffering is the victim's and not the spectator's" [Innerarity, 2001: 200]. But in this culture of show and exhibition, would we know how not to be spectators?

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# THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

## PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

## PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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