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JWSR Editorial Policy

The main editorial goal of the Journal of World-Systems Research is to develop and disseminate scholarly research on topics that are relevant to the analysis of world-systems. We especially want to include works that proceed from several different theoretical stances and disciplines. These include, but are not limited to, civilizationists, evolutionary approaches, international political economy, comparative, historical and cultural analysis. We seek the work of political scientists, historians, sociologists, ethnographers, archaeologists, economists and geographers.

We especially encourage works that take theory seriously by confronting problems of conceptualization and making definitions of concepts explicit, by formulating hypotheses, constructing axiomatic theories and causal models. Theoretical research programs that combine theory construction with comparative research are badly needed to take the world-systems approach beyond the stage of a perspective.

We also want to encourage the application of comparative, quantitative and network-analytic methods to world-systems research, though we will certainly also publish pieces that do not use these methods. Any empirical study that is deemed relevant to world-systems analysis may be published even if it uses a very different conceptual framework.

And finally we also want to publish discussions of future trajectories and options for the modern world-system and considerations of what can be done to create a more humane, peaceful and just world society.

The purposes of JWSR are:

to produce a high quality publication of world-systems research articles; to publish quantitative and comparative research on world-systems; to publish works of theory construction and codification of causal propositions; to publish data sets in connection with articles; to publish reviews of books relevant to world-systems studies; and to encourage authors to use the hypermedia advantages of electronic publication to present their research results.

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JWSR is a self-published refereed journal under the control of the Editor and the Editorial Board. The Associate Editors are consultants who help to procure and evaluate articles for publication.

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Publication of a festschrift should be an occasion for reflection, appreciation, and hope: reflection on an unusually significant career, appreciation for opening paths that contributors and others have followed, hope for the honoree’s well-being in the years that remain. Many far-flung colleagues and friends were invited to participate in this publication, and most were able to accept; so many, in fact, that the impossibility of an old-fashioned book quickly became apparent to us. At the other extreme was the example of the open website through which Noam Chomsky was honored on the recent occasion of his seventieth birthday. Thus we were happy to hit upon the present alternative, a special macro “double double” issue of the on-line Journal of World-Systems Research—its own important institutional by-product of Immanuel Wallerstein’s lifework. “Double double:” half the contents appeared in the jumbo summer/fall issue (VI, 2) and half in the current one (VI, 3); each of the two numbers is twice normal size. We hope that our readers will agree that “macro” is indeed appropriate in this instance.

As adumbrated in the summer/fall introduction, it is convenient to divide Wallerstein’s scholarly career into three overlapping temporalities: Africa and colonialism/nationalism; the modern world-system; social science and the structures of knowledge. We have organized the festschrift around this scheme, such that VI, 2 contains the introduction, three general essays, five contributions with a colonial/national thematic, and eight dealing with historical aspects of the modern world-system. This new double issue, dated as fall/winter, includes nine contributions focussed on contemporary global matters and thirteen on questions of social science concepts and methods.

As we salute Prof. Wallerstein at 70, we know that he joins us in thanking those who helped make this publication possible: Donna Devoist of the Fernand Braudel Center at Binghamton University; Christopher Chase-Dunn, founding editor of JWSR; Ben Brewer and Ho-Fung Hung at Johns Hopkins University; and Eric Titolo at Binghamton University and the University of California, Santa Cruz.

G. Arrighi & W. Goldfrank, Special Issue Editors

Preface
IV. WORLD-SYSTEMS: CONTEMPORARY
The Civilizational Orientation in the Making of the New World

Anouar Abdel-Malek

To the living memory of Joseph Needham, maître en l’art de civilisation

Great intelligence embraces,
Small intelligence discriminates.
Great talk is sparkling,
Small talk is verbose.

–Tchuan-Tseu

(1) The historical moment of the position of the problem, from the onset, leads to the heart of the sudden perplexity about the nature, rôle and prospect of “the civilizational question” in our times.

While the very category of “civilization” was avoided until recently, a flurry of amazement-cum-disquiet has been pervading the public mind, more specifically the intellectual circles used to the long-prevailing dichotomies of social thought (“left” and “right”; “developed” and “under-developed”; “center” and “periphery”; “conservative” and “radical”; “reactionary” and “progressive”; “religious” and “secular”).

All of a sudden, as it were, on the morrow of the implosion of the former U.S.S.R., the end of the bi-polar system, the advent of unipolar world hegemonism in 1989-1991, a resounding essay in 1993 came as a shock. “Civilizations,” finally in the limelight, were deemed to “clash.”

(2) History indicates that “civilizations” were recognized as distinct constellations of socio-cultural formations since early times—much before “the making of international society” as we came to know of it, from the end of the 15th century to our time.
Ancient history is made of the parallel existence of such major constellations, mainly the civilizational empires of Egypt, Persia, China in the heartland, while the Western hemisphere witnessed the Aztec, Maya and Incas, to mention but the major recognized macro-formations.

At a much later date, socio-cultural formations in Europe were united under Rome, till the beginnings of its weakening in what became known as the dark Middle Age (of Europe). Simultaneously, four major constellations could be recognized, outside the limited European-Roman sphere:

(a) China, maintaining its continuity since its formation, twenty-five centuries B.C. to this day.

(b) The central area of Islam, in South-West Asia and North Africa, around the Arab caliphs and shi’ah Iran.

(c) The Indian sub-continent with a predominant Hindu culture while power was mainly the domain of Muslim rulers.

(d) The Mongol Asian and Eurasian world, which came under Muslim rule during recent times.

In Europe proper, Rome was gradually succeeded by the rise of catholic Christendom, albeit at a much slower pace than the four circles of the Orient.

These constellations, recognized as so many “civilizations” by latter day historians, remained unconnected, except for short periods, or by chance, till the Silk Road provided the major instrument for intercivilizational, mainly commercial, exchanges.

From the 11th century onwards, the rising power of Europe unleashed its protracted warfare against Islam in the Arab world (“b” above). The Crusades were launched under a purported religious-civilizational banner, while being, in essence, a classical sequence of military waves of plunder and subjugation—directly leading to the concentration of “historical surplus value” in the hands of the rising bourgeoisies.

These centuries led to the successive waves of colonialism, classical imperialism and hegemonic imperialism, from the 17th century to our times. Hence, these economic-military-political processes, accompanied by the spread of cultural hegemonism, were described as instances of “civilizational” wars. This also leads to the emergence of the ethos of “clash” side by side with the categories of “cultures” and “civilizations” in recent times.

Yet, the question remains: why now? why this sudden acuity, amidst gloom verging on despair, in the world of plenty?

(a) The cultural-civilizational factor has always accompanied times of tension, change and transformation: the decline of Pharaonic Egypt, facing the northern invasions; of the Roman empire, at the time of the Christian challenge; of Islam after the demise of the rising power of Europe; the waning of Indian cultures in Central, South then North America crushed by Western invasions; the crises of the Ottoman and Mongol empires. The more recent feature of the Western world as of the October 1917 revolution, when the battle raged between Slavophiles and Westernizers—till the 1991 implosion of the USSR. China remained immune to confrontations until the 19th century, accompanied by Japan, while Southeast and South Asia clashed with Western invasions some two centuries earlier.

(b) This factor was recognized as the struggle for maintenance against intrusions—the definition of actors as “nations,” “cultures,” “civilizations” being the latter day descriptive terminology of history at the center of the human and social sciences.

Maintenance thus became synonymous with normality. The normality of a world defined by the centrality of the West, mainly Europe then, more recently, North America, is surrounded by the “other,” fringes of societal formations marginalized by real-concrete history to the periphery. The “other,” past civilizational empires and geo-cultural areas, as well as the continuity of distant China, is seen as antique, exotic regions where strange processes unfolded, and as the realm of exceptionalism.

In a word: normality was synonymous with the maintenance of the centrality, or hegemony, of the West—from the end of the 15th
century till mid-20th century.

To the central interrogation: “Why now?” the answer must be sought in the realm of world transformation, in the changes of the West enjoying prevalent centrality and hegemony since the 15th century.

(4) At this juncture, it seems relevant to consider the impact of five centuries of Western centrality and hegemony on the movement of ideas, as well as Weltanschauungen (visions of the world), the general mold of the human and social sciences.

(a) From its very beginning in the 18th century, international society—i.e., Europe at the center of the constellation of dependent countries, cultures, nations, social formations—viewed the whole as one entity: the “universality” of the constellation—excluding, at that time, most of the Asian continent—led to the emergence of “universalism.” Hence the definition of this ensemble as the all-encompassing “civilization,” bringing together all component parts and factors—what obtained in the center being deemed “normal,” representing “universal” modes of being and values, to be accepted by the peripheries. From the onset, this postulated one and unique “civilization” was seen as the eternal mold and norm of human societies, past, present and future. Alterity was not accepted, except as the “other” to be negated or normalized via reductionism. Montesquieu’s “Comment peut-on être Persan” candidly expressed this vision, forgetting that Persia, Egypt, China antedated the new limited world of the European bourgeoisies by tens of centuries.

(b) This overall vision of the world pervaded the very structuration of the tools of investigation and interpretation of human societies. What obtained was deemed to be normal. The central group of societal formations was seen as being able to provide the raw materials, as it were, for interpreting the whole range of societies in terms of universality: the sectoral character of the whole network of concepts and notions was ignored, in the sure thought that the purported universality of the world as it obtained for five centuries could serve as the valid basis for asserting the universal character of emerging theories. The sectoral, European, then Western-centered, nature of the whole range of valuable knowledge about human societies was deemed to interpret the whole, to be “universally” valid as many concepts, laws, the substance, the theoretical work led to the elaboration of distinct fields and approaches that become universally valid human and social sciences.

The “rest” of the world could only be understood in terms of this set of ideas. Thus, if the concept, say, of “nation” was deemed to be a recent rendering of processes of societal coalescence in major European societies, it followed that there could be no nations prior to the beginnings of European modern times, let alone in human societies of the peripheries. Reductionism thus became the core-philosophy of human and social sciences: what was good for the center could not fail to be good for the peripheries.

(5) Then, as of the early 19th century, the earth trembled. The negation of the “other(s)” via the iron claws of reductionism led to the rise of the hitherto negated societies, deemed dormant, or not able to take action. Already, the first tremors during the 16th to 18th centuries, had signaled that deep layers were on the move, beneath the serene patterns of Western hegemony as universalism.

(a) The response of the hitherto marginalized societies (the “peripheries,” the Three Continents of Asia, Africa, Latin America), while directly motivated by the ruthless economic exploitation of imperialism, took the path, and adopted the categories and terminology, of the “nation”: national movement, party; national liberation movement or war; national sovereignty, independence; united national front ranging to national renaissance.

The liberation of oppressed societies, viewed in this national context and ethos, implied the cultural dimension, often seen as the national-cultural heartland of mounting historical waves of liberation and reassertion of oppressed societies, within a wider, perceived mold of more ancient origins—religions, continents and civilizations. The last term is used as a descriptive tool rather than in essentialist terms. It is used only when continuity, maintenance
through time, was perceived to a meaningful degree, the living tradition of "the present as history."

(b) On "the other side of the river," the rising challenges had to be identified. Thus came the notion of "the Orient." This notion found ever widening resonance in the domains of the philosophy of history, romantic poetry, exploration and travel literature, echoed in political and diplomatic documents. Differences were deemed to belong to the very essence of dependent, subjugated societies, but rarely accepted as the result of historical dialectics, of real-concrete political, economic, cultural-spiritual struggles between real-concrete forces through recent times.

As of the 11th century, and more so, since the 17th century, the "other(s)," the "savages," "primitives" or "infidèles" were gradually fused into "the Orient," which was seen as mysterious, abnormal, dangerous—at best "exotic" for lighter minds. In each and every case, in all instances, it constituted the world of exceptionalism. Hence came the general tonality of "Orientalism," which gradually became a field of studies, more so of cultural imperialism. It led to the imperative of firmly keeping the sciences of man and societies, as well as social thought, immune to the formative processes at work in "the Orient," so as to preserve their integrity as the one and only body of normality, of accepted knowledge. Hence reductionism as method.

Reductionism is the intellectual expression of hegemonism. It pervades the very texture of dominant cultures, and prepares the minds and feelings for an adversary, hostile attitude towards the temporarily weaker societies.

(c) Real concrete struggles and creativity changed the world from Mohammed Ali’s surge in Egypt (1805), via the Meiji Ishin in Japan (1868), to the liberation of China after the Long March (1949), followed by Vietnam (1973). In less than 150 years, the "Orient," in fact the whole range of societies in the Three Continents, achieved independence and sovereignty, albeit on vastly different terms. While large sectors of the formally independent countries are compelled to be marginalized, other major sectors are going through momentous processes of development, mainly so in East Asia with corresponding degrees of political impact on processes of world transformation.

(6) World transformation, around the momentous 1949-1973 period, was and remains perceived from several simultaneous approaches.

(a) The gradual displacement of the center of gravity of economic growth from the Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific area, centered around East Asia, a process all the more disconcerting as advanced technologies remain mostly in leading Western centers.

(b) Although tempered by "social capitalism," notably in Germany, France and most Western European counties, the cynical triumphalism of the shareholder, as against the stakeholder, transnational financial hegemony gave rise to mounting unemployment, frustration, erosion of belief and value systems. "Crisis" became the pervading feeling in advanced industrial societies of the Western world. In East Asia, principally the historically unparalleled economic growth of Japan, and now, more strikingly so, China, hand in hand with the circle of "Asian tigers" and NICs in East and Southeast Asia, and the Pacific façade in all parts of the American hemisphere, showed that Asian societies are able to cope with the inevitable contradictions of social dialectics, thanks to deeper, non-economic, formative factors. The group-centered, communitarian approach, social cohesiveness and consensus, the resilience of family, nation, state, cultural specifics, accompanied by the inevitable "aggiornamenti" marks a historical epoch of the rise of the major centers of the Orient.

(c) Thus, the stage is reached for maximal contradiction at the world level: while strategic power and advanced technologies still remain in the hegemonic Western world, the major interrogations and alternative models for human and social development are being presented by the Orient—in its widest circles—centering around the East Asian hinterland.

"Historical initiative," clearly changing course, is seen by leading circles of the Western world as a direct challenge to its future course. And this challenge is more often than not perceived in
circles wider than the economic-military-political matrix. Hence the re-emergence of "culture" and "civilization," religion and visions of the world.

Processes of world transformation are perceived as world crisis, the crisis of the West leading to its decline.

Thus, the stage is set for confrontation, as the inevitable line of defense.

Of whom? Against whom?

(7) At this stage, the introduction of the difference between "units of analysis" and "units of analysis and action" helps clarify the field.

(7.1) "Units of analysis," in the domain of macro-societal formations—beyond the tribe, ethnic group, social class—can be seen to comprise four main components:

(a) "Nations" as the optimal mold ensuring the continued coexistence of recognizable cohesive, stable demographic concentrations.

(b) "Nation," in the broadly accepted definition of modern social sciences, around its center of social power, the State.

(c) "Geocultural area," bringing together a group of nations, usually via the media of one, or a limited number, of language(s) as unifying instrument(s) of culture. Usually, though not always, such groups of nations are located in distinct proximate geographical space.

(d) "Civilizations" (or civilizations, or circles): the wider circle, as a post-fact description of the major circles which coexisted, mainly without organic links and interaction, until the making of international society as from the 15th century. These circles were distinguished, came to be recognized by a specific network of beliefs, visions of time and the world. They sometimes revolve around different structurations of key concepts, which are the net result of the "depth of the historical field."

(7.2) "Units of analysis and action" attempt to identify the major actors and the subjects of historical dialectics.

This is the domain of "nations": they, alone, enjoy the "depth of the historical field" which renders feasible the optimal actualization of potentials, thus giving voice to the hidden part of the iceberg. It is a matter of decisive importance for meaningful action.

Nation is the major variable, around its national state. State can also be obtained in non-national societal formations, but in a much weaker mode, of secondary or marginal efficacy.

And yet, major confrontations in history invoked wider frames of reference: religion, during the Crusades, as well as during the Iberian conquests of Central and South America; civilization during the heyday of colonialism and imperialism, the "civilizational mission of Europe" facing the barbarians; as well as the more recent "new international order" proclaimed by the uni-polar hegemonic center, where the normative approach ("order") acts as the ideology of hegemonism.

To be sure, major identification labels were and still are chosen to cover action programs in such terms, which help to mobilize the deeper layers of identity and cumulative achievements. The "Asian peril," followed by the dangers of "Islamic fundamentalism," is in lieu and place of the shifting pattern of historical initiative, and the control of the world's oil resources menaced by radical nationalism.

Yet, when all is said and done, civilizations and cultures do not launch wars, nor conclude peace. The nations of the world, around their respective states, are the major recognizable actors, bringing together the two circles of social dialectics: the inner (ethnic, social class); and the outer (international, world politics).

Nations, yet, are always influenced by outer molds of their respective cultures and civilizations.

(8) How could the mounting tensions of the times of world transformation develop? Is there a space for meaningful action in a domain where the winds of change are blowing, impetuously, more than at any previous time in the history of mankind?

Tensions lead to confrontations, that is, the clash approach in international relations. A glance at the panoply put forth by the epigones of this approach, which claims the non-strategic-political character of the
The first range of problems is of the classical economic-cum-political sort, yet in novel terms. Water, instead of oil, reserves; ecology that sets the limits to the menacing growth of the peripheries; new technologies, mainly in the field of informatics; the spread of new dangerous diseases, often leading to mass epidemics, side by side with the resurgence of old pathologies deemed extinct, and the growing inefficacy of existing therapies; the spread of hard drugs; the mounting menace of massive migrations towards the industrial societies, etc.

Little, if anything, is put forth to search for meaningful solutions and limit the damage. In fact, the above listing comes as there are many menaces in addition to the panoply of traditional strategic-military and economic conflicts, such as the persistent nuclear menace.

(b) “Human rights” occupy the center stage. This is, precisely, where the theses of the center—projecting itself to encompass the world, via the successive waves of reductionism—can only but differ from, and collide with, the visions of other civilizations, cultures and national specificities. The tacit acceptance of the centrality of the individual in Western societies, as of the development of the European bourgeoisies owing to the range of possibilities offered by cumulative “historical surplus value,” leads theoreticians and policy makers of the hitherto prevailing central area to refuse the legitimacy of the parallel set of processes unfolding in Oriental societies in their different geocultural areas, which give primacy to the group, community and togetherness. They are placed before the individuation of social life.

A non-confrontational approach would stress the rights of peoples side by side with the rights of man. The confrontation approach chooses to denounce Oriental “despotism,” seldom recognizing the visions and life patterns of the “other(s).” A stage has been reached where human rights are invoked to justify mili-

(c) Democracy, rather “liberal market democracy,” is deemed to be the socio-political and ethical norm for all societies. The crisis of socialist state formations in Europe leads to the negation of the very possibility of socialism, let alone its powerful assertion in a large part of the world.

(d) In the name of the above, military-political institutional alliances are brought to ever more advanced levels of strategic power. N.A.T.O. is now extending towards the frontiers of Russia, towards Asia, via the oil reserve area in Central Asia.

In the name of “civilization,” the one and only one.

(9) It is our opinion that another path can be charted: the non-antagonistic treatment of contradictions, leading to complementarity.

(9.1) “Contradiction” is of the essence. The European (Western) concept, from Aristotle to Hegel and Marx, of contradiction has been conceived in antagonistic terms: thesis facing antithesis leading to the supersession of both sides in the resulting synthesis. From the onset, conflict and warfare are postulated as the path to deal with contradiction. This vision has enabled the West to open, conquer, discover and innovate. It has also led to the resolution of contradictions by the launching of the atomic bombs in 1945, and genetic manipulations in our times.

The Chinese philosophical tradition, from Taoism to Mao Tsetung thought, puts forth that “contradiction is the essence of being.” As such, it cannot be “overcome,” eliminated via the removal of one side, and/or its forcible taming by the other. Real-concrete life, in nature and human societies alike, shows the persistent structuration of reality in terms of contradiction. While remodeling the pattern of the interrelations between different component elements of the contradiction, the readjustment of their respective role and impact opens the path for the combination between continuity and change, maintenance and transformation. This is the hallmark of the rising Orient in Asia in our times.
Since the early European Middle Ages, facing the difficulties of propagating the Christian faith in the Islamic-Arab world, Central and South America, later Africa and Asia, the Jesuits proposed the concept of “inculturation”: the message of the new, Christian faith could only be understood if it followed the specific nature of other cultures, faiths and peoples.

This major step in European thought remains inadequately understood, and its efficacy from Ricci’s mission to Ming China in the 16th century to “liberation theology” in our times remains marginalized.

One more step was needed to further develop the call for recognizing identities. Such was the purpose of our work to develop the concept of “specificity” (1962-70) as the key tool to understand differences, thus helping the bridge-building efforts towards convergence.

The analysis of the concept of specificity can be attempted at three levels/moments:

1. The level/moment of general definition, from the origins. In order to reach for the specificity of a given society, one should seek what has been the pattern of societal maintenance obtained in a given socio-economic national formation through a critical study of its historical development. The particular pattern of this societal maintenance is simply the pattern of structuration of and interaction between the four key factors in every form of societal maintenance: the production of material life in the geographic and ecological framework (the mode of production stricto sensu); the reproduction of life (sexuality); social order (power and the state); the relation to the time-dimension (the limitedness of human life, religions and philosophies). In that group, the production of material life occupies the decisive place in the structuration of the whole pattern of maintenance, but only in the last instance. By applying this model to different societies, we would be in a better position to clarify the general picture, to qualify and to give colour, adding tone and nuance to the first analysis undertaken on the basis of socio-economic criteria.

2. The level/moment of the emergence of spatio-temporal factors to conscious awareness. The study of specificity is not undertaken in the outer world of pure epistemology—but within the framework of the concrete evolution of given societies. This evolution puts the time factor in the forefront; hence the central importance of the notion of the ‘depth of historical field.’ There is no specificity in a temporary society—a jamboree, student movement, a state artificially established for show purposes. To talk of societal maintenance is to address oneself to the long historical duration that molds events—not to contingency. So one can validly speak of specificity in the old social-national formations—the ideal terrain for specificity—and in those formations which have not yet reached the level of national evolution stricto sensu—in the ‘new nations,’ to use the term coined by Thomas Jefferson in speaking of the United States of America. One can thus see how vast the field is—the immense majority of nations and peoples in our times. The social sciences will feel less at ease with the ‘space’ factor—because one form of geo-politics has fallen out of favour. However, the historical evolution of societies does not take place in the abstract space of the dialectics of the mind—’History’ in place of ‘history’—nor does it unfold in the secluded field of epistemology.

Societies—but only within the framework of their geographical conditions, should be considered under two aspects: (i) the aspect of location, which enables one to assess the importance of location to each society and its state as compared with others, that is, geo-politics; (ii) the aspect of internal conditioning, that is, ecology, which indicates and quantifies resources and potentials, which then had to be tempered by taking the demographic factor into consideration.

3. The moment-dimension of the dialectics of the factors of maintenance and the factors of transformation, on the basis of the ultimately decisive action of the mode of production and in extreme cases of the progress of techniques of production. It is to disentangle the factors which maintained from those which maintain (which is very different from speaking of ‘invariables’—of much
Is it now possible to chart the path from "confrontation" and "clash" towards "complementarity"—let alone "convergence"?

(a) Major conflicts in our time and the foreseeable future are, essentially, political-economic in the wider sense. The changing emerging patterns, centering in the displacement of historical initiative, are leading to the crisis of modern hegemony, located in Europe and then North America (the "West"), as the crisis of the "civilizational project" of the West itself. The Promethean-Faustian vision of "man as demiurge," master, let alone creator, of the world, leading to protracted, boundless productivism, consumerism, hedonism. They lead to mounting confrontations and a rising tide of unsustainable scenarios in a finite world, which is the home of a many-splendored panoply of nations, cultures and civilizations. The crisis of the power system is seen as the crisis of (Western) civilization.

(b) Hence, there is the advent (some would say resurgence) of the cultural-civilizational dimension as the wider frame within which power struggles are unfolding (e.g., the call for a "new Chinese spiritual civilization").

This realistic recognition of the emerging patterns is brought to its maximal systematic acuity by Huntington’s 1996 presentation as of his 1993 theses, thus: "Western belief in the universality of Western culture suffers from three problems: it is false; it is immoral; and it is dangerous.... Imperialism is the necessary logical consequence of universalism.... It could lead to a major inter-civilizational war."

(c) To avoid major confrontations, it is of importance to avoid imposing the center’s vision, let alone will, upon other cultures and civilizations.

More specifically, we should avoid the theoretical and essentialist approach, while simultaneously reaching for areas of convergence. These areas can be seen to obtain in the domain of the exigencies of the very survival of humankind on our planet Earth; hence the primacy of the normative approach, the attempt to locate common problems, parallel preoccupations, joint efforts to seek viable, concrete solutions to real concrete problems and situations. In a word: it is essential to give priority to the real concrete approach to real concrete problems faced by real concrete societies, albeit in vastly different terms.

(d) This approach can best be implemented by the will of the different formative schools of thought and action at work in the different national, cultural and civilizational areas to confront these obligations, thus fulfilling their duty as organic intellectuals—at work in the domains of knowledge-cum-policy formulation and implementation.

Once more, once again, there is a rising role for the socio-cultural factors, as compared to the traditional political-strategic-economic approach, advocated since 1973 and mainly so, by our concerted joint work at The United Nations University during its seminal formative stage (1975-1985). An approach now echoed by Huntington ("Peoples of all civilizations should search for and expand the values, institutions and practices they have in common with peoples of other civilizations").

(e) If all subjects/factors of history are invited to take their full part in these processes towards survival, complementarity leading to convergence, the two cultural-civilizational circles comprising the higher density of the oldest societies and nations—the Orient, and Europe; both in their wider connotations—can be seen to be
called upon to take joint action, based upon their exceptionally rich experience in the changing patterns and fortunes of historical dialectics.

“Civilizational strategy” should welcome different scenarios and initiatives, different levels and tempi.

Our contention, throughout, has been and remains that differences, if recognized, can open the path towards convergence.

Our plea throughout, has been and remains that it is now imperative and urgent to take meaningful action.

Our hope, our decision, throughout, have been and must firmly remain to trust that the combined lucidity and realism of our humankind will prevail over the negative mind and nihilism. Confrontation and clash, if understood, can open the path towards complementarity, convergence—our joint, richer, futures.

The civilizational dimension and approach facilitate the transition from the crises of world transformation towards the challenges and promise of the making of a new world.
In the prevailing discourse, market and democracy are credited with such a strong unity it almost appears impossible to separate the two. The market is considered a manifest condition of democracy, the latter inexorably bound up with the former. Neither the concepts—not the realities—of what is or what could be the market and democracy are questioned in this discourse. In the same manner, globalisation and universalism are conceived in the discourse as being practically synonymous. The “Global Village” constitutes one of the fashionable catch-phrases which, though bereft of meaning, bear witness to this confusion.

In this contribution, I will expatiate on the thesis that each of these dichotomies (market/democracy and globalisation/universalism) is more contradictory than complementary. The association of these two sets of issues, defined by an economic globalisation based on the market and a democratic political universalism, is as a result, utter nonsense which forces us to rethink the market, democracy and universalism within the perspective of a far-from-final history.

I.

The market is invoked in mainstream discourse just as supernatural forces are invoked elsewhere, forces to which individual human beings and society as a whole are supposedly subjected. They summon one to “believe in the market,” because the market, and only the market, “reveals” the “true
values” of the hamburger and the automobile, of the square meter of living space in the metropolis, the hectare of rice field, the barrel of petrol, the exchange rate of the dollar, the work hour of the factory laborer in Asia or that of the Wall Street broker, the “true” price that must be paid to gain access to medical care, university education, to the web, etc.

The language through which the market is evoked is akin to fundamentalist interpretation of religion. Just as the God of fundamentalism created the entire universe, leaving us no choice but to submit to His will as revealed in the sacred text, the market commands the world; one must submit to its rule. The peculiar rationality of the market becomes that of the totality of social life.

This rationality is therefore not that of the emancipation of human beings and their society, it is that of submission to binding law. The market has thus become absolute, no longer the concrete network of trade relations classified under the modest category — no matter how important — labeled economic life. It is the principle which guides all human relations. One can then speak of the market of ideas, of political options (what a curious and despicable use of words), probably also of the market of the honor of politicians, like those of sex (both of which are alive and well — the Mafia knows how to use them). Ethics have disappeared.

It is the so-called calculation based on the market which we are offered as a common denominator proper to all human relations. Its implementation is based on such an astonishing principle of simplicity: for everything there is a supply (whose curve rises on the basis of price) and a demand (whose curve is descending). There is therefore a “true price” at their intersection. Supply and demand are independent of each other; nobody questions how they are formed in the real world and their subsequent interdependence. The sect of “pure” economists (that is to say unpolluted by “politics”) was constituted to construct models of this curve, thus demonstrating that the market is self-regulatory and giving further legitimacy to its work by affirming that the equilibrium which it produces produces the best possible world. This is the very meaning of the “invisible hand.” Have these efforts been successful? Certainly not, neither in theory nor in the practices which they inspire.1

How can the interactions of the rational behavior of elementary units be analyzed, further integrating expectations so as to produce a general equilibrium? Since the time of Walras, economics has been employed to no end since it has been demonstrated that it is impossible to derive the pattern of supply and demand curves from optimal behaviors (the Sonnenschein theorem). Economists have resorted to narrating fairy tales. Fables credit animals with credible behavior and imagine the latter to achieve their objectives, which is to draw “the moral of the story.” Since the time of the Robinsonnades, so-called pure economics has never been able to come out of this frame of generalization by analogy.

The fundamentalist believer — of God or the market — affirms in theory that it is not necessary for him to act freely, but only to submit, to wait for God (or the Market) to solve the problem. In practice he will remain a perpetual deviant because he acts nonetheless. That will not hold, the sectarians in question would say. We integrate expectations into the identification of rational behavior.

Arrow’s model, the pride of pure economics, properly demonstrates that there is at least a general equilibrium in the hypothesis of perfect competition. The latter supposes that the famous auctioneer of Walras centralizes supplies and demands. Curiously, therefore, the model demonstrates that a central planner perfectly aware of the behaviors of the billions of actors operating in the market could make decisions that would produce the envisaged equilibrium. The model does not demonstrate that the market, as it really exists, can achieve this. It needs Big Brother to solve the puzzle.

Fortunately, there is no Big Brother. The system adjusts each time according to results produced by the effective actions of individuals who interact in the markets. The equilibrium, if achieved, will be as much the product of the process (which derives from chance) as the result of the rationality of actors.

Therefore, if fundamentalism is untenable in theory, it is much more so in practice. The pure economist sect pretends to construct an economy free of all facets of social reality such as the existence of states, the organized confrontation of social interests (social classes for example), the oligopolistic nature of the main producers’ organization, the interplay of political, ideological and cultural forces, etc. They study economic life as the astrophysicist studies stars, denying what specifically separates social science from the sciences of nature: that society produces itself and that it is not manufactured by outside forces. However, they immediately disprove their own lies
by introducing the concept of expectations, proving that the individual they sought to treat as an objective reality is the same active subject of his own history.

Moneytheism replaces monotheism. Fortunately, we are free to believe in other versions than that of the fundamentalists. One can believe in a God who allows human beings to make their history, and one can conceive of a regulated market. In reality, the market is always regulated, of course. The real option therefore is not regulation or deregulation, but what type of regulation and in whose interests?

I will not propose here a reading of the successive forms of regulation over the last two centuries, without which capitalist accumulation would have been impossible. I refer here to developments that the reader will find elsewhere. Each of these forms responded to challenges of the particular time and place, to the necessary social alliances through which the domination of capital was expressed, forcing the latter to adjust to the implied social imperatives. The reading of politics and history, in which fundamentalist sects have never shown interest since the truth has been revealed in its totality once and for all, makes it possible to understand the meaning and real impact of the market.

The victory of democracy over fascism, and of the peoples of Asia and Africa over colonialism, created, in the post Second World War era, conditions for transparent and efficient social regulation—for a limited time, as has always been the case in history. The historic compromise between capital and labor in countries of central capitalism, on the basis of which the “welfare state” was constructed, as well as the development project that I call national-populist in the Third World, have constituted the most recent stage of this long history. They are the real, or at least potential, forms of democratic regulation because they are socially transparent. The state appears then as the instrument for the implementation of these “social contracts.” The state’s intervention is not that of stupid and awkward bureaucrats bent on pursuing only ridiculous or hidden objectives, as presented in the discourse of rightist anarchism. Instead, it is the instrument for the affirmation of a mature society that knows what it wants.

Society is not governed by the principle of the anarchic conflict of individuals; it is not a jungle without laws (even the jungle or the Mafia are regulated by their own laws). Neither is it a long quiet stream of universal harmony. It is the place of confrontations and compromises organized between incontrovertible social realities: nations, workers, enterprises, oligopolies, transnationals, etc. The compromises achieved between these interests—sometimes convergent, often divergent—define the mode of regulation that governs society, among others the mode of regulation of economic life, both at the national level and in international relations. Bretton Woods or fluctuating exchange rates are modes of regulation. But they express the victory of certain interests over others which are summoned to submit (and they either accept or reject it, in theory and in practice).

The universal anarchy/harmony utopia obviates reflection on the consideration of reality: modes of regulation that are always present. This is why the economy of contemporary one-sided thinking reduces the instruments of economic policy to two: budgetary policy and monetary policy. This is evidently not true. Other instruments, recognized or hidden, are in operation. There are always industrial policies, be they those of the state for example, charged with the task of supporting the establishment of stronger and more independent productive systems vis-à-vis the exterior, or be they the expressions of the strategies of private groups of industrialists or financiers themselves (and in this case one speaks, wrongly, of the absence of policies because they are not transparent). There are always social policies in fact, be they relatively favorable to workers (social security for example), or unfavorable to them. The flexibility of the labor market is not the absence of social policies, it is a social policy unilaterally regulated by the strongest—the employers. It is the implementation of the totality of these policies—recognized or not—which determines, among others, the state of the external balance, be it balanced or not. And since we live in a world of nations, states, and various currencies managed by various states, the search for a stable external balance is, to varying degrees, unavoidable. The mix of policies that I call regulation must take this into consideration. Whether this is achieved or not, whether it favors the interests of some or others, all constitute another series of problems.

What is known as deregulation is in fact nothing more than another form of regulation whose nature is hard to discern because it is unilateral. As a clear example, the WTO, a curious institution: if markets can really be deregulated, why the need for an institution assigned to regulate them? The WTO does regulate markets, while condoning, in the corridors, the
dominant segments of capital (the transnationals) negotiating compromises between themselves. Being private business secrets, these regulations will simply be legitimized afterwards by states, called on to “rubber stamp these secret agreements.” Opaque, the so-called “deregulation” is simply a shameful regulation and at the same time essentially non-democratic. The MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investments) is even more cynical: it replaces the legislation of States, potentially democratic, with those of transnationals and above all erases the principles of the separation of powers; in the proposed courts of arbitration, the transnationals are both complainants and judges.

Whether transparent or opaque, regulation is always present. Markets can’t exist without it, since the forces that operate in markets are the expressions of social relations, which the sect of pure economists have banished from sight. Markets (and the economy in general) are embedded in these relations. Karl Polanyi reminded us in 1944 that the “liberalism” of the first from sight. Markets (and the economy in general) are embedded in these relations. Karl Polanyi reminded us in 1944 that the “liberalism” of the first half of the 20th century had produced the two world wars and the Fascist drift. Before him, the classicists—from Smith to Ricardo, then Marx and, much later, Keynes—shared, beyond the divergence of their visions, methods and proposals, this recognition that economics is political.

Therefore, in the reality of the world, we do not have to deal with “markets” simply, but with markets for goods and services that are generally produced by private capitalist enterprises, the majority of them oligopolies, on the basis of defined relations of production (wage labor, labor which has a semblance of independence but which in fact is a kind of sub-contracting, etc.). In these relations the majority of human beings with only the strength of their muscles or brains to sell are alienated, in the sense that the history of which they are subjects and agents, appears to them as imposed from outside.

Similarly, in the reality of the world we do not have to deal with “natural resources” that can be treated as “goods” ( commodified). These resources constitute the basis of reproduction not only of the material needs of the society but also of biological life. However, the rationality of the market, which is real but relative, is based in the short-term, that which, through the famous “devaluation of the future” does not go beyond a few years. Under these conditions the dictatorship of the market engenders the progressive and inevitable destruction of the natural basis of reproduction, the irrational consequence of the short-term rationality of market calculations.

In the reality of the world, we also have countries, states, nations (call them what you want), a reality we will probably live with for quite some time. A diversity of national or pluri-national currencies necessarily comes with this plurality of political power. However, mainstream economists assure us that since money is a commodity like any other, it carries a price tag—the equilibrium exchange rate—which assures external balance; and that the market, if deregulated, makes it possible to ascertain the “true price” of the currency. Yet none of the numerous Nobel prize laureates expert on this subject is capable of finding an answer to this simple question: what is the true price of the dollar expressed in yen that the market would have revealed to us? 80 or 380 yen? And, why, whatever the rate between these two extreme values between which the dollar fluctuated, has the external balance of the United States remained in deficit? In the same way, none of the most prominent economists has been able to find an answer to the question: what is the true exchange rate of the Euro and the dollar? Some have underscored a strong Euro of which they praise the advantages, the others support a weak Euro which they consider more useful. No one appears to be concerned with the “true price” of the new European currency. The currency is inseparable from power and market alienation pushed to their maximal point of abstraction, as Marx, and after him Polanyi, illustrated so well. The analysis shows that the supply of money is determined by demand. Besides, the central banks, for which some wish a neutral and independent management (by whom?), know that they do not have this magical power to fix the money supply. And they do not make it, because they can not make it, but act only partially and indirectly on the demand for currency, not on the supply, when choosing the interest rate.

External equilibrium can not be attained by way of the true exchange rate as revealed by the so-called deregulated market. If one pretends that this thing (the true exchange rate producing external equilibrium) exists and that one could know what it amounts to, one poses the wrong question, and, consequently, one can only provide a response bereft of any meaning. To the question: how is the true exchange rate of the Euro and the dollar? Some have underscored a strong Euro of which they praise the advantages, the others support a weak Euro which they consider more useful. No one appears to be concerned with the “true price” of the new European currency. The currency is inseparable from power and market alienation pushed to their maximal point of abstraction, as Marx, and after him Polanyi, illustrated so well. The analysis shows that the supply of money is determined by demand. Besides, the central banks, for which some wish a neutral and independent management (by whom?), know that they do not have this magical power to fix the money supply. And they do not make it, because they can not make it, but act only partially and indirectly on the demand for currency, not on the supply, when choosing the interest rate.

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for the weak economies in the global system, deregulation does not lead to external equilibrium. Then, devalue, we are told; or let your currency float and devalue your currency spontaneously. The wave of devaluation becomes infinite. The height of the irony: the more you devalue the more you move away from the purchasing power parity of which the defenders of the illusion (the exchange rate equilibrium) pretend constitutes the bottom line.

But who wins and who loses in this game? This question is avoided from the start—“this is not my domain,” the economists concerned would say. And yet, visibly, there are winners and losers. Small winners: the horde of western tourists who can afford to pay for very inexpensive five-star hotels, beyond their reach at home. Big winners: the transnationals. Because it has been ordained, simultaneously, in the name of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation, the sale of the juiciest pieces of the badly managed local productive systems of course, to the “efficient” transnationals. A national electricity company had constructed a network of production and distribution systems at enormous cost (in the past when the dollar was worth 100 local monetary units). Its juiciest segment (the one that is meant to serve the rich districts that can pay) is resold to a transnational while estimating that the 100 local monetary units are only worth ten American cents. And that is how the deal is struck. I call this the massive devaluation of the capital laboriously accumulated by the poor, a massive transfer of the value of the capital for the benefit of the rich. The pursuit of fantasy (the rate of equilibrium) pretend constitutes the bottom line.

The modern era began with a philosophical break from that past. An era beyond their reach at home. Big winners: the transnationals. Because it has been ordained, simultaneously, in the name of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation, the sale of the juiciest pieces of the badly managed local productive systems of course, to the “efficient” transnationals. A national electricity company had constructed a network of production and distribution systems at enormous cost (in the past when the dollar was worth 100 local monetary units). Its juiciest segment (the one that is meant to serve the rich districts that can pay) is resold to a transnational while estimating that the 100 local monetary units are only worth ten American cents. And that is how the deal is struck. I call this the massive devaluation of the capital laboriously accumulated by the poor, a massive transfer of the value of the capital for the benefit of the rich. The pursuit of fantasy (the rate of equilibrium) pretend constitutes the bottom line.

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2.

Democracy is, like the market, a key and sacred word of the lexicon of modernity, one that has become so hegemonic it is now rarely problematized. The idea that the public makes of it, even cultivated, is based on fuzzy images, more or less precise: the agora of Athens, and Greek etymology of the word, Habeas Corpus, the human and citizens’ rights declaration of 1789, the universal declaration of the human rights of 1948, multipartyism, elections, the separation of powers and the state of Law, etc. A long list to which the Asian and African nationalists, sensing that they had been forgotten by the enumeration of the mainstream media, have added the innumerable forms of dialogue in the management of villages in Africa and Asia (Islamic Choura, Indian panchayat). But neither one nor the other—beyond the narrow circles of specialists—bothers to know how these institutions participate in the reproduction of a society or the type of society in question. Democracy is simply a good thing in itself.

The point of view I defend is firstly that we have to do with a concept and a historic modern reality, that is to say, constituted in relation to the formation of capitalism. I would say therefore that all forms of the organization of dialogue in the exercise of power in past societies do not have much to do with modern democracy, and that the Greek etymology of the word should not distort our understanding because power (democratic or not), ideology (and the content of the alienation that defines it) and economic life maintained in capitalist modernity are organized in a manner that does not have anything to do with the way it was in past societies.4

All philosophical systems throughout the ancient world were structured around a metaphysical form of this relation: there is a governing cosmic order which imposes itself on human beings and on their societies. The task, at best, was to seek out the divine commandments holding sway over them, or else to learn them through the utterances of prophets.

The modern era began with a philosophical break from that past. An era of freedom, but also of insecurity, began. Once political power was stripped of divine sanction, and the natural world was stripped of magical influences, the way to the free exercise of human reason was opened. Henceforth, humanity was called to the knowledge that human beings make their own history, that they can and even must do so, and that to do so they must choose. The modern world is defined by this rupture through which humanity escapes from the commandments of a cosmic order—or frees itself; rather, in the view of those who, like myself and many others, see this rupture as progress. For my part, it must be said that in the past metaphysical alienation was a necessary requirement for the reproduction of those precapitalist social systems which I have characterized as tributary, and the overstepping of this alienation is linked to the social system’s qualitative transformation into a capitalist one. I insist on the word “overstepping” (dépassement) rather than “abolition,” because I maintain that in its transhistorical, anthropological dimension the human being is a metaphysical animal. But that is a different question, not to be discussed here.
For me there is no other definition of modernity, and modernity requires nothing more than the philosophical rupture to which I have referred. Thus we see that modernity can never be completed, never be closed. On the contrary, it opens onto the unknown, whose boundaries, though ultimately unattainable, are pushed ever further backward in step with the accumulation of our knowledge in regard to the social realm. Modernity is unending, but it takes on a succession of forms which vary according to the responses it offers to the challenges confronting society at each moment of its history.

The concept and practice of modern democracy find their place within this framework. To say that human beings make their own history is to propose an organized social frame which facilitates the creation of an emancipatory project. The latter in turn defines what we call modern democracy. One then begins to see why democracy has nothing to do with the forms of social dialogue of past ages. The function of power, and the dialogue which underscores it, remains in the old systems based on the reading and interpretation of tradition, supposedly eternal since it is founded on divine laws. On the contrary, modern democracy fully embraces the right to invention. Herein lies all the meaning of the sign of equality which Enlightenment philosophy places between Reason and Emancipation.

The parliaments of the Ancien Régime in France, like the Choura of the Arabo-Islamic world as well as other institutions of dialogue proper to all ancient societies, were not democratic institutions in the modern sense of the term.

In Restoration France, for example, Joseph de Maistre proclaimed that the liberatory aspiration of the Revolution was a chimera to be abandoned, that the lawmaking madness of modern democracy was to be renounced because "only God is a legitimate lawgiver," and that the tradition of respect for God's law was to be dutifully obeyed at all times and in all places. Burke was not saying anything different from the Islamic fundamentalists of today. The sentence written by Joseph de Maistre could have been signed yesterday by Ayatollah Khomeini and today by Cheikh el Azhar. In all the instances the relation between Reason (and the necessary democracy to attain it) and Emancipation is shattered.

The proposition that humanity makes its own history represented the birth process of modernity and defined the field of inquiry for social thought, but it suggested no answers to such inquiry. Who is the active agent of this history: all individuals, or only some of them? Social classes? Various communities and groups with their own unique qualities and statuses? Nations? Societies organized as political states? How is this history made? What real factors do these agents put to work? What strategies do they adopt, and why? How, and according to what criteria, do they judge success? What real conditions are transformed by their activities? To what extent do those transformations correspond to the goals of their authors, and to what extent do they diverge? All these questions remain perpetually open. They simply remind us that modernity is a permanently moving process, not a system closed and defined once and for all.

The development of modern democracy, which came in response to these issues, therefore has a history. This response crystallizes first of all in the capitalist social project which defines the subject of this history: the bourgeois who is simultaneously the citizen and the entrepreneur. This double quality breeds a strict separation which bourgeois modernity imposes between the political domain, guided by the principles of democracy, and economics as managed by private property, free enterprise and market competition.

The democracy in question is therefore exclusively a political democracy. It gradually proclaimed its principles (the rights of the individual, freedom of expression, election, the separation of powers) and invented institutions permitting its rule (legislative houses, governments chosen by electoral majority, independent judiciary etc.). It defined the citizen with the freedom to exercise these rights. This citizen was first and foremost a man; it was only much later, in the most advanced modern democracies, that similar rights were to be attained by women (rights still not fully awarded de facto).

It was only after prolonged struggle by the working classes that universal suffrage was extended. As can be seen, the equation market equals democracy does not have much to do with an abstracted view of history; modern democracy was only achieved through the active struggles of the victims of the market.

Modern bourgeois thinking does not at first recognize the contradiction inherent to the strict separation of market and democracy. On the contrary, they are viewed as two distinct dimensions of emancipation, that of the citizen and that of the entrepreneur (and the two characters are most often found in the same individual). The idea that the other individuals who are...
neither citizens nor entrepreneurs—women, workers—should enjoy rights is still a stranger. Thus, it is no surprise to find that the leaders of American independence turned out to be slave owners; they proclaimed themselves democrats as well. Thus, it is not surprising that the first modern democratic legislation forbade “workers’ coalitions” and strikes, in such a way as to strictly separate the principles of democratic governance of politics and those of economic management through capital, enterprise and market.

The history of democratic progress continued precisely through the affirmation and conquest of new rights, social rights which challenged the unilateral management of the economy by the market. Here again it was necessary to wait quite a while before these new rights emerged. Up to the Second World War, they continued to remain practically limited to a few rights for workers’ organizations (free trade unions, right to strike) and light labor laws. It was only after the war that the working class was able to win—thanks to the defeat of fascism—a political and social legitimacy that it never enjoyed before. It was only then that the “welfare state” was conceived of and constructed, producing a new form of social regulation of the market.

It is useful to return to the theoretical issue implicit in our analysis in order to complete the debate which preceded concerning the concept of democracy—to wit, the meaning of the proposition that the human being, individually and collectively, makes his own history. It will be seen at the same time how the separation of the realms of democracy and the market constitutes a fundamental contradiction of the capitalist project.

To overstep metaphysics is thus to assert that there is a dichotomy between nature and society, and by that fact to reject any confusion between the domain governed by natural laws (whose discovery is the business of the natural sciences) and that governed by “social” laws. Recognizing that such laws have a status different from that of natural laws (because humanity makes its own history), I now, as always, insist on this distinction, which is a subject of perpetual discussion. It is not accepted by those for whom the natural sciences represent the model for the social sciences. Because I consider such an approximation to be both a distortion and an impossibility, I have suggested that we should speak of social thought rather than social science, without for a moment conceding that this terminology implies that a scientific world view is indispensable in the investigation of social thought.

At every instant, modern social thought is torn between its aspiration to treat human beings as the free authors of their own history and its recognition that they are subject to seemingly objective laws comparable to the laws of nature. Under capitalism, the dominance of economic factors is expressed as the autonomy of economic forces. Like natural forces, these act as realities subject to objective laws. In the dominant discourse there is a perpetual insistence on a supposedly unavoidable submission to these notorious economic laws (which vulgarizing rhetoric encapsulates in the phrase “the market”). In vaguer and often cruder forms of this rhetoric, reference is made to laws of nature, and even to a “state of nature,” to which people would be as subject as they are to objective forces. Recall, however, that the Enlightenment modernity defined itself, with its call to escape from supposedly natural laws and to give full authority to the lawmaking citizen. As we will see, retrogression toward submission to these alleged demands of nature is always lurking in the recesses of bourgeois thought. From nineteenth-century social Darwinism to aggressive contemporary insistence on genetic and “neurological” explanations of social phenomena, this deviant conceit is perpetually present. Yet it is forcefully expressed only under certain conditions that must be specified.

The movement of history is not predetermined. It does not proceed linearly and unidirectionally. It is comprised of moments of advance in some direction, of hesitations, of retreats, of blind alleys, of choices at forking pathways.

During periods of tranquil progress it is always very tempting to think of the historical process in linear terms. These are periods which the political economy of the system interprets as phases of accumulation ensuring reproduction of the social relations primary to the system. During those moments, history seems to be going, naturally and inevitably, in a known direction. Those are moments during which social thought seems capable of producing powerful and coherent doctrines, those of the “grand narratives” (such as the bourgeois democratic project, the socialist project, or nation-building projects) which current social thought, in deep crisis, treats as objects of ridicule. There was no difficulty in giving each special branch of knowledge, as it applied to its own plot in the field of social reality, its appropriate place within such an architectonic doctrine.

On the other hand, when the social equilibria that hitherto ensured
the calm reproduction of society have turned topsy turvy, when no one can foresee the direction in which society will move once its equilibria have been restored, the crisis also becomes manifest in the collapse of those big, reassuring intellectual structures. Their weak points become yawning gaps. Such periods are then marked by the fragmentation of social thought, and this fragmentation provides fodder for wayward conceits that direct it away from its needed reconstruction.

My interpretation of contemporary history treats it as having moved out of a period of the former sort which fell apart in the current crisis.

Therefore, is modernity outmoded, as is complacently uttered in current fashionable discourse? Not in the least. For if modernity simply means that human beings make their own history, then it is a long way from becoming outlived. Undoubtedly, in times of deep crisis, like the present, there is a great temptation to go back to a pre-modern stance and claim that while human beings believe that they make their own history, in reality history takes place quite apart from their activity. In other words, there is a temptation to claim that what happens is unknown and unpredictable, let alone influenced through constructive and consequential action, and accordingly to suggest falling back on the unambiguous stance of trying to manage this meaningless history as well as possible. To manage as well as possible, then, means the democratic management of pluralism at the grass-roots level, the organization of so-called “conviviality,” the improvement of this or that aspect of social life. The counterpart to this is acceptance of the essential features of the established system, including the rule that the market dominates everything—i.e., capitalist political economy. The motives leading to these conclusions are understandable: they stem from disarray consequent to the exhaustion and even collapse of the great projects marking the preceding stage of history, especially the socialist project but also that of the nation-state and various others. But to understand these motives is not the same thing as to believe that this situation might last eternally, as is proclaimed in the “end of history” thesis.

The critique called post-modernist thus fails to see that modernity, always incomplete, is today confronted with a challenge, not to renounce its fundamental principle but to move ahead in its implementation.

Preceding the postmodernist propositions is an extensive rhetoric asserting “the failure of modernity.” The least that can be said on the topic is that this superficial discourse has no analytic foundation whatsoever. The modern epoch is also the epoch of humanity’s greatest achievements, accomplished at a pace immeasurably greater than that which marked pre-modern times. Modernity achieved enormous progress in material production and scientific knowledge; likewise, progress of democracy despite its limits and occasional setbacks; social progress, also despite its limits; and even ethical progress. The idea that each human life is irreplaceable, the idea of happiness, the idea of individuality irredutable to membership in a familial or ethnic collectivity—these are all modern ideas. Certainly these results of progress—and I have no qualms with using that currently unfashionable word—did not come about through continuous movement along a straight line; they had to be won, they are always threatened, and there are setbacks which are always accompanied by enormous crimes. But this is no reason to throw out the baby with the bath water and to mutter that “things used to be better.” Nor is it a reason to simply say that because of “failures” we must give up on the foolhardy struggle to go forward and instead be content to simply cope with the present reality. That would be to take a leap which I consider neither necessary nor useful.

Modernity remains an unfinished project, and it will be so as long as the human race continues to exist. Currently, the fundamental obstacle setting its limits is still defined by the social relationships specific to capitalism. What the postmodernists refuse to see is that modernity can progress further only by going beyond capitalism. Unfortunately this possibility seems inaccessible at the present moment. For the “failures” of modernity and the aggravation of conflict which has brought with it a wave of violence—recognition of which is the source of the postmodernist thesis—are results of the evolution of that same capitalism and signs that it has reached the end of the historical path at whose earlier stages it could still, despite its specific contradictions, appear synonymous with progress. Today the choice of “socialism or barbarism” is truly the choice confronting the human race.

Postmodernism draws no distinctions in its indictment of the various “master narratives.” It rejects the concept of capitalism which, like Enlightenment, it treats as synonymous with reason and modernity. Undoubtedly, all these great narratives are based on a single abstract notion, that of emancipation—another way of saying that human beings make their own history—and accordingly they seek to formulate concretely liberatory projects.
The Enlightenment established that the concepts of reason and emancipation are closely corresponding, even synonymous, with each other; reason becomes meaningless if it is not put to the service of emancipation, and the latter is impossible if it is not based on the former. Nevertheless, this common denominator is not a sufficient basis to mix up the bourgeois-democratic project with the socialist project, whose objective is precisely the overstepping of the limits of the bourgeois-democratic project. The bourgeois-democratic project was liberatory of the citizen and the individual through the establishment of a law-governed state and universal education, but was deferential to such fundamental requirements of capitalism as property, entrepreneurialism, wage labor, and the laws of the market. Nor can one be content with mentioning the failures of each project (mass culture and the associated manipulation of democratic process under capitalism, the deviant course that drove the Soviet project onto the rocks) to justify the conclusion that it is no longer possible to give meaning to history.

The crisis of democracy is today a major issue demanding our attention. The combination of two series of evolutions, which merge as one in the short term, today gives room for the permanent contradiction in capitalism between the expansion and deepening of democracy and the unilateral dictatorship of the market.

We are in fact living in times characterized by a disequilibrium in the relations of social forces to the benefit of capital, to the detriment of labor. A temporary product of the erosion of the post-war systems of regulation, this imbalance intensifies the utopia of “deregulation,” that is to say, the one-sided regulation by capital. In this situation social rights conquered after a hard struggle by the popular majority are questioned. Democracy returns to its bourgeois origin: that of sole political management while economics is handed over to the dictates and vagaries of the market. What is produced is what I call a “low intensity democracy.” The citizen (and today it is everybody) can vote freely for the right or left. This is no longer of any importance, let alone effect, because his future as worker (or as an unemployed person) will be decided elsewhere, in the “market.”

The vote loses its meaning, its impact, resulting in the crisis of democracy. In countries where people believed the latter finally entrenched, it wobbles; the abstention of the majority of the electorate in the United States (and the poorest half is not by happenstance) as events have proved. Is the devaluation of what is called the political class in Europe not a sign of the same dangerous erosion? In the Third World, manifestations of this crisis are even more violent. The erosion of societal, national populist projects has no doubt found an opening in the desirable recognition of the virtues of free expression and political pluralism. But this opening coincides with a degradation of the social situation including the imposed model of globalisation, which will be examined later. Also, the process of political democratization had hardly gained momentum before it quickly lost legitimacy in the eyes of the popular majority. What can be expected of this fancy pluralism, electoral travesty and the weak powers they produce? Does the escalation of religious fundamentalism and ethnic strife not already prove that disaster is not far away?

Nonetheless, this serious crisis coincides with a new leap in the development of productive forces. The rapid progress of science and technology has already quickened what I call the necessary withering away of the dictate of value, which is to say the market. Globalisation, which I take up now, aggravates this major contradiction of capitalism, catapulting the explosive market/democracy conflict to levels of unprecedented violence.

III.

Globalisation has equally become a “catchword” so much abused in popular discourse that one is no longer sure of its real meaning. Taken in its most ordinary sense—the existence of significant relations between the various regions—globalisation is as old as the world, even if it is agreed that these relations today are considerably more crucial than in the past. But it is certainly even more important to identify the specific characteristics of each of the successive phases of this very long history of globalisation, to analyze its mechanisms, linking the successive forms of globalisation to the social systems of regions in mutual relations.

There existed—at least for the old world of Eurasia and Africa—a system of globalisation that I described and analyzed over the long duration of two millennia, from 500 BC to 1500 AD. The so-called silk roads, transfer of technologies and the spread of religions, testify to the reality of this ancient globalisation. When Vasco de Gama landed on the coast of India in Calicut in 1498, he was surprised to find Christians there. It is known that the Uigurs were Nestorians before being converted to Islam, that Islam
traveled to China and Indonesia, that Buddhism came all the way from the Himalayas to conquer Mongolia, China (for a time), Japan, Sri Lanka and countries of Southeast Asia, that Alexander the Great, then Christians and Moslems found it in Afghanistan.

The globalisation in question—which did not integrate so-called Pre-Columbian America—was very different in the logic of its working from that which subsequently became capitalist modernity. The three “centers” of the old globalisation (the Chinese, Indian, and Middle-Eastern) accounted for 80 percent of the population of the globe. This globalisation was not polarizing in the sense that the development gaps between the various regions were, for the most part, very modest, perhaps not exceeding the ratio of two to one. Furthermore, little stood in the way of upward mobility. It is instructive that the greater part of Europe, which until around the year 1000 was on the periphery of the global system of the time, was able, over a remarkably short period of time—three centuries—to “catch up” to, and even “overtake,” the old centers.

In its modern form, globalisation developed after the industrial revolution which, between the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, marked the beginning of full-fledged capitalism. The mercantilist transition, between 1500 and 1800, can be interpreted from this point of view as the fight between the old (feudal) mode of production and the new (capitalist) one, and also as the fight between the old global system (which swung between three centers: Chinese, Indian and Oriental) and the new system which integrated the Americas and organized the ascendant Atlantic-European center. I will not dwell on this crucial turning point which I have discussed elsewhere.6

The new globalisation—that of capitalism—is polarising. In two centuries, from 1800 to the end of our century, it has been able to reduce the population of the centers of the system—which generally embraces the contemporary “Triad” (the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan)—to 20 percent of the population of the planet. The developmental gap between these centers and the vast regions of the world which have become their satellites, has continued over the last two centuries, to the point that the ratio mentioned earlier (which was two-to-one in 1800) is sixty-to-one today. The polarization that is characteristic of modern globalisation is definitely phenomenal, without precedent in the history of humanity.

The key question this raises is whether this polarization is immanent to the global expansion of capitalism, that is to say, produced by its governing internal logic, or if it is only the result of various concrete, multiple and specific conditions having all, as if by chance, operated in the same direction, therefore making it impossible to catch up. The prevailing discourse does not broach this issue, resting content in repeating ad nauseam that “globalisation offers an opportunity.”

As a counterpoint, I advance the thesis that polarization is immanent to the global expansion of capital. This is because the “world market” in question remains deeply unbalanced by the single fact that it remains truncated. Constantly widening its commercial dimension (trade in goods and services) and the international transfer of capital, this market remains segmented both with regard to labor and international migrations of workers which remain subject to controls. On its own, this truncated nature of the world market is bound to engender polarization independent of the thousand and one concrete specific conditions that, according to conjunctures and policies, can either spur the acceleration of growth here, or slow it down elsewhere.7 Liberal discourse pretends to be unaware of this reality and, as a result, remains inconsistent. A truly coherent liberal should insist on the opening of borders in every dimension. Then, trade, capital flows and migration of workers would create conditions for the homogenization at the world level, of an authentic globalisation of the economy. Marx and Engels thought in 1848 that the bourgeoisie would make it and would have the courage to carry on to the end of its project. They certainly overestimated the historic revolutionary role of this class. The end result was therefore a globalisation of capital and not of the economy, which, on the contrary, differentiates itself in the center/periphery dichotomy that continues to worsen.

The progressive construction of polarization in the real existing world of capitalism also has its own history in which one can recognize stages of its consolidation. During one-and-a-half centuries—from 1800 to 1950—this polarization was practically synonymous with the industrialised/non-industrialised divide, a duality challenged after the Second World War. The Russian revolution from 1917, then that of China, sought both to “catch up” (through industrialisation) as well as construct other social relations inspired by historic Marxist socialism. The political successes of national liberation movements in Asia and Africa, and the Latin American “desarollismo” in
turn, imposed an overhaul of the past scheme of polarization. All are expressions of the revolt of peoples of the periphery, victims of the polarizing capitalist globalization. These are expressions in tandem with more or less radical historical movements in association with more or less revolutionary internal social changes with the objective of accelerating modernization and industrialization.

This string of major changes largely took the center stage of history during two-thirds of our century, testifying to the dominant character of the polarization of modern globalization. This evidence—for me—has nonetheless been permanently forgotten in conventional social thinking, and underestimated, to say the least, in the critical thinking of socialisms and even of historical Marxism.

Dominant capital has been forced by this new relation between social forces more favorable (or less unfavorable) to peoples of the periphery “to adjust.” It did so with success to the point that it has been able “to reintegrate” into the global system societies which, to varying degrees, had attempted to make themselves autonomous. This is a way of explaining the gradual erosion of the Soviet and national populist models. Much closer to the concept of a “capitalism without capitalists” (with regard to the former USSR) or “state capitalism” (with regard to countries of the Third World) than to that of original socialism, the models in question attained their historic limits after having fulfilled their real functions of transition leading to “normal” capitalism.

But the societies in question reintegrated into capitalist globalization without transforming themselves into real new centers equivalent to the historic centers that were always a significant element in their models. The explanation of this reality is certainly complex, varying from one country at a given time to another, and could be subjected to scurrilous generalizations. The internal social, political and ideological dynamics proper to these societies certainly share a major responsibility in this history (or more precisely these particular histories). But I will assert that, beyond these concrete and diverse conditions, two major realities dominated the scene of this history.

The first concerns the shift of the center of gravity of the forces that produce and reproduce polarization. The previous form was industry, which has subsequently been replaced. In its place, I argue that advantages which allow the historic centers (the triad for short) to maintain their dominant positions (in spite of the industrialization of the peripheries) is located in what I called the “five monopolies”: technological initiative, the control of financial flows at the international level (the most internationalized facet of capital), access to the natural resources of the entire planet, control of the means of information and communication, and, last but not least, monopoly of weapons of mass destruction.

Through the use of these five monopolies the triad puts industries of the periphery in positions of sub-contractors, similar to what was, at the dawn of capitalism, the system of putting craftsmen at the mercy of mercantile capital. In the spirit of this analysis, what I called the law of globalized value has passed through successive forms, each specific to the particular phases of polarizing globalization: unequal trade to the phase of the industrial divide, giving way to new forms of extraction of the surplus produced in the “globalized” peripheries. The case of Korea, to which I will return, perhaps illustrates better than any other the nature of the dynamics of the new polarization. This analysis, of course, is in contrast to the rosy “success stories” in which the World Bank specializes.

The second has to do with the persistence of a “reserve” labor force that globalization of the periphery (including socialist states) was unable to absorb. The concept that I propose to consider here is founded on a distinction between two categories of workers: those in efficient, modern forms of production who are, as a result, competitive, and those who are excluded, namely workers in sectors with low productivity. The distinction is certainly relative and sketchy, but significant.

Historical capitalism was able, in these advanced centers (the triad), to gradually absorb the reserve into what I call “the active army.” The thesis of the globalization of developing countries through parallel labor absorption became classic with the work of Arthur Lewis. The conventional thinking—that of the World Bank, for example—never went beyond this. Yet, the facts demonstrate that this absorption is impossible within the context of the prevailing logic governing the accumulation of capital for reasons that are almost obvious. As long as productive forces develop, modernization requires a relative increase of capital and decrease of manpower. This inability of capitalism to absorb a “reserve” that has become a larger proportion of the global population defines the historical limit of this social system, the irrationality of its rationality.
By examining the advance of peripheral societies in industrializing, and the proportion of their mass of “reserve,” one gets a striking picture of the magnitude of the challenge facing humanity as a result of capitalist globalization and the diversity of the forms in which it is expressed.

This challenge also concerns the centers themselves. A reserve army is indeed on the road of reconstitution here for twenty years or so (the unemployed, the poor, the excluded and the marginalized). I will not intervene here in the debate on this set of problems: products of “transitory” changes (even though, persistent over several decades and perhaps affecting a quarter or a third of the population, as could possibly be the case in Great Britain, the “problem” already embracing dramatic dimensions), or a trend that is bound to worsen by reason of the nature of contemporary scientific and technological revolution?

The kind of revolutions that shook the peripheries of the system during the 20th century, and particularly during its second half, their radical nature, led to the constitution of three layers of nations more or less engaged in modernization and industrialization.

The first layer no doubt embraces all the countries called socialist or formerly socialist: the USSR, Eastern Europe, China; South Korea and Taiwan, as well as, to a lesser degree, India and the major countries of Latin America—Brazil and Mexico. These countries entered the industrial revolution, in the sense that they constructed some national productive systems, as a result of which they are either effectively competitive (Korea is the best example) or at least are potentially so (without however, excluding possible involution in real history).

However, none of them has been able to reduce its reserve army in the same proportions to what this reduction was in the centers in their analogous stages of development. It seems reasonable to estimate this reserve at 40 percent for Russia, more for Brazil and Mexico, and at a much higher proportion (in the neighborhood of 70 to 80 percent) for India or China. Korea and Taiwan are perhaps the two exceptions to the rule, which can be explained by some exceptional local and international conditions.

The second layer consists of countries where industries have been established largely by transnational capital, but where it is difficult to identify a national productive system. Some of these dispersed units can be competitive, others not, and the local system as whole is not, or is far from becoming, so. It is difficult to say that these countries have “achieved” their industrial revolution. I group in this category countries of south-east Asia whose capitalism is subject to qualification, not without reason, of “proxy capitalism” (or “ersatz capitalism”), the Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq), South Africa, Turkey and Iran, and some countries of Latin America. Considering a lot of singular data for each of these countries, the aggregate reserve varies between 50 and 70 percent of the population.

The third layer contains countries that have not yet industrialized (sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and some west Asian countries). In these countries the aggregate reserves nearly constitutes the totality of the population.

It will be noticed that my classification is silent on some of the oil producing or mining states whose rentier economy does give the appearance of wealth (in terms of income per capita) simply because they are sparsely populated. Like the American Protectorates of the Gulf, these countries are, in spite of their financial clout, passive participants in the world system, in reality just as “marginal” from this point of view as countries of the third group. Marginalisation, which I have defined in terms of the passive position occupied in the world-system is not synonymous with poverty. This inter-relationship is very evidently predominant, but there are exceptions—the marginalized “rich.”

In fact, only countries of the first order of the periphery try to impose themselves as active participants of the world system, to force centers of the triad to adjust to the exigencies of their development. As we will see, this ambition is bound to occupy a central position in future conflicts.

The analysis that I propose here of modern globalisation seen in its economic dimension, will perhaps now help us see more clearly the complex and ambiguous relations which it maintains with political, ideological and cultural universalism.

iv.

The concept of universalism, which is to say a discourse applied to all humankind and not reserved to a fraction—ethnic or other—of the latter, has an equally ancient history.

What I called the metaphysical revolution, which extends from the fifth century BC to the seventh century AD, was based simultaneously on
the tributary mode of production and the domination of the metaphysical ideology of the age. That Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster are situated in the same century, about 500 years BC, that two centuries later Hellenism produced the synthesis of cultures of the Middle East, thus preparing the terrain for Christianity and Islam, these important facts constitute for me manifestations of this universal aspiration. It nonetheless remains defined within the setting of the tributary society that determines its upper reaches and limits. My thesis on this essential point is that the ideology of metaphysical alienation fulfilled in pre-capitalist societies a dominant function in the reproduction of the legitimacy of power, and that economic life was subjected to the logic of this dominant function. Here, power was the source of wealth, a relationship later inverted by capitalist modernity.

The grand universalism of the tributary age conquered enormous spaces which constituted themselves into distinct cultural areas, but none among them was able to impose itself on the entire planet. One might therefore be tempted to read the history of the two millennia that preceded the formation of capitalist modernity as those of, on the one hand, the class struggle within the tributary social systems in the manner of Marx, and, on the other hand, of the “conflict of cultures” (religions and civilizations) à la Huntington perhaps (with all requisite reservations about the simple and superficial theses of this sociologist of Foreign Affairs). One is bound to assert that the conflicts of the time were far from assuming this dominant cultural dimension. Within the large cultural spaces in question, numerous and diverse political authorities shared and competed for control of the tributary extractions of surplus and their conflicts are those that, in fact, occupy center stage. Even the Crusades, so often presented as an epic battle between Christianity and Islam, were in fact “Frank wars” (as they were called by the Arabs at the time) conducted by feudal lords of the European periphery (mainly France, England and Germany) as much against Byzantium as against the Khalifate. These can be seen as an offensive by an ascendant periphery against the center (Hellenistic Byzantium and the Khalifate) dominant at the time.

The chapter of this phase of universalism has in any case been closed. “The human being makes his history” constitutes the new central tenet of modern universalism. Capitalist expansion has conquered the planet. However, this economic conquest has been far from homogenizing, and has, on the contrary, exacerbated the polarization of wealth. Modern universalism confronts a challenge to which it cannot answer from within its existing framework founded on the accumulation of capital.

The human being that is proclaimed to make his history is, as a result, the European and European alone. Eurocentrism,—this particular distortion of ideologies and perspectives of the dominant world—is not one among other manifestations of the “conflict of cultures.” It is the expression of the contradiction proper to the polarizing expansion of globalised capitalism. Eurocentrism is, as a result, a modern product, a fabrication that goes back again to the 18th century, concomitant with the age of Enlightenment. It has nothing to do, for example, with the vision which Western Christians of previous ages made of “infidels,” Moslem or others. I developed these theses elsewhere concerning the multiple manifestations of eurocentrism, its mythological constructions concerning either the Greek ancestor (and Prometheus), or Christianophilia (the attribution to Christianity in general, or, for example, to Protestantism in particular, in the manner of Weber, specific and particular virtues that all other religions—confused with the “other,” the “oriental” don’t possess) or, in short, pure and simple racism.

The globalisation of real existing capitalism, that is to say of a polarizing system, does not have much to do with its cultural dimensions brought out by the discourse on “the westernization of the world.” Technocrats of the system will always have some trouble understanding that the “global village” is a hollow expression. In fact, behind “westernization” there is in reality a real domination by the culture of capitalism. If I put quotation marks around “westernization” it is because the term is misleading. In fact, the dominant culture of the modern world is not “western,” but capitalist in the sense that the center of gravity around which it is constructed is the economic alienation proper to capitalism. This fundamental character is not inherited from the European past; by inventing modernity Europe broke with its own past.

Nevertheless, the culture of capitalism has been unable to take root in the periphery because the latter are victims of world polarization, the very core of our problem. On the one hand, the main aspect of this culture—commodity alienation—is accepted without question. Protests against it are more pronounced in the richer societies of the center than among the poor of the periphery whose peoples aspire to a little bit of this consumption of
which only the privileged can see the limits. But on the other side, the other aspects associated with this culture—the universal values of capitalism (spirit of enterprise, respect for the law, plurality of opinion) as those of its alternative socialist critique (overcoming commodity alienation, democracy with a social content)—are not generally accepted with ease. Polarization deprives them of all their positive content.

Therefore, depending on the time and local conditions, traumatised societies of the periphery will sometimes lean toward the adoption of values of the capitalist culture in question (democracy and the spirit of enterprise) or of their socialist critique. The disappointment and chaos that unfailingly follow on the failure of the attempts of the liberal bourgeois (or para-socialist attempts) result from the polarization that erases potential progress. This is the case in our moment of crisis, and religious fundamentalism as well as the resort to ethnicism are manifestations of it. The dominant system then tries to accommodate these returns to the past, which do not threaten the real domination of capital in any way, through light and sweet talk in praise of ‘diversity.’ This facile discourse of post-modernism ignores that there are different species of diversity. There is that which focuses on the future and calls for the plurality of the creative faculty for a future that lies beyond capitalism. There are also those sterile variants which focus on past heritage. In one hand you can brandish the symbol of your diversity (the Koran, or the flag of an ethnic group for example), so long as in the other hand you hold a bottle of Coke.

The internal contradiction of capitalist modernity therefore sets the economic dimension of polarizing globalisation against the political project of autonomy of nations of the periphery aspiring to “catch up.” Historically, this contradiction was either exacerbated or attenuated depending on conjunctures, as was the case in the post-Second World War period marked by systems of regulation of the expansion of the market both at the national level and at that of international interdependence.

Three systems then occupied the center stage from 1945 to 1980-1990: the welfare state in the capitalist countries of the center, Sovietism in the East and populist national projects in the Third World. Each of these systems was based on its proper logic of strong regulation of markets, even to the point that the second (the Sovietism) nurtured the illusion of having reduced the sphere of intervention of the market to almost nil. At the level of globalised interdependence, systems conceived at Bretton Woods for the management of the international monetary system and within the context of the UN negotiations concerning trade and investments (notably within the UNCTAD), were also systems for the regulation of globalisation. Countries of the East, without receding into autarky (except when imposed from the outside, as was the case with China from 1950 to 1972), pretended to master their external relations again to a greater degree.

These forms of regulation brought about a generalized upsurge in economic growth and the period witnessed historically unprecedented growth rates in the three regions of the global system: the West, the East and the South. The negative assessment of the period by extremists of neoliberalism—the society of Mont Pèlerin—that speaks “of the failure” of models of the time, or of their “irrationality,” is a completely ideological judgment (in the worst sense of the term) negated by the facts.

The regulations in question did not attenuate the fundamental contradiction of the system between the expansion of the accumulation of capital and the entrenchment of democracy. In the welfare state of the West, the practice of political democracy has been scrupulously respected to a previously unknown degree. But this political democracy was not social except in the sense that it was accompanied by the extension of social rights (type of social security) that avoided the socialization of the control of production as such. It therefore ended up with a manipulative and depoliticizing “massification” that gradually eroded the sense of democracy. In the countries of the East and the South, regulations put in place were also socially oriented in that the economic growth they engendered benefited, to varying degrees, wide segments of the masses. These were accompanied by a near-absolute non-democratic policy. This forceful clamp-down on plurality was legitimized by discourses claiming it was necessary to “develop first,” with democracy to follow in an almost spontaneous fashion. Official ideologues of Sovietism, theoreticians of Latin American “desarrollismo” and politicians at the service of the western powers (symbolized for example by Huntington) were in perfect agreement on this point.

The overall result was therefore the reinforcement of commodity alienation and the destruction of the natural environment. The hopes that the
systems bred in the East and the South would be able to eraze the heritage of polarization were also gradually erased, even though at one time and in certain areas they made it possible to reduce the impact of this polarization inherent to capitalism and “really existing socialism.” Fatally, therefore, illusions vanished, systems were eroded, their legitimacy weakened, enabling the contradiction accumulation/democracy to resurface. The three systems of regulation and the one which operated at the global level to articulate their efficiency attained their historic limits. Their erosion therefore produced an upset in the relationship of social forces for the benefit of capital and the triumph of neoliberalism of the society of Mont Pèlerin. Contrary to the theoretical affirmations of this sect, this change wouldn’t catapult the entire global system toward unprecedented heights, but on the contrary, encapsulate it in a declining spiral of endless crisis.

The challenge cannot be met by a “return to the past,” a “remake” of previous forms of regulation. This does not take into account the critical reading of the post Second World War period that I have just proposed as well as consider the major changes, at all levels, produced by the “success” of the half century of the post-war period (industrialization of the peripheries, democratic aspirations, the questioning of commodity alienation, awareness of environmental degradation, new forms of the law of value, moves beyond manufacturing and Taylorist industrialization etc.). These are the new challenges. They can only be met by looking ahead, toward the future, without nursing a nostalgia for the past, recent or distant.

The collapse of the systems of regulation of the post-war period, which had attained their historic limits, opened a period of crisis of capitalism. The unbalanced power relations in favor of dominant capital, represented by the transnationals, yielded a meaningful rise in the profit margin. This was only made possible on the basis of relatively stagnant global demand, or even contraction, as a result of unequal distribution of income. I dwell elsewhere on issues associated with the system of management of this crisis,17 legitimized by the ideological discourse of neoliberalism, generally called “competitive deflation” and whose constituent elements are well known: monetary policies, fixing of interest rates over those of inflation, budgetary policies aimed at reducing the deficit by curbing expenditure, flexibility of labor, and privatization.

These crisis management policies have a global dimension as they are deployed to enlarge terrain for financial investment, itself turned to as an alternative to the contraction of productive investments. The crisis manifests itself in surplus growth (produced by that of profit) which cannot find an outlet in the expansion of productive investment (for lack of dynamism in demand) in seeking an alternative financial outlet. What is known as financialization of the system (priority given to the protection of financial investment at the expense of productive investment) therefore constitutes a strategy for the management of the crisis in question.18 From this point of view, globalisation (it should be qualified as financial) becomes a strategy, rather than the product of an objective constraint. This strategy of financial globalisation is comprised of equally well known elements: the floating of exchange rates (which gives ample room for speculation), the management of the external debt of countries of the Third World and the former socialist bloc (and at that level the so-called policies of structural adjustment do not deserve their name, since their exclusive objective is crisis management aimed at subjecting the policies of countries concerned to the unique objective of debt serving even at the price of their de-industrialization), the external deficit of the United States. The interventions of the IMF aim to widen the field of this globalised financialization.

Results of this financial globalisation are already apparent. From 1980 onward the international financial transfers curve takes off and detaches itself from the growth of world trade and productive investments. To attribute this take-off to informatics, as is common, does not make much sense. The strength of data processing, which is only a means, certainly reinforces the possibilities of speculation, but it is not its reason; for that a surplus must necessarily exist that can not find a profitable niche in productive investment.

The major part of international financial movements concerns transfers between countries of the triad. This explains why no matter the comparative real interest rates (in the United States, Japan and Germany on which the European union is aligned) and the wide fluctuations of the exchange rate (the dollar to 80 yen or 380 yen!), the American deficit persists, destroying the theory that the meeting of supply and demand of money reveals the “true” exchange rate adjusted to the balances of payments.

Still, a portion of these flows head to the countries of the periphery. Floating capital finds in the periphery opportunities for short-term invest-
ment, making it possible to rifle laboriously accumulated local surpluses, as was the case during the “financial crises” of Latin America (Mexico in 1982, tomorrow Brazil?), of South Africa (following the movement of capital toward this country avoiding Southeast Asia since its crisis of 1997), and could be the turn of Russia and others tomorrow. These capital flows moved toward East and Southeast Asia. The motivations here were more diverse. Strong growth (in China, Korea, Southeast Asia) attracted capital there, nourished by the illusion of prosperity without risk. This strong growth, exceptional at the world level, was nonetheless due, to a large extent, not to deregulated opening up (as the World Bank Reports put it) but instead to the regulation maintained in this region through the management of national strategies. That these strategies were effective and intelligent in the long-run is debatable. Whether they attracted our sympathy or appeared negative in their social and political dimensions are different problems. The attraction of these funds for Asia was reinforced when, as from the 1990s, some of these countries (especially in Southeast Asia) equally took their turn in opening capital accounts. They found themselves further strengthened by the opportunities that would emerge in China and India with the envisaged opening of their accounts.

The influx of capital into Southeast Asia led to a kind of crazy inflation in real estate and stock markets. As the good economists of the region had predicted way back in 1994, this was bound to lead to a financial crisis. These nonconformist economists were ignored; the World Bank and IMF rejected their forecasts through stupid reports of command optimism until the collapse!

The so-called Southeast Asia crisis marks a turning point in the future trend of the management of globalisation. It announces the coming collapse of globalised management of the financial surplus of capitalism in crisis. It is interesting to observe that national governments in the region in question reacted in a manner that has for the first time disproved the certainties of the G7 and the institutions at its service. China and India are, in effect, no longer considering opening their capital accounts; Korea and countries of Southeast Asia are looking in the same direction, that of the restoration of national control over the movements of capital; countries of Latin America and some others, possibly including Russia, could imitate them; and the Non-Aligned movement (NAM) could become “Non-

Aligned on Globalisation.” The G7 was not insensitive to this real danger that threatens to put an end to financial globalisation, retransferring the risks of the depreciation of capital into the triad. Did the G7 not acknowledge that it was necessary to “regulate” international capital flows barely two weeks after the crisis exploded? A few days earlier the same word, “regulation,” was still forbidden. Whoever used it risked being labeled blinded by Communist nostalgia. The chief economist of the World Bank, Stiglitz, followed in these same footsteps in suggesting a new formula for crisis management called a “post-Washington consensus.” Of course these key persons responsible for globalised management initiated only a counter-offensive to enable them remain masters of the game. It is necessary to save capitalism from neoliberalism, declares George Soros.

Indeed the global economic war has begun. The crisis of Southeast Asia, and especially that of Korea, is in fact, in its financial dimension, a minor crisis similar to the many witnessed by Great Britain and France after the war. It has been observed that the “fundamentals” proper to the countries of Asia concerned have remained healthy, and, measured in terms of deficit in proportion of the GDP or durability, the Korean crisis is less severe than that of the United States. And yet dominant capital—backed by the diplomacy of the United States and Japan—is not content with reform proposals appropriate to the problems through the reorganization of the local banking and financial systems for example. They try to seize the opportunity to dismantle the Korean productive system no less, under the pretext that the latter would be dominated by monopolies! The same logic should bring the IMF to oblige the United States—whose crisis is more severe and more profound—to sell Boeing for example (a monopoly, it would appear) to its European competitor, Airbus (also a monopoly!). Mr. Camdessus, irrespective of his French nationality, would be fired by Clinton the next hour if he were to propose a similar solution!

The collapse of the financial globalisation strategy opens a new phase of serious international conflicts. Those who, while analyzing financial globalisation, concluded that the latter would in the end be the harbinger of geopolitical conflicts and perhaps a return of nationalistic affirmations of national sovereignty, were they wrong to have understood the nature of the crisis before others? Of course, the conflicts in perspective are not “conflicts of cultures” à la Huntington, but instead, as always, conflicts of societies. The
major conflict that would probably erupt quickly is that which has already ranged the dominant powers of the triad against those who govern societies of the first order of the periphery. But we can also foresee an amplification of contradictions within the triad, on whose development will depend, to a large extent, the dynamics of the construction of the European Union.

Will these conflicts retain a purely mercantile dimension? Or will the upsurge of the social struggles engendered by the collapse of the management policies of the crisis raise them to significant social and meaningful alternative policies? In Europe, these struggles will necessarily center around the project of the Union to possibly give it a progressive social content. Also, in China, they will lean toward one direction or the other of the national project. I refer back to what I wrote about the various scenarios concerning these two regions whose evolution will play, it seems to me, a crucial role in the next stage both of social transformation and globalization.

In any case, we are entering into a period of conflict and the rise of social struggles. The neoliberal policy of “competitive deflation”—globalization unilaterally regulated by transnationals—financialization is already in crisis. In record time, it has seriously aggravated all social problems that peripheral capitalism had never seriously tackled hitherto: the agrarian question and amplified poverty, social dislocation and exclusion at an unprecedented level, marginalization of countries and entire continents. In the developed capitalist centers, it has brought job insecurity and permanent unemployment back to the fore. As can already be seen, major social movements, as those of the landless in Brazil or unemployed in France have assumed the dimension of a political challenge. These social struggles are bound to strengthen and spread because the inevitable devaluation of capital will give rise to violent conflicts over who pays the bill. The G7 and its instruments (including the military strength of the United States and the media at its service) are already trying to shift the weight of the crisis to the popular classes in countries of East and South Asia. They have already been able through the reduction of the prices of raw materials (oil and tropical agricultural products) to further marginalize the most vulnerable countries of the periphery and to shift onto their peoples the burden of impoverishment of their economies. Tomorrow, they will probably try to shift part of the bills to the pensioners in the private systems of pensions, (in the United States, in Great Britain especially),

because it is less difficult to reduce retirements than wages!

Will it be possible, in such conditions, to develop strategies for common struggles globalised in their own way? Will the reconstitution of a reserve army in the centers themselves, make it possible to create a new popular internationalism? Will the conjunction between the struggles for the democratization of political and social systems in the peripheries and the rejection of the G7 crisis management plans make it? The answers to these questions will depend on the development of the people’s struggles, which, in the final analysis, are the subjects of history.

Certainly it is not useless to propose possible alternatives in order to “move beyond the crisis,” alternatives to the “globalisation” mentioned earlier. The debate around these questions will certainly help the social movements to see more clearly, to formulate more effective strategies. I would say, without mincing words, that it is not difficult to conceive these alternatives on the basis of principles that seem obvious: the regulation of markets at all levels making it possible to return to full employment and the reduction of reserve armies in the periphery, the reorganization of capital markets with the prospect of channelling the latter to productive investment, rebuilding of financial and monetary systems in view of organized rationalization plans creating conditions for a new negotiated globalisation, the democratization of societies and the reinforcement of basic human rights. These changes would certainly require the establishment of appropriate institutions, both at the national level (by inventing new forms of state intervention) and at the regional and international levels. It is not difficult to conceive the modalities on which to base the latter institutions called forth to substitute for the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, nor reforms that could relaunch the UN (in the management of trade and transfer of capital and technology, through a regenerated UNCTAD, for the security of peoples and nations). These alternatives are inscribed in the perspective of the construction of a polycentric world, assuring peoples and nations levels of autonomy that would enhance democratic and social progress.

Difficulties are not situated, in the main, at the levels of “technicality” of the mechanisms and institutions to be conceived. They are situated at a totally different level: What social and political forces are in a position to impose it?
We now come to the conclusion of this presentation of challenges, with a fundamental question: how is history made?

I am not one of those for whom history is a process without a subject. Whether the determinism in question is one of the dominant conventional ideology, expressed in terms of implacable economic “laws” and in the comical case of the neoliberal sect in those of the self-regulated, omnipotent “market,” or be it those popularized by the vulgate of Soviet Marxism, the “diamat,” (the Russian reduction of two qualifiers: dialectical and materialist) or formulated in the more elegant manner of “over-determination” in the manner of Althusser. I belong to those for whom history is a process set in motion by active subjects. This immediately raises two sets of questions: who are the subjects, and how are they active?

Marx was interested in these issues. In the 1848 Manifesto, he described them in terms of rival classes defined by the mode of production: slaves and masters, serfs and lords, proletariat and bourgeoisie. Others have defined them in no less contrasted terms of rival peoples or nations. In fact, the two sets of conflicts—of classes and nations—take center stage. The history of the last two centuries can be interpreted as animated by the workers’ struggle and the struggle of nations victimized by world polarization. In other words, to the struggles waged by “antisystemic” forces since the system is both that of exploitation of labor and inequality of nations. In the vision of historic Marxism of the 2nd and 3rd international, the proletariat became the obliged gravedigger of capitalism. In that of imperialism and Third World nationalism, the dominant people or their dominated victims fulfilled similar functions as major actors in history.

The concept of the subjects of history which I propose is not fixed. These movements are diverse, and do not become active and decisive except for a time, determined by the movement of the contradictions of the system. Classes, segments of classes, groups of intelligentsia, peoples and nations occupy the center stage and determine the general orientation of the system particularly in the times of crisis, of disruption of the logic of its expansion. For example, I would say that the people of Vietnam occupied this center stage when, in the liberation struggle, they were able to overcome the American power and made the American people themselves begin to doubt the moral order on which this power claims to justify its legitimacy.

The determinant active subjects of history are rarely “known” in advance. History is for that reason unforeseeable. Fortunately, neither the history of an individual, nor that of the society is “programmed,” inscribed on Divine Tables, or recorded in genes.

This uncertainty must in turn be explained. I propose at this point the thesis that I described as “underdetermination” (as opposed to “overdetermination” of the Marxo-Althusserian vulgate). In this spirit, I propose to analyze the logics proper to each of the constituent processes of social reality, and to study their specific concrete contents, be it the logic of capitalist accumulation (for modern times), that of a particular type of system of power, or those of ideological and/or religious systems. These logics are not, a priori, either fatally complementary (in conformity with the concept of over-determination of the market discourse), nor necessarily contradictory. A particular consistency is always finally produced in one way or another, determined by the actions of subjects of history. This coherence is ensured by the dominance of a specific logic at a given moment and the subjugation of others. One does not know in advance which of the various possibilities will impose itself. My definition of human liberty is situated in the choice that societies make and that determines the particular coherence in a given concrete society, at a given moment of history. It is not therefore liberty conceived without constraints. Such is my reading of Marx and Engels: human beings make their history, but within the context of objective constraints.

The choice between different possible alternatives—always diverse, but in limited numbers—is permanent. But it becomes decisive in its long-term consequences in certain circumstances which can be said for that reason to be situated at the crossroads. There is certainly some danger in saying that a particular time has a particular nature. I will nevertheless, have the audacity to advance the hypothesis that we find ourselves in such a moment of history, where the better and the worse are both equally possible.

My basic argument is that capitalism, in its development, has passed through two successive phases and that the second has exhausted its possibilities.

During the first phase, that of the mercantilist transition, capitalist social relationships did not generally express themselves through the subjugation of free labor in an enterprise organized specifically to extract more absolute or relative surplus value. The biggest proportion of producers
were at this time the owners of the necessary technical knowledge and even further, to a large extent, formal proprietors of the means of production (which were reduced to handicraft tools). They were subjugated to capital through the market dominated by the capitalist merchants. Putting out was therefore the formula by which merchant capital exploited the labor of small producers. In some cases these were assembled under the same roof of a manufacture which made it possible to control their use of time more thoroughly. The period—be it called that of mercantilist transition or that of the first phase of capitalism—is also the one that Marx analyzed in terms of primitive accumulation: characterized by the violent dispossessions of producers (the enclosures were among the means which have been studied in that frame) necessary for the creation of a “free” labor force forced to sell its labor in the form of wages, or by “putting out.” The articulation of political power and expansion of markets was at the center of the mechanisms of accumulation of the period. Contrary to the imagination of conventional economics, capitalism is not synonymous with “market.” Marx, Polanyi and Braudel have discussed this issue, and produced realistic analyses of this politics/economy relation specific to capitalism that dominant conventional social thought ignores.23

The phase was at the same time that of conflict between the logics of tributary power—in this case feudal in its European form—and those of capitalist power. This was a conflict regulated during the mercantilist transition by the absolute Monarchy of the Ancien Régime and finally resolved with the triumph of the bourgeois revolutions of the Netherlands, England and France.

The second phase is that which I qualify as the full-fledged form of capitalism, simultaneously founded on the bourgeois system of political power (liberal constitutions based on suffrage) and on the industrial revolution. The means of production become a collection of equipment (machines and buildings) outside the reach of artisanal property. Whereas the exploitation of labor had been present throughout the history of humanity, mainly based on the control of access to natural means of production (basically land), henceforth it would be control of this equipment that determined the major form of ownership. Still, over this long period workers remained repositories of the knowledge required to operate the machines. They were skilled laborers close to the engineers, who were few at the time. It took more than one century—until the Taylorism invented in the United States in the 1920s—for the workers to be massively dispossessed of their qualifications. These skills were transferred to an external social body, that of technicians, engineers and organizers of production.

This phase witnessed the establishment of the fundamental character of capitalism, the proletarian/capitalist conflict. It therefore witnessed the birth and the development of the workers’ parties and their struggles to extend the rights limited by bourgeois democracy. Simultaneously the mechanisms of the reproduction of capital assumed autonomy, giving the impression that the “market” dictates its law to both the workers and the employers. I say “impression” because, in fact, these forms of expanded production do not exist outside the social relations in which they are embedded. Therefore, really existing capitalism is unthinkable outside politics and the state. This is why primitive accumulation endured this second phase of capitalism. Primitive accumulation is not specific to the prehistory of capitalism alone; on the contrary, it constitutes a permanent aspect of it. Such is the expropriation which gave birth to oligopolies, whose episodic “anti-trust” promises have never been implemented conscientiously. It is also from the industrial revolution that the center/periphery polarization reached the catastrophic dimensions that I evoked earlier. However, this polarization was not produced by the spontaneous activity of the market, but more so by the political interventions of the states concerned. For this reason, I qualify imperialism as the permanent stage of capitalism. Unequal exchange, particular to this long 19th century, was one of the main forms of this permanent primitive accumulation.

There are many signs indicating that capitalism has entered a third phase of its development, perhaps the phase of its decline: the ongoing scientific and technological revolution, computerization and robotics, decentralization of productive systems (delocalized production, managed from a distance, sub-contracting, etc.), tertiarization and quarterisation of economic life and the decline of the share of industrial manufacturing.

The dominant discourse concerning these transformations proposes that this last transformation by definition brings progress. This appears a simple and naive thesis once one realizes it is not technique that commands history, as McLuhan asserts, but the struggle for the control of the latter, and that the economics which sets the system in motion is itself encapsulated in
social relations. The conjunction of these transformations, whose importance I do not overlook, only indicates that we are indeed at the crossroads and that the alternatives have to do precisely with social relations ignored in the dominant discourses.

The development of historic capitalism is that of the continuous exacerbation of its three contradictions: commodity alienation, global polarization, destruction of the natural base. None of these ongoing changes mechanically imply the reversal of the trends. But each of them could make this reversal possible.

Informatics and computerization on the one hand, the growing centralization of capital on the other, are challenging the concept of value and announce its possible withering away. The near disappearance of direct labor as a result of robotized work processes abolishes the autonomy of every singular chain of production to make it an indissociable element of social production taken as a whole. Besides, the new forms of re-skilled labor amplify interdependence in production, abolish the concept of competitiveness at the level of the productive unit while endowing it with the power that belongs to the society of citizens. This is a concept Marx imagined more than a century ago, announcing the end of the diktat of value and which he described as “general intellect” becomes reality.

This evolution makes it possible to consider new social relations emancipated from commodity alienation, of which the income of citizenship could constitute the first step, starting the long transition to socialism defined as the social mastery of production. But it could equally be maintained in the corset of a renewed alienation, legitimizing inequality both in the distribution of the social product and in the organization of power at all levels, from enterprise to state. In this hypothesis production would remain regulated in appearance by the “market,” in fact by coalitions of dominant capitalist interests. More than ever this capitalism of the third age appears like the antithesis, and not the synonym, of the market. More than ever its reproduction would require the continuous and active intervention of the state, of policies manipulated to serve its interest and the reduction of democracy to the status of decorative rhetoric.

The decline of industrial production in the centers of the system and the explosion of the so-called tertiary and/or quaternary activities are themselves ambiguous. Some of these activities, dictated by scientific progress, potentially hold promise for a better organization of society. One could easily include in this category the more effective equipment, progress in medicine, expansion of knowledge and education. But many other such activities are nothing other than means of organizing the wastage of the surplus generated by the increased productivity of social labor. This wastage is necessary in order to facilitate the reproduction of unequal distribution of income. It also exacerbates mercantile forms of economic management. The “costs of selling”—advertisement and others—are the expressions of such bloated capitalism in decline. One sees that the relative decline of manufacturing industry does not bring the pre-industrial world. Economic activities—including those related to the tertiary and the quaternary sectors—remain more than ever controlled by oligopoly capital whose centralization continues endlessly. Here again one finds capitalism is unthinkable without politics at its service.

At the level of the global system, ongoing changes are bound to further exacerbate polarization. The “five monopolies,” which I explained earlier, are at the root of this aggravation of the trend toward inequality, in spite of the successes of industrialization in the peripheries of the system. However, these monopolies have “extra economic” dimensions ignored by “pure economics.” Their obvious political dimensions, which the arrogance of military superpower calls to mind each day, illustrate once again that the economy is embedded in social relations in which politics constitutes the tip of the iceberg.

In this perspective, capitalist expansion could continue for a long time while drawing from the gigantic reserves I mentioned earlier, by organizing a kind of putting-out system at the global level. This system, which much resembles a kind of apartheid at the world level, maintained by military violence, would certainly have meshed perfectly with the temperament of the departed Adolf Hitler! The global system of capitalism of the third age therefore runs the risk of being nastier than those of previous phases of its development; it also stands to reason that this possibility is not the only one. Peoples and nations of the periphery no longer accept the destruction that polarization represents for them. Bridges can be constructed by establishing an active solidarity between this refusal, on the one hand, and the democratic aspirations of peoples of the centers on the other. Systems of regulation at the global level might then enhance the current potential to
bring positive changes and the progressive reduction of polarization, as well as the construction of a pluricentric world, and the conditions for the long transition to global socialism.

Actually existing capitalism is not the chimerical model of the imaginary of the sect of Mont Pèlerin. It has always been a political and social system in which competition between the owners of dominant capital is embedded, although the competition may take different forms. Power and politics are always there, behind the market. “Normal” reproduction of capital and the so-called forms of primitive accumulation (which imply political and social violence) are always linked. The prevalent rhetoric is used to separate these two faces of Janus, describing as “corrupt” or “Mafioso,” attitudes which are nothing more than the extreme expression of normal competition (which in fact implies the exercise of violence and the abusive use of power). These explosions of rhetoric aimed at legitimizing “good capitalism” replicate themselves regularly, and curiously in moments—such as ours—characterized by the exacerbation of the permanent contradictions of capitalism.

The contradiction from which I began is that between the economic logic of capitalism and globalisation and the emancipatory, democratic aspirations of the popular classes and nations victimized by capitalism. This contradiction remains far from resolved. So long as this contradiction is surmounted by the dominance of the first of its poles, capitalist society will become increasingly barbarous. However, if the second of its poles manages to win out, even if gradually, then the third age of capitalism will become that of its decline, opening the long transition to socialism.  

Footnotes


2. Samir Amin, Spectres of Capitalism, op cit., chap. 2.


4. See my views on modernity and critique of post modernism in Spectres of Capitalism, op cit., chap. 6, bibliography at the end of the book.


16. The formal opposition between “market economies” and “centrally planned economies” should be qualified. See. S. Amin, Spectres of Capitalism, op cit., chap. V.


20. Samir Amin, Capitalism in the Age of Globalisation, op cit., chap. VI.


22. On underdetermination, see S. Amin, Spectres of Capitalism, op cit., chap. III.


24. Samir Amin, Les défis de la mondialisation, op cit., conclusion, Section I.

25. Samir Amin, Spectres of Capitalism, op cit., chap. V.

The great American sociologist C. Wright Mills noted in 1959 that “in our time the problems of Western societies are almost inevitably universal problems” (Mills 1959:164-180). He already spoke of “postmodernity” and pointed his finger to one of the foremost characteristics of contemporary globalisation: the tension between Reason and Liberty. According to Mills, this tension caused malaise and a certain indifference that led to the formation of a “happy robot” in contrast to the Enlightenment model of a creative human being.

Since his time, of course, much has been learned about global processes. Globalisation is seen as a composite of linked economic, political and cultural processes, the fulcrum of which is in Western-American society (Eurocentered). It tends to homogenise, control and subvert those different ways of social organisation with which global elements come into contact. Corporate power, armed might and technological advances originated or established in the West are arrowheads for such expansion.

In the South of the world, where intense and destructive global processes have taken or are taking place, we usually expect more than rational,
technical messages and actions because our collective spirit is strongly rooted in animism, mythology, mysticism and esoteric religions. The main culprits of the material and spiritual annihilation that is so apparent in the southern societies of Latin America, Africa and Asia are well known. Since the 16th century, culture bearers from Europe have imposed Christian beliefs and capitalist principles that in most regions were counterproductive or destructive to the local. This bifrontal good-and-evil legacy created what Wallerstein defined as “our modern world-system.” The secret of the stability of this system, according to him, is threefold: (1) its ability to permit the endless accumulation of capital; (2) to foster an ever-widening class polarisation; and (3) the willingness of the world population to tolerate the anomalies (Wallerstein 1998:46,59).

Colonial cruelties and advantages were later transmogrified as “universalist modernity” or “modernising development,” presented as goals to be pursued and practices to be followed by the peoples of the South. Another folly was that “development” turned out to be a rapacious accumulation of wealth by the well-positioned few, such as multinational corporations and their national consuls, as well as a breeder of misery for the majorities in the “target populations” (Sachs 1992). Many “targets” decided later that they do not want such “development,” and that they prefer to have at least a romantic or humanist recognition of general responsibility for the management of the world, with consequent actions to defend the natural resources, which are full of life-meanings for us in the South.

The resulting situation has induced qualms of conscience because Mill’s Western malaise has given way to a world-encompassing ethos of uncertainty. It has to be understood in space-and-time terms, or SpaceTimes as proposed by Wallerstein (1998), in order to grasp the complexity of the matter starting from its historical roots. Contemporary uncertainty originated in a nasty and brutish reign of violence, vice, consumerism, hunger and poverty imposed on the world on an increasing scale since the wars of the 50’s, accelerated by the dismantling of the welfare state and protective tariffs, and the spread of neoliberal policies. The main victims have been the young (angry and desperate for the lack of future), senior citizens (left aside by the system), women (still frustrated by patriarchy), and destitute groups (open to delinquency). In general, not knowing where we are going and how we are doing makes us uneasy and anxious, hence the uncertainty. Much institutional hypocrisy and policy inconsistencies have resulted thefrom.

Northern qualms of conscience for their part in originating this uncertainty are answered in the South by conscious or unconscious appeals to the local, the particular, and the cultural, and to a respectful recovery of common people’s knowledge. Participatory methodologies of action and research (PAR), originated in the South but disseminated throughout the world, have been developing for these purposes (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991,1998). Global economic activities and “trickle down effects” instigated by “modernising development” have called for southern struggles to defend traditional ways of livelihood, specific natural contours, and spiritual expressions. Then the special, the diverse, the strange or the surprising (to Westerners’ eyes) crop up as they do not fit the imposed, authoritarian or homogenising global processes, and the positivist/Cartesian approaches in social and economic research. Many such cases are cited in PAR publications.

Much is left to curtail the consequent decomposition, corruption, unemployment and the disruption of the social fabric of the South. But in the meantime the South has also moved in various forms into the North. Thus, we are all more and more enmeshed in the same problems. This calls for combined efforts and resources to fill human spaces and needs in time, especially those of the common peoples who have been the main victims.

THE ROLE OF POVERTY

There would have been progress, were it not for the fact that the class polarisation induced by capitalists and neoliberals feeds on poverty and creates unemployment. This is dangerous to all peoples, including the rich, because poverty is an active element of entropy in social systems: societies are becoming self-destructive, as economic “development” steadily demolishes the very resources (natural, social, cultural, human) on which it feeds.

Poverty is measured in terms of per-capita income, but Rahnema (1992:161) calls for our attention to certain qualitative elements that are meaningful and helpful in checking entropy: they are “moral forms of poverty,” those which resist the Calvinist view that poverty reflects personal inadequacy. To counterbalance the destructive effects of greed there appears an ethical reaction to redefine poverty, destitution and ignorance as motors for change. To be poor may not mean to be cheap nor to lead a vulgar life.
But of course there is more. If destructive global practices can be fought with adequate global treatments, then we can look into some hopeful signs in the creation of people’s SpaceTimes in the South that would alleviate critical conditions even beyond poverty.

**FILLING PEOPLE’S SPACETIMES**

For our purposes, people’s SpaceTimes are concrete social configurations where diversity is part of normality, and “where people weave the present into their particular thread of history” (Sachs 1992:112). Local affirmation, collective memory, and traditional practices are fundamental in such SpaceTimes. Here life and cultural identities, mutual aid and cooperative institutions are formed, personality is shaped, and collective rights have priority over individual rights. Hence it is not surprising that many of the mechanisms used in SpaceTimes by the common people to defend themselves are those to which they have had recourse throughout the centuries, mechanisms and practices which they know best for survival in basic struggles such as those for land, power, and culture.

There is one big difference now: Local people are willing and able to articulate assistance from trusted outsiders as their efforts widen in response to the threat of capitalist globalisation as such. Important activities like social movements are then born which leave aside traditional party apparatus and prejudices, and which open the gate to global forces different from those of the greedy economic establishment. They are those forces or initiatives which are expected to support social and economic justice and to foster social well-being, especially among the poor. Let us consider some of these trends and possibilities.

The struggles for territory and natural resources are effective mechanisms in the South for filling such dynamic SpaceTimes with positive potential. They respond to destructive global processes with people’s power built from the bottom up, often with success. They have advanced in the defence of the local environment. But a number of them, those of peasant origin, are now against a wall. In searching for new territory to plant, peasants may fail for the agricultural frontier has stretched to the limit with the impending end of forests which they were compelled to slash and burn. One likely counterright may be to reverse the urbanization trend and induce a return to the land from overcrowded cities—but this time to occupy territory to contest actual landowners, or in new renditions of agrarian reform, in order to increase the production of much needed food.

Social and political movements may grow from the grassroots to macro levels, or mature from protest to proposal by articulating a rather new ecological worldview. For example: in Papua New Guinea, 95 per cent of the population rose to defend their collective lands when the government and others tried to open the gate to privatization. In Uttar Pradesh (India) organised peasant groups won control of forest land. Gaia or Mother Earth is a prime mover for native groups like the U’wa of eastern Colombia. To defend her by heroic acts was the only way to stop the inroads of oil multinationals. The U´Wa readily obtained the help of northern NGO’s which were alert to what was going on.

The successful Uwa event stimulated Indian movements elsewhere, perhaps through Internet connections. In Chile, the Mapuche have noisily gone on a ramp against a foreign energy company that is affecting their lands. In the Amazon, native communities assailed by biologists looking for medicinal plants from which to derive valuable genetic materials and patents are also rising to their defence. The natives count on the help of convergent naturalist groups from the North.

Lumber exploitation furnishes another case for successful popular organisation in TimeSpace. For decades the forests on the Pacific coast of Colombia have been in the hands of destructive national and international companies. Not so much now. People’s space is being provided through an amendment introduced by intellectuals in the National Constitution (1991) for the creation of autonomous Black communities with collective titles to land and forest. The first decision of these communities has been to take effective control of local councils. The companies receded from these areas, as happened in India with the Chipko movement and in Luzon (Philippines) at Bukidnon.

Among the largest organised peasant movements active in the South are those of the tribals of India, and of the Landless of Brazil (Movimento dos Sem Terra). While successive Brazilian governments played with industrial concerns and established gigantic enterprises with global ties, peasants moved in to invade landed estates to grow food, not without considerable casualties. Similar movements for new and old territories have arisen in Zimbabwe, New Zealand, and Australia.
The struggles for political power are other important mechanisms in the South to gain SpaceTime. The historical contribution of Mahatma Gandhi in these respects should be remembered. Bloody conflicts linked to international armamentism often thrive. People’s SpaceTimes are filled with weapons and a culture of death. Narcotics production and trade erases national boundaries and builds autonomous power structures and territorial units. Agents of death multiply in these circumstances as well as in others where exploitation weakens communal life. Horrendous mass displacements may take place. But even in such adverse circumstances the common people are able to defend themselves with cooperative practices and they succeed in building countervailing forces. Experiments of direct, libertarian or anarchist participatory democracy are tried in these new territorial units, owing to the power vacuum left by the State or the illegitimate violence of government agents sent out to fill it sporadically.

The best known case of such conflict today is in Chiapas (Mexico) where charismatic leaders have been able to articulate a program of reforms with the unusual motto, “Let us lead by obeying.” With this mandate and intense Internet support, they undermine NAFTA economic claims and create a critical mass of national and international democratic groups. The Zapatista movement punishes local vested interests, reaches other parts of the country and recruits middle class members with its insistence on social values. Similar cases of people’s movements challenging power structures with direct democracy can be observed in Indonesia, South Africa and Mozambique.

The struggles for cultural recognition seek alternative definitions of “good life” as well as people’s affirmation of identities within geocultural boundaries. In this way the people counteract homogenising global processes (Esteva and Prakash 1997:285). An interesting case from this standpoint is the young Australian Aborigines who have used music to fight alienation and alcoholism, and regain their human dignity. By combining rock rhythms and recovered native songs and instruments, the youngsters have produced a special fine music that went beyond the local and received national and international awards. Colombians at present suffer daily doses of violence; we bear them by dancing “paseos” and “salsa,” and our mass meetings are always enlivened by popular music. Socialism may still be saved by the songs composed and sung by the young generation of revolutionary Cuban balladeers. Art produces the emotional strength necessary for continuing the struggle.

Mass demonstrations in Ecuador have been rooted in the renewed value of cultural traits such as native dress, language and food. The recovery through PAR techniques of historical figures of popular origin (among them great women leaders), usually forgotten by official history, have proven to be basic in feeding rebellions in several regions.

When well motivated, educators are bearers of messages that resonate in people’s TimeSpace. Their recent innovations have been supported by three idea-forces: (1) awareness-building on social realities (from Brazil); (2) action learning to link the schools with local communities (from Australia); and (3) training of teachers as researchers (from England). This intellectual tripod has been tremendously effective in the South, though with painful human losses caused by repression and paramilitarism. Today some of the largest social movements and trade unions are formed by active teachers.

Religious beliefs are acknowledged to combat anguish and uncertainty. The results vary from the activism of Christian Base Communities, as in Brazil, Haiti and the Philippines, to the passive otherworldliness of some evangelical sects. Hindus and Buddhists have shown both accommodating and bellicose attitudes regarding people’s movements in Asia. Islamic and African expressions likewise. Yet cultural/political symbols like Father Camilo Torres and Cardinal Helder Cámara, in spite of papal bulls, are still alive and remembered for their sacrifices in taking the side of the poor. Doubtless the weight of the religious factor as culture builder is fundamental for cementing necessary changes as we have seen in the resulting movements.

**Reason and Heart**

With the brief presentation of these three classical but renovated types of people’s struggles—for territory and natural resources, for political power, and for cultural defence and recognition, some deductions can be made about global social mechanisms and actors for filling people’s SpaceTimes.

In the first place, there is some mounting assistance from North to South by converging antisystemic forces of NGO’s, political parties, think tanks, some governments, and critical institutions. This is significant for it
demonstrates unexpected global or international countermovements to the negative global trends imposed by corporate abuses and capitalist practices worldwide. Such corrective trends appear to be increasing, which makes us feel that globalisation is becoming a differentiated social system. It should be qualified theoretically to specify both its evident negative effects as well as possible positive aspects it may be assuming for the sake of common people’s progress, though these aspects are presently less visible.

Secondly, modern traits introduced in southern communities may not be rejected in toto by the people. As just suggested, outside elements and allies may be felt necessary to improve local conditions and to stop shared enemies like nuclear plants, dams, and harmful installations (e.g. Bhopal, India). There is an assimilative process of the novel with indigenous cultures and knowledges. This is a process now called “hybridity” but it is nothing new as it appears to form part of local defence tricks since the times of the first European expansion. It is one reason for the amazing centuries-old survival of our persecuted cultures. This is confirmed, for example, by the adoption of the video camera by the Kayapos of Brazil, an Amazonian tribe that has succeeded in establishing strong relations throughout the world for the protection of biodiversity and environmental conditions threatened by gold miners.

The extended use of electronic information networks in the South—which cover a great variety of activities—also proves the openness to adopt favorable technical novelties. International ties and support have proven positive for local struggles such as those at the Narmada dam in India.

Thirdly, flexible concepts such as “participation, modernity and development” (even with their adjectives: sustainable, participatory, integral, etc.) have to be deconstructed in order to distill from them those negative ideological characteristics which make them alien and damaging to the southern peoples (Escobar 1995). There has been “maldevelopment” favoring only the best-positioned minorities. Care should be taken for blind imitations of incongruent ideas originated in institutions and practices of advanced countries; popular resistance in the South hinges often on the impact of such practical incongruences at the local level. Besides, although we know better how to induce people’s empowerment and self-reliance through participatory techniques, there is also the danger of cooption of the concept “participation” to replace the discredited “development” on the part of dominant agencies and regional governments which instead may be attempting “incorporation or manipulation” (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991).

Fourthly, hybridity fortunately may not affect southern views of spirituality, cosmology, imagery and mythical traditions. Magic and myth are still resilient, as in the use of shamans’ practices to aid land take-overs. This is extended to music, wit and humour, something that staid Western researchers or activists may often miss. In short, these heart-felt elements represent an effective counterhegemonic force to balance the materialism and instrumental reason carried along by destructive global agencies.

As a general conclusion, affective responses of the local people of the South to the inroads of globalisation are rooted in equally cosmic phenomena linked to the reproduction of life and culture in their infinite specific expressions. This is a human survival problem. If global winds are unstoppable because of power manipulation and communication techniques, there still can be room for those winds which favor the vital defence of the particular and the diverse.

Therefore the most successful ways to fill people’s SpaceTimes in the South at present, are those which convert cultural elements into political and economic actions. Culture coupled with spirituality are good starters to overcome the present ethos of uncertainty. Despite the heavy assault from globalisation, local reserves of common sociability and solidarity fortunately continue to exist and show resistance in grassroots communities, villages, hamlets and slums. Specific or local cultural expressions still have the capacity to resist and to subvert the axioms of capitalism and modernity, as well as to value economic needs and opportunities in terms other than the tyranny of the profit motive and the market principle.

For these reasons the least that one could expect from corporations and other exploiters (in the South as well as in the North) is that they should stop irrational and/or usurious accumulation—this is a self-defeating crime against man and nature that is already showing the entropic fatigue of dominant capitalism. Exploiters should exercise fair play in their enterprises, in the sharing of wealth, in the payment of wages, and in offering satisfactory work conditions so that people’s SpaceTimes would not be filled by hate, resentment and violence as is the case today in countries where savage capitalism and neoliberalism rule.

But is it possible to see such economic flesh-eating tigers willingly con-
verting to vegetarianism? Can globalisation reconcile with diverse interests and incline toward the good for the collectivity? Virtual projection might foresee societies with enough abundance for all, as it is technically feasible. Yet there would be a period in which coercion for justice might be necessary, so that confiscatory measures or world taxes could be imposed on corporations and billionaires who defy the healthy principle of parsimony. An acute sense of justice and ethics from dominant groups and institutions is indispensable for creating stable better living conditions in the South as well as a better world for everyone.

As for pertinent methodological aspects, studies presented at the 1997 PAR World Convergence Congress showed solutions in at least three significant directions: (1) to recognise the role of combining people’s knowledge and academic knowledge in popular struggle and in other activities, which may furnish the basis for a new and useful scientific paradigm; (2) to practice in such a way that it gives a moral and humanist orientation to the work of the activist/researcher; and (3) to gain a sense of personal commitment that combines the logic of action and the logic of research. In short, an urgent need to resurrect altruism and solidarity as dominant ways of life was felt in the South as well as in the North, and to build a new brand of ethnogenesis to provide for greater happiness (Fals Borda 1998: 218-219).

Survival for the pursuit of Liberty and Happiness involves less inconsistencies, less arrogance, and more than instrumental reason. Generosity and a political will are also needed. The situation calls for the heart as much as for the head of the rich and poor. Hands and minds should move in tandem in a new world alliance to reconstruct societies through humane globalising initiatives.

REFERENCES


The work of Immanuel Wallerstein has been criticized by certain anthropologists for not having taken culture into proper account. He has been accused of the sin of political economy, a not uncommon accusation, a reflex of the 80's and post-80's anthropological jargon that might finally today be exhausted. Years earlier a number of social scientists were engaged in a critical assessment of the social sciences from a distinctively global perspective. Wallerstein, Frank and others were at the forefront of this critique which had a powerful impact on anthropology. The global perspective was not a mere addition to anthropological knowledge, not a mere of extension of the use of the culture concept, i.e. before it was local and now it is global, before culture stood still, but now in the global age, it flows around the world. It was a more fundamental critique, or at least it implied a more fundamental critique. This critique could only be attained from a perspective in which the very concept of society was re-conceived as something very different, as a locus constructed within a historical force field which was very much broader than any particular politically defined unit.

The world system perspective grew from several different sources. Wallerstein and others argued that no understanding of the history of the West could be attained without understanding the relation between regions. This was a crucial rewriting of the history of the last 500 years. It was more, however, since it said something crucial about capitalism that was often for-
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gotten by ideologists of various persuasions. The control over the way in which wealth circulated, the way it was accumulated, the destiny of any particular area or country, was not simply a reflex of local production and consumption. On the contrary, any particular locale was dependent upon the way it related to the larger arena of the total economic process.

Now there are surely differences in the particular interpretations of history involved here. There are those who would see the world systemic or global as something essentially modern, there are those who would push it back to the Medieval world with its Middle Eastern, Indian and Chinese centers, and there are those who would push it back to the Ancient world, even 5000 years. The questions: are we still talking about capitalism in all of this? is there not a fundamental difference between mercantile systems of the past and the modern world system? are there parallels, at least, between such systems if their dynamics are not identical? These are all unsolved questions under debate, questions that may lead to important progress in understanding the history of the world.

With all these differences, however, there is something common in this perspective. The commonality is, in fact, twofold. First it is a realization that the conceptual structure of social sciences needs to be revised in order to account for the global nature of social reproduction. The second is the imperative need to deal with the radical issue of people’s control over their conditions of existence which is so critically recast in the world system perspective. From “socialism in one country” to survival in any country is the issue that bears down on those who urgently sense that something has got to be done.

The globalization framework has a very different origin. It is best described as a self-reflective awareness that something new has happened. In all of its various forms it tends to insist on the specificity of the present, often in unabashedly evolutionist terms. Before we were local but now we are global. The global is seen as a new level of social, economic, political integration that has now, finally, been attained. There are various prototypes, from business economics (Ohmae 1990) to cultural studies, especially of the post-colonial variety. The movement from local to global, from national to transnational is an additive process that acts upon former structures, dis-integrating or otherwise transforming them. They lose their power and significance as organizers of social existence, of if they don’t, they should and

shall. The TNC’s take economies out of the hands of the state, just as the global media, and transnational populations take social organization out of the hands of the nation. Below I shall discuss this as an ideological transformation rather than a scientific discovery. The reason for this is that the discourse of globalization appears as the immediate product of a growing awareness by intellectual and other elites that something has happened and not the result of serious research. This does not detract from the value of this awareness, but it requires that we situate the awareness socially and attempt to account for its appearance as well as seriously considering those aspects of reality which it claims to represent.

The fundamental difference between global systems and globalization approaches is that the former represents a theoretical framework within which the institutional structures of the world are themselves generated and reproduced in global processes which are not something that is a result of the past few decades of “evolution” but which are structural aspects of all social dynamics, while the latter is a historical or developmentalist image of a contemporary change. For example, to claim that culture today flows across the world, filtered through states, markets, movements and everyday life (Hannerz 1992), is to assume these structures are the units between which flows occur and are not themselves structured and transformed by global relations. If the latter were the case then the global flow model could not be expressed in such terms.

OUT OF ANTHROPOLOGY: ETHNOGRAPHY AND GLOBAL SYSTEMS

From an anthropological perspective, the discovery of the global dimension was quite revolutionary. After all, the ethnographic enterprise was predicated on the self-sufficiency of the local in explanatory terms. Several generations of anthropologists were imbued with the notion that the field of fieldwork was all that was necessary to accede to an adequate understanding of the other. When we embarked upon the critique of the local in global terms, it was precisely because we had come to an understanding that the very constitution of local situations in the guise of communities and societies was only adequately accounted for in terms of a larger set of relations. If the very constitution of the social—not merely certain institutions, but the very forms of sociality in a social field—is dependent upon larger processes of the global system, then the notion that society is the sufficient explana-
thing that has happened, not about the basic nature of social realities. It does not propose a novel approach to the social, but instead proposes that the world has changed. This is apparent in so many of the texts whose underlying discourse is predicated on a transition from the local to the global, from the national to the transnational. This perspective is not focused on underlying structures, but on directly observable or experienced realities. It is about transnational phenomena as such, behavioral “transnational connections” of various kinds, about the movement of goods, people and information, not about the nature of such movement. This is why such discourse so often concludes with the simple statement of the existence of global realities and with its moral implications. Globalizers often seem, for clearly ideological reasons, to be very much taken by the novelty and liberation involved in the mere existence of globality. After all it would appear to be liberating for those who write about it in such terms. In a more general sense, however, globalization can, as I suggested above, be understood as the analogue of structural functionalism to global system theory’s structuralism. This is because of its pre-occupation with events and happenings and behavioral relations. But the analogy stops there since it is not terribly interested in discovering abstract principles of the observed realities.

Here another approach seems to have colored globalizing anthropology, one dependent upon Geertz’s textualization of the culture concept (1973). The latter assumes the objectivity of the “other” as text, which can be read by the anthropologist without the benefit of the “other’s” intervention. Culture is read over other people’s shoulders. The eye of the observer becomes supreme in this kind of anthropology. It is the other for-us, the other as part of our experience which becomes the core object of analysis. This is how such posited realities as hybridity, creolization, and the like can emerge. These are the ethnographic “realities” that form the cultural mainstay of globalization. If the city landscapes in Stockholm now combine ethnically and linguistically mixed populations and store signs in American English, if we observe (at the airport) the Nigerian, Congolese or Papua New Guinean sporting a can of coke and a hamburger...is this to be interpreted as creolization in the sense of cultural mixture? Is it to be interpreted as hybridity in the sense of the liminal sphere between the modern Western and the pre-modern, non-Western, assuming that the other is associated with a whole array of pre-modern behaviors and representations of reality (Can-
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cliní 1995)? What is really going on in such referred-to realities? Does anyone have to ask or is the observation enough. What about other peoples' experiences, intentionalities and lives? Are not such hybrids defined as such because they seem to be betwixt and between our own "modern Western" categories, i.e. hybrids for us? This, of course, is not merely a question for global anthropology, but is a more serious issue of method. The tendency to substitute one's own experience for those who we are supposed to be studying has not been discussed with respect to the anthropology of globalization. With all the discussion of ethnographic authority, with multivocality and multi-siting, there is a certain disinterest in what kind of knowledge we are aiming for. This can be concretized in terms of the different kinds of questions that can be asked of informants or of the field within which informants may make their lives. Questions of the type: how do you do that? Whom do you marry, why do you adopt your own grandchildren? etc. Such questions elicit a certain frame of reference in the responses, one that takes the form of abstract formulations with generalized we's and I's. Very different kinds of responses are elicited by longer term and more intimate contacts, what, in clearer fashion, is present in some of the more phenomenological anthropological work and even sociological work of the past and present (Mannheim 1982, Kapferer 1998, Csordas 1994). The difference between these two kinds of anthropology is not a trivial matter. It is the difference between an anthropology that strives to grasp the living experience of others and one that is content with our objectified aspects of those other lives. The presence of other people's voices is of course an important aspect of the necessary breakdown of an ethnographic authority that was itself a structure of global hegemony. But the other voices must include more than simply objectified knowledge if we are to grasp what other lives, or any lives, are about.

GLOBALIZATION AND ETHNOGRAPHY

There is an important connection between current versions of globalized anthropology, the way in which communication is carried out and the kinds of knowledge that are ultimately produced. The current interest in globalized objects and the identification of other people's identities as creole and/or hybrid exemplifies this linkage between superficiality and globality. When I have questioned whether or not the subjects described as creole or hybrid actually experience themselves in such terms, or in terms that are easily interpreted as such, I am usually told that this is a question of objective culture and not of experience. That is, global cultural products are like texts that already contain their meaning before the reader engages them. I find this a quite disconcerting understanding of cultural process. This is a notion in which meaning is actually objective, and can therefore be read by the anthropologist without reference to the subjects whose worlds we are describing. Can this actually be the case? To some extent it is implied in a strongly textual notion of culture and is an extraordinary demonstration of ethnographic authority. This authority is explicit, it assumes that culture can be read, and reading is indeed the metaphor of the authoritarian observer. No need to ask, to engage the other, certainly not to participate, as in participant observation. One need only participate to the degree that it avails one of a good spectator seat, i.e. a good place from which to observe, for reading is a kind of observation. It assumes that meaning is thoroughly public and objective and thus requires no intervention on the part of the "native". The understanding of culture as public text was first emphasized by Geertz, but has become an implicit assumption for many. And while Geertz himself has been concerned with the understanding of other people's construction of selfhood and inspired many an anthropologist to embark on such understanding, it is difficult to understand how his insights into the Balinese person as mask with nothing behind it could have been attained. Thick description, of course, implies that meanings are subtle, but it is not clear how one can arrive at such understanding by means of mere observation, or at least it would be interesting to know what ought to be observed to arrive at deeper conclusions concerning other people's experience of the world. The recent critique by Unni Wikan (1995) demonstrates that a deeper understanding can be arrived at by engaging with other people in a more intensive way. Whether one agrees or not with her interpretation is beside the point. What is crucial is that she argues directly from the combination of social practices and social discourses and representations. From here it is possible to maintain a dialectical and detective like procedure in trying to grasp other strategies and constructions of life worlds.

In the aftermath of Geertz and quite to his own apparent consternation (1988), there has been a postmodern (or at least post-Geertzian) question-
that other people have within that world. Second, there are aspects of other worlds, those which may also be part of our own (global systemic) reality, that can only be accessed by means of a series of analytical and hypothetical propositions since they are not available to consciousness except via their effects on people’s lives.

This kind of discussion has not been taken up recently within anthropology. Rather the issues have remained focused on the question of authority itself, on the questions of voice and location. They have been very much assimilated by the experiences of anthropologists themselves, experiences that dovetail more generally with those of many intellectuals and academics (not necessarily the same thing) as well. This has led to the conflation, delineated above, between the experience of the observer and that of the observed. And it is this which has become the mainstay of much of the globalization literature. The latter consists primarily in statements based on external interpretation, not least of the meaning of events and objects. This is the basis of the discourse on hybridity with a few exceptions. It is significant that much of this discussion is itself focused on objects, not often objects at an exhibition. Clifford’s analysis of anthropologist M. O’Hanlon’s Paradise: Portraying the New Guinea Highlands, the catalogue of which is published by the British Museum, deals with the way in which local traditional objects are mixed up with western consumer goods (Clifford 1997). Foster (1999) has also discussed this in a recent article, namely the way in which a traditional shield in the exhibit can be decorated with the logo of South Pacific Lager. It turns out that there was a specific motivation for this hybrid product; that the designer “had been asked by senior men to incorporate a representation of a beer bottle on the shield, to make the point that ‘it was beer alone which had precipitated this fighting,’ and the question that springs to mind is what was this all about” (1997:68). Drunkenness was directly involved in the conflict that inspired this shield. One might well have made a more intensive study of the way in which shields are decorated in order to grasp the way in which motifs are incorporated, i.e the way in which the “modern” might well have been a totally irrelevant property of beer in the process of creating the shield. Is this a question of hybridity in the sense of fusion and mixture, or of a very specific and motivated articulation, one that does not leave the experiential world of the creator but seems
“matter out of place” to an anthropologist dependent on an idea of culture as text, i.e. as objectified meaning? Foster suggests, following Marcus (1995), that to arrive at such understanding we need to “get up and move out of intensively investigated single sites” (Foster 1999:144). But it is precisely the de-intensification of ethnographic praxis that enables us to substitute our own experience of the object for that of those whom we are purportedly trying to understand.

**THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION**

A solution to this problem can only be worked out at the theoretical level. We must propose the kinds of relations we should expect to find linking global processes and the production of cultural form. This requires, in its turn, that we examine more closely the nature of cultural production itself rather than simply assuming that culture is a substance or thing in itself that can, as a result, move in global flows. Culture is attributed meaning and must be actively maintained as meaning in order to continue to exist. This aspect of meaning is not often taken seriously, since meaning is often stabilized in institutional forms related to the stabilization of communication itself. Any archaeologist knows that meanings cannot be read from remains without making all kinds of assumptions of equivalence to some given scheme of established interpretations. What is it that makes such attributed meaning *shared meaning* is a complex issue, related to the way in which social worlds are organized and enforced for larger groups of people. Power is converted into authority and the latter into forms of socialization; the formation of subjects and of subjective experience. Such processes are incomplete since the activities involved do not occur in a vacuum devoid of other intentionalities. However, such processes do create a field in which shared experiences and shared modes of meaning attribution are effected. Such fields might be said to be fields of resonance in which what Mannheim referred to as conjunctive communication can occur. Such fields are hierarchical. They are also the fields within which shared cultural forms are created.

This might appear to be an argument for the local basis of cultural production, and this does not seem to square with globalization. After all most of the phenomena of world culture, from pop music to clothing styles, to green movements and popular cults, are not apparently based on the kind of shared experience that is formed in delimited fields of social interaction. This is an important issue and a two tiered analysis: First, one must ascertain to what degree the same meanings are being attributed to the same phenomena and/or objects in the global arena. Second, one must ascertain the ways in which there might be said to be overlapping resonances or analogous experiences being produced that allow a broader possibility for identification of the same things in the same way. There are serious sociological issues here: for example might it be argued that similar kinds of youth cultures are produced in the Caribbean and in the Anglo-American dominated areas of the Pacific that make reggae a formidable powerful attractor and that these are related to the forms of social transformation that have occurred in both places? While the two worlds that became articulated to capitalist modernity might be very different, and this accounts for difference in the original musical forms in the two areas, it could be that more general properties of those worlds, such as egalitarian village structure lacking autonomous political structures, with strong forms of pooling rather than exchange, with a certain similar form of oppression by white colonial society all might have come together to produce a “structure of feeling” which enables such trans-oceanic musical resonance. This kind of approach, in any case, would seem to be more interesting than simply saying that the cultural item, reggae had become global by moving around the world on the sound waves. There are certainly more important questions to be understood here.

The argument for the centrality of socially shared experience and its constitution is not an argument against globalization, of course, but an argument for a more systemic understanding of the latter as a cultural process. By not assuming that cultural meaning is a substance (a curious essentialist tendency among globalization “theorists”) by deconstructing it, it should be possible to then reconstruct the way in which it is constituted by others in the global contexts of their particular existences.

**CULTURAL TRANSNATIONALISM AS IDEOLOGY**

One of the reasons that the cultural is taken for granted among cultural globalizers, is that it is an instrumental part of the very identity of those who hold this approach. This identity is not an artificial construction as such. It is based on a very real experience of the world, but it is a specific sector of the world, a sector of cosmopolitan movement, an elite transnational world. It
can in itself only be understood if we take a broader view of the transformation of the world system today. While all academic discourses are situated and can be subjected to ideological analysis, in the case of the globalization literature this is much more obvious simply because there is a surprising lack of empirical research involved. The discourse is best characterized, instead, as authoritarian and often implicitly—and even explicitly—normative (Appadurai 1996). This is a style that is fully consistent with a self-relegated authority in which description and interpretation are merged. Never is a hypothesis suggested! Rather, reality is simply defined in a certain way dependent upon the author’s experience of everyday life (rarely) or films and other media (more generally). This is fully consistent with the textualist bias in both cultural studies and anthropology. The research of others may well be used to make an argument but it is often purely illustrative rather than openly interpretive. Appadurai’s recent discussion of violence in relation to globalization is a case in point (1998). Using selected examples it is proposed that violence is a means of eliminating ambiguity, “matter out of place”, foreigners who look like nationals, the liminal products of migratory hybridization. Now while there are significant cases of military questioning of busloads of short Tutsi or tall Hutu as well as their murder, it is not at all clear that this is about the fear of mixture in itself. On the contrary there is evidence that it is the fear/hate of the other as such and that the ambivalence is a mere problem of identification. After all most of the people killed in ethnic warfare are quite clearly identifiable. Appadurai’s cavalier use of the material to which he himself refers is evidence of the conflation of interpretation and description.

The argument that seems to organize the discussion is that globalization is producing a world of hybridity which is causing reactionary violence on the part of those who would continue to maintain a belief in ethnic purity or ethnic absolutism as it is fashionably called today. An author like Hannerz (1992), more aware, perhaps, of the problem of the empirical material, avoids this problem by qualifying practically all his statements to the point of extinction. Thus, in an article on the withering away of the nation, we are informed after many meandering words that the nation may not be disappearing, but it is in any case changing. Such breathtaking risks can only be understood as a kind of fear of theoretical flying. Appadurai is quite the opposite, predicting the evolution from a national to a postnational world, an evolution that is bound to be bloody but which in the end shall free us all from that old fashioned institution, replaced at last by the cultural freedom afforded by diasporas! While this is not presented as a hypothesis and with little argument to back it up, it does have the quality of being falsifiable on several counts, not least the assumption that all’s well that ends well, as if we were fast approaching the end of history, the multicultural diasporic and hybrid world of globalized capitalism. Why we should feel safe in our diasporas is difficult to understand, and why majority, non-diasporic, populations, should be defeated by these new transnationals, and why all this appears as brand new is also quite strange given the evidence that some aspects of globalization, the most powerful economic aspects have been coming and going periodically for a very long time. There is, in fact, some evidence that we may well be in the midst of a period of contraction.

The core of transnationalism appears to be a will and desire to transcend boundaries and everything that they represent in the form of closure, locality, confinement, terms that are associated with backwardness, provincialism and curiously a lack of culture, supposedly in the sense of cultivation. This model is one that polarizes the cosmopolitan with respect to the local and defines the former as progressive, as the future of the world, as the civilized while relegating the latter to the barbaric, the red-necked, the reactionary and racist. This polarity is not a recent invention, but is very much part of the cosmological structure of the global system. Its historical appearance might be said to be salient in periods when real polarization occurs, when global elites exit in theory and practice from the local and national fields in which they were previously embedded.

GLOBALIZATION, CLASS AND CULTURE

A global systemic anthropology should aim at understanding both the world and the cultural identities and derivative discourses that are generated by the structures of that world. In several recent publications (1999a, 1999b) I have suggested that there is a dual process involved in the current process of globalization. The first of these is a decline in centrality or hegemony in the world system, a decline expressed in the weakening of the nation states of the former center of the world system, i.e. in the West. This has been accompanied by the disintegration of the Soviet Empire as a hegemonic structure and of some of the weakest links in the world system, espe-
cially Africa. While there is a great deal of variation involved, this process has involved massive decentralization and the emergence of new or renewed politicized identities. It has also involved massive disorder and dislocation of populations, and a resultant mass migration to traditional centers that are now facing their own internal crises. The most general property of this new disorder is expressed in a wave of ethnification resulting in a cultural and political fragmentation of formerly larger units. The ethnification consists in a strong re-identification that is clearly advantageous for those who so identify but also increases the conflict potential in the larger world. The rise of indigenous movements, regional movements, immigrant minority politics and increasing nationalism are all in such terms expressions of the same transformation-fragmentation process of identification in the world arena. While this was occurring in the relatively “declining” areas, the rising areas of the world system in East and Southeast Asia demonstrated an opposite rise of national and regional identities, a new modernism and a decline, often forced, of minority politics. This is not to say that minorities disappeared, but that their political demands were either accommodated by successful integrative politics or simply ignored or even suppressed. That this process has been reversed in the current Asian crisis is well exemplified by the rapid increase of ethnic conflict in Indonesia after many years of relative peace and by the apparent liberation of East Timor after years of attempted integration.

The hypothesis involved here is simply that areas rising in the system tend to become increasingly centralized within delimited zones (national states, territorial states) with an accompanying decline in sub-state identification, and that the reverse occurs in periods of loss of global position. This hypothesis refers to specific tendencies in a complex reality in which there are other forces that might offset such tendencies. For example there is presently a regionalization in the world that is part of the process of economic globalization that may be crucial in understanding the tendency to a three-way division of the world among the EU, NAFTA and APEC as competing potential hegemonic zones. This must be seen, of course, against the background of the dual division of the world that arose out of the Second World War and of the virtual monopoly of the United States as Western hegemon until the 60’s. The change involves a combined fragmentation in former centers and weak links and a consolidation in new rising zones.

Localization in such periods becomes increasingly transformed into a real Indigenization combining often competing positions, indigenous, national and regional. Indigenization is a process of rooting and is a general process of identification (as we shall see below) that is not dependent upon whether or not one is indigenous in terms of standard definitions. In global perspective, there is not that much disagreement today concerning the fact that the formerly homogenizing Western world, the former Soviet Empire and the weak link, Africa, are pervaded by a plethora of indigenous, regional, immigrant, sexual and other cultural political movements aimed at a kind of cultural liberation from the perceived homogenizing force of the state. In a certain perverted sense this is as true of the new elites as of the regional minorities, but in very different ways. The rise of indigenous movements is part of this larger systemic process, which is not to say that it is a mere product in a mechanical deterministic sense. There are two very different but related aspects to this process. The social process consists of the disintegration of homogenizing processes that were the mainstays of the nation state. This has led to increasing conflicts about particular rights and of the rights of “particular” people, a real conflict between individual vs. collective rights and of the national vs. ethnic. Cultural politics in general is a politics of difference, a transformation of difference into claims on the public sphere, for recognition, for funds, for land. But the differences are themselves differentiated in important and interesting ways, not least in relation to extant structures of identification. Both regional and indigenous identities in nation states make claims based on aboriginality. These are claims on territory as such, based on a reversal of a former homogenizing situation that is re-defined as conquest. Roots here are localized in a particular landscape. There are important ambivalences here; all nationals can also be regionals and many nationals can identify as indigenes. All of this is a question of the practice of a particular kind of identity, an identity of rootedness, of genealogy as it relates to territory. It is in the very structure of the nation state that such identities are defined as prior identities. No nation state can logically precede the populations that it unified in its very constitution. This, of course, is a logical and not an empirical structure. There is no guarantee that the nation state did not itself generate regional identities. In fact much of the “Invention of Tradition” tradition consists in arguing precisely in such
terms. Just as colonial governments created regional and state-to-be identities in Africa, so did nation states create regional minorities at home. What is overlooked in this intellectualist tradition is the way in which identities are actually constituted. The latter consist in linking a matrix of local identifications and experiences to a higher order category which then comes to function as a unifying symbol. The logic of territorial identity is segmentary. It moves in terms of increasing encompassment and it depends on a practice of creating of fields of security. It expresses a certain life-orientation, an intentionality, that cannot be waved away by intellectual flourishes.

The differential aspect of indigeneity is not a mere social struggle for recognition of difference. It is about the way difference must be construed and incarnated in real lives. There are extreme examples of this process that are expressive of the deep structures of the nation state. It has led the Afrikaners of South Africa to apply for membership in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. One of the most spectacular is the formation referred to as the Washtitaw nation. The Washtitaw according to Dahl (1997) are a self-identified tribe, inhabiting the Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma area. They are black and are allied with the extreme right “Republic of Texas”. They claim to be descended from West Africans who moved to America when the continents were still joined, i.e. before the Indians:

We are the aborigines—the dark-skinned, bushy-haired original inhabitants of ‘so-called’ north and south America (Muu, Afruumurican). (Bey 1996:4)

They have an empress who claims not only land but also an aristocratic descent for her tribe. Dahl shows that there are early references to Indians from the early 19th Century that indeed describe the Choctaw as somehow different than their neighbors, but it is not clear that they were black. On the other hand, there are Black Indian tribes in Surinam who are descendants of runaway slaves and it is not unlikely that escaped black slaves may have been adopted into the Indian tribes of the area. What is more important is the fact that there is a local identity that may well be one that resulted from historical relations between blacks and Indians, but that it has been transformed into tribal identity in which the African is paramount and more indigenous (previous to) than the Indian. The structure of the identity is what is important here and its association with the Republic of Texas is significant. For such groups, the major enemy is the state, representative of the cosmopolitan and anti-popular, oppressor of real people, imperial and posi-

tively against the kind of aboriginal difference represented by the Washtitaw and similar organizations. Their political aim is control over territory and governmental autonomy. They make their own licence plates (as do certain Hawaiian groups) and refuse the entire tax system of the United States.

The structure that is constructed here is one whose logic is organized by the very structure of nationhood, a relation between cultural identity and territory opposed to the territorial state which is perceived as usurper and conqueror. This kind of a structure emerges in conditions in which the state is clearly not representative of the people involved. Such conditions are variable, not only in space, but in time as well. The logic linking peoplehood and indigeneity to the constitution of the nation state is the same logic as well as a structure of opposition.

**Class Polarization: Cosmopolitanism vs. Lemon Nationalism**

The other aspect of this process is the increased polarization between classes and a transformation of the identities of the classes involved. This is again primarily salient in the old centers of the system and consists in a combination of increasing cosmopolitanism among rising elites and increasing localism, nationalism and xenophobia among declining and increasingly marginalized classes. The new elites are the source of much of the new ideologies of globalization, just as the declining lower classes are the locus of lemon nationalisms. The ideologies are, of course, rooted in social processes that are central to the global system itself and they enter into the politics of society as powerful forces. They pit nationalists against multiculturalists, localists against cosmopolitans, but they are positions that are simultaneously generated within the same social field and the complementary oppositions of modern identity. Zygmunt Bauman (1998) is one of the few sociologists who has attempted to get at the essence of the process of globalization. He has described the new elites as modern day absentee landlords, invoking the historical parallels with previous eras, but also stressing the kind of relation involved. Those who have the real control over the territories rented by the working and increasingly poor have no wish to live in the neighborhood, not just locally but regionally as well. The formation of the gated community, the isolated elite which is more closely related to other elites in similarly gated communities than to other locals, is a phenomenon of truly global proportions. The structure of Sassen’s global cities is...
a concentric one which is also conical, with elites and capital in the center surrounded by a descending hierarchy of servicing populations increasingly flexible as one reaches the bottom, where a great majority are basically disposable. This is the “Blade Runner” vision of a not unrealistic future-become-present.

Bauman compares different kinds of mobility in the world as well. After all, while the global elites travel in one world the new helots travel in another. And we ought to be clear about the extraordinary differences involved. While one world is producing visions of a new millennium in which there is a world citizenship of happy multicultural or hybrid travelers who are translocal border-crossers, another world is plagued by an anguished fear of the truly deadly border and a daily life filled with concerns far removed from questions of roots and routes, except, perhaps of how to get from the sweatshop to the hood or the barrio, and how to get the rest of the family over the border—and all of this bottom life occurs in a world of increasing hostility. The hostility is not a mere product of the lack of education as it is so often advertised by elites, but a hostility based on real fear of loss of the basic elements of human existence. Lest I be taken for ideology mongering of the kind that I criticize above, I would insist that this kind of description be open to scrutiny. On the other hand, there is ample empirical evidence to ratify this rather alarming picture. In another more important sense the picture is not meant to appear out of the ordinary. On the contrary it is the normality of the processes involved, their systematicity, that ought to be upsetting.

The globalization of class structure is expressed at the elite level by an increasing self-consciousness of world position. There is a clear understanding that, in economic terms, corporate structures are not only becoming well established sources of social membership but also are encroaching on the former domains of territorial states. As one executive puts it:

The corporation will pick up some of the burdens of the nation-state, as the nation states weaken. Corporate citizenship is in the realm of globalizing bureaucrats and politicians who often have official responsibility for ‘regulating’ the corporations. (Sklair 1998: 12)

The significance of this is that there is a process of globalization of capitalist consciousness as well as class. And there is a growing set of elites, including cultural elites that are also involved in this process. A recent book published in Sweden makes an explicit connection between globalization, creolization and neo-liberalism which remains implicit in the work of Appadurai and others. The title of the book is revealing enough: Creole Love Song (Stockholm 1998). It is also noteworthy that this book appears in the former ideal type of social democratic national centralism, the locus of the “people’s home” and that it is in this country that inequality (according to the Gini index) has increased almost vertically in the 1990’s, and by 25% since 1979. (Bourgignon and Guesnerie 1998: 24) Sweden is also rife with the kind of polarized conflict discussed here; the recent introduction of the word “political class”, increasing nationalism, and declining faith in the state while the politicians declare the people to have populist tendencies and stress the need for re-socialization of these classes dangereuses.
GLOBALIZATION, CLASS AND CULTURE IN GLOBAL SYSTEMS

The combination of Indigenization and cosmopolitan hybridization as two powerful polarizing cultural identifications in today’s globalizing world system can be represented in Figure 1.

In Figure 1 the hierarchy is cultural and not economic. The middle range distinguishes among nationals, diasporic and ethnic minority populations. The differences here refer to the fact that immigrants can become ethnic minorities via the kind of integration and re-identification that localizes the group rather than practicing long distance relations. Such minorities, while not equivalent, can take on the same kind of status as regional minorities and even indigenous minorities. It is important to recognize the basis of cultural identities in terms of social practice and not external definitions. African Americans can identify themselves—and have done so—in diasporic, ethnic/racial, and even, as we saw above, indigenous terms.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE GLOBAL SYSTEM

This discussion is meant to provide a way of modeling cultural production in the global system. The model is based on an understanding of cultural production and creativity as grounded in various substrates of shared social experience, experience that has existential meaning for those who partake in it. This raises questions of the intentionality involved in cultural elaboration and transformation, and in the resonance which makes cultural form work as a social phenomenon. Such social experiences are formed within a hierarchy of constraints and dynamic processes that link global process with the local structuring of social lives. It treats globalization as a particular phase process in the larger system, one that is linked with declining hegemony in older centers, with decentralization of capital accumulation—in other words, globalization of capital—and a double tendency toward globalization of elites and localization of middle and lower classes. The current polarization of elites and locals of the upwardly and downwardly mobile is combined with a cultural fragmentation that strikes the dehegemonizing zones of the world arena, leading to a complex combination of ethnification and class polarization. The latter give rise to various cultural transformations and an intensive creativity, one that is not a celebration of cultural liberation but of deep contradiction in the real lives of the people that social scientists should be trying to understand. This understanding has been the program of World-Systems Analysis and a larger family of global analyses. It is one that is founded in a critical perspective and distances itself from pervasive ideologies, including those concerned with globalization itself. Wallerstein has dedicated his research to the understanding of the systematic nature of the historical processes of the world arena. The attack on this attempt by postmodernists, postcolonialists and others who identify increasingly with the freedom that seems to be offered to them via the advantageous financing of cultural elites must become part of the analysis rather than a merely an opposed intellectual position.

REFERENCES

Al iniciar el recorrido, Wallerstein sostiene dos tesis principales: que la historia está abierta, y que vivimos una etapa en que el determinismo disminuye. En un caso enfrenta las tesis de una historia clausurada, en otro, la de un futuro sin alternativas. Ni es el fin de la historia ni vivimos en el mejor de los mundos posibles. La investigación y la acción tienen que explorar en los terrenos macro y micro de la política, la economía, la cultura y la sociedad y descubrir cómo se abre y cierra la historia del porvenir, y como se abren los límites actuales del sistema-mundo a los valores universales respetando sus particularidades y especificidades. El planteamiento de Wallerstein se opone a las tesis de moda de los funcionarios-filósofos del “establishment” conservador, dizque tecnocientífico y objetivo. Permite comprender un mundo que está abierto a la libertad aunque no necesariamente la alcance.

En un palacio frente a la Plaza de Ienna nos reunimos alrededor de Immanuel Wallerstein. No pudimos ir a Chateau Vallon porque los “fascistas” nos lo impidieron. Y aunque el mismo día que se inició el encuentro el juez dio una sentencia contraria a “nuestros enemigos”, los efectos favorables de la misma no nos sacaron del parisino exilio.

En un salón Parlamentario, Immanuel anunció la muerte del sistema dominante: “Hemos entrado—dijo—en una época de transición. Las oscilaciones políticas y teóricas serán más fuertes e irregulares. Las opciones se
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Víaje alrededor del Sistema-Mundo

presentarán como problemas morales. La elección (le choix) será cada vez más difícil, y el debate girará en torno de los principios”. Immanuel habló de una especie de grandes ciclos deterministas y voluntaristas que se alternan. Y dio singular importancia a la voluntad en el período presente, en que la libertad puede prevalecer sobre la necesidad, y en que lo determinado entra—a la manera de Prigogine—en una especie de bifurcación, o de gran opción histórica. El propósito central de su discurso, consistió en anunciar el principio de una nueva historia en que la teoría, la moral y la decisión, eventualmente podrán construir un mundo mejor, no necesariamente predeterminado.

Desde que empezó el encuentro inicié un ejercicio práctico. Me propuse relacionar los pequeños con los grandes problemas, la historia inmediata con la construcción de la utopía, mis experiencias en Chiapas con las de otros mundos. El ejercicio resultó interesante.

El derecho de optar por una línea de conducta, el derecho a elegir, a escoger, es un buen tema de reflexión histórica y sociológica, no sólo política, o empresarial, o filosófica. Sentí la necesidad de una tipología de las opciones, algunas coyunturales, pasajeras, otras estructurales y hasta sistémicas, las que dejan huellas en conductas e instituciones: ¿Cuál es el determinismo de las opciones? ¿Cuáles son los problemas que hoy parecen sin opción, como cuando se afirma que la política neoliberal no tiene opción, y se demuestra con hechos amenazadores y razonamientos tecnocientíficos que es la única política posible, segura, técnica, científica mientras se pontifica, con la lógica de los “milagros económicos”, que es la más redituables a largo plazo?

Yo creo que no hemos estudiado bien las variaciones históricas y sociológicas de las opciones, sus determinismos variables, sus libertades esperadas e inesperadas. Creo que no hemos estudiado la historia de las opciones y del miedo. De los hombres que no quieren escoger, o que no pueden escoger, y los procesos por los que al fin se deciden y sí pueden, aunque les vaya la vida.

Si en todos los tiempos estamos determinados y en todos los tiempos optamos, los largos ciclos del determinismo y el voluntarismo de que habla Immanuel requieren estudios de los tiempos y espacios en que se concentran las posibilidades de sumisión, o los de liberación que hoy él destaca con optimismo esperanzador. Pero ese enfoque me lleva a pensar en los conformismos superados y en los “estallidos” embrujadores y no es sólo en ellos, o a partir de ellos, como quiero pensar. Quiero pensar en la construc-

Alain Touraine encabeza a los oradores invitados. A su clásica tesis sobre la vuelta del actor añade algunas notas nuevas. De alguna manera identifica el proceso de globalización con lo que llama una “economía des-socializada”—expresión feliz—como aquélla de su último libro ¿Podremos vivir juntos? que se refiere a los pobres y a los ricos. Touraine habla también de “reconstruir un sistema de mediaciones”. “Il faut reconstruire—sostiene enfático—un système de mediations” (Me recuerda el viejo estilo de mis profesores franceses Braudel, Gurvitch, Friedman). Sólo que su voz se ha enriquecido —pienso—con su simpatía hacia los indios de Chiapas: “Marcos, un demócrata en armas” es un ensayo ejemplar que publicó en el Nouvel Observateur a su regreso del “Congreso Intergaláctico”. En ese contexto, entiendo su propuesta de que “Hoy las mediaciones fundamentales, son las opciones centrales”. Vuelvo a mis inquietudes de cómo relacionar las pequeñas y grandes mediaciones, cómo construir mini-mediaciones (siempre Chiapas en el transfondo del pensar) que a manera de “fractales” lleguen a producir grandes cambios organizados que no se salgan del control de los actores sociales, de los “pequeños” actores respetuosos de los valores particulares y universales, de los vínculos múltiples y variados de las civilizaciones que se articulan.

Un breve comentario de Samir Amin me lleva a otras reflexiones sobre el tema. “La historia del capitalismo—dice—es una historia de compromisos históricos”. De guerras, y de compromisos, pienso automáticamente. Entre unas y otros se construyen las mediaciones potencialmente funcionales a los pueblos.

Tengo que ver más el surgimiento y evolución de las mediaciones democratizadoras. Cómo juegan en ellas no sólo factores culturales, sino sociales, no sólo económicos sino políticos. No puedo desconocer la metamorfosis de la cuestión colonial, de la cuestión agraria, de la política neoliberal y las grandes compañías. Pero pienso en la construcción de las mediaciones
como luchas y compromisos históricos acumulativos. Es lo fundacional. Ya volveré.

Por lo pronto escucho a De la Gorce, el conocido analista de la política mundial. El coloquio empieza a cobrar un sentido múltiple. Si Immanuel abrió la historia y Touraine registró el ingreso del actor social en busca de sus propias mediaciones, De la Gorce ayuda a pensar en la construcción del futuro a partir de un breve panorama que esboza sobre los hechos fundamentales de la historia mundial desde 1945. En esta etapa se realizó la des-colonización formal de muchos países de África y Asia. Surgió la Rebelión Mundial del 68. Se vino abajo el proyecto comunista. Salimos de la pesadilla de la Guerra Fría y entramos a una nueva etapa en que la hegemonía mundial de Estados Unidos es indiscutible. En todo ese tiempo y más, recientemente, se amplió la población de marginados y excluidos en números relativos y absolutos... De la Gorce plantea el problema de cómo enfrentar la hegemonía norteamericana con una visión geopolítica europea. La verdad es que desde el fin de la Guerra Fría—me recuerdo—se pasó a lo que los zapatistas llaman la IIIa. Guerra Mundial contra ‘los condenados de la tierra’ sean éstos inmigrantes que llegan del Sur a los países del ‘Norte’, o hambrientos y revoltosos que se entrematan en el Sur o a los que ‘El Imperio ataca’. Pero creo que se da otro hecho fundamental a que se refiere André Gorz desde hace varios años y que Rifkin ha puesto de moda con su tesis sobre ‘el fin del trabajo’. Se diría que existe una combinación entre la 3a. Guerra Mundial contra los pobres del Sur, y otra aún más silenciosa, y con menos tiros que se da contra los trabajadores asalariados. No es el fin del trabajo, ni el fin de la historia. Pero hay indicios de que se está liquidando al trabajo mercancía y a los trabajadores, que ofrecen su trabajo por un pago. No se les emplea, no se les contrata, no se compra su fuerza de trabajo. Aumenta el desempleo y los empresarios contratan trabajadores más baratos, o menos exigentes.

La Tercera Revolución Industrial baja enormemente los costos de producción y el empleo. La electrónica y la informática, combinadas por las mega-compañías permiten al sistema disminuir el empleo de trabajadores caros en el Norte y emplear a trabajadores que cobran menos en el “Sur”; a trabajadores que exigen menos, que a veces no piden casi nada, y que hasta pueden ser explotados por voluntad propia. Y éstos. ¿Qué van a hacer si no tienen otra alternativa? ¿Acaso los colonizados podemos escoger? —pregunta alguien y contesta— Estamos excluidos de escoger!...
de mercado con graves consecuencias para el bien común y el interés general de los habitantes de cada país y del mundo. Es el saqueo institucional de la cosa pública, de la República Nacional y Universal. “¿Y qué?—me pregunto. ¿De qué sirve que sepa esto? Que no haya duda de que es así.” Samir Amin da la solución necesaria, aquélla sin la cual cualquier propuesta de democracia, de justicia, resulta ilusoria. Parece antigua, parece terca; pero es cierta: “Lo que se necesita es otra relación de fuerzas sociales que luche contra la lógica unilateral de la acumulación de capital que hoy, completamente sola, bloquea el sistema”.

Vienen varias intervenciones más sobre las enormes dificultades de enfrentar la situación para construir un mundo mejor. Se refieren a las naciones, a las regiones, a los pueblos. Bonnard plantea la necesidad de un cambio en la correlación de fuerzas, desde un punto de vista internacional, y con el objetivo de que el dólar no siga dominando al mundo. Chesnais habla de los peligros de la balcanización y tribalización, o regionalización, de los Estados Europeos. Pierre André Taguieff hace ver que “los modernizadores son tribalizadores”.

Siento como que muchos europeos quieren y temen unos Estados Unidos de Europa. A la vez admiran el que los norteamericanos sean unos “profesionales de la integración de inmigrantes”, y temen a los inmigrantes. Quieren una Europa Unida y también una República (como Francia) “única e indivisible”. Hasta el nacionalismo (“la France”) es erigido por momentos en el principal motor de la historia. Y a veces lo defienden con razón frente a quienes con alma neoliberal—como Vargas Llosa—declaran que “la nación es producto de una imaginación maligna”. “El nacionalismo—contestan—ha sido demonizado; declarado enemigo natural de la democracia. Eso es falso”. Dejan planteado el problema de ¿Qué nacionalismo es necesario preservar, abierto, democrático, universalista, hecho a tratados entre iguales…? En el mundo hegemonizado por Estados Unidos ven que los Estados-Nación abandonan el control sobre sus monedas, sobre sus impuestos, sobre sus territorios. La búsqueda de una alternativa a la hegemonía norteamericana es persistente. Implica nuevos conceptos de la soberanía y de las autonomías.

Poco después aparece la ex-URSS como un estado dislocado. Y lo peor es la dislocación de la sociedad. Surgen allá “desigualdades monstruosas” y una población cada vez más decepcionada de la política en que creyó un cuarto de hora. En cuanto a China, pasa de un capitalismo sin capitalistas a otro con capitalistas. En materia de democracia sigue los consejos de Huntington: la deja para después. En silencio “amplía los mercados y aumenta las desigualdades regionales y sociales”. Si las reformas de China son más exitosas que las de Rusia; su mejor porvenir se contempla como una alianza con la propia Rusia y con la India.

En ese ambiente, la lógica de los grandes bloques hace pensar de nuevo en la imposibilidad del super-imperialismo. Entre “que si quieren y no quieren”, aparecen tanto el bloque hegomónico de Estados Unidos, como otro de Europa y uno más de Asia. ¿Se pondrán de acuerdo para dominar al resto del mundo o aumentarán sus conflictos y choques violentos?

Sobre el conjunto domina “la gestión del mundo como mercado.” En su intervención, Samir Amin no sólo habla del Ex-Tercer Mundo sino del Mundo. Se refiere a la grave erosión de las relaciones y derechos sociales que se establecieron al fin de la 2a. Guerra Mundial. Señala al capital como la fuerza dominante que impone la lógica de sus intereses en forma unilateral. El resultado comprobable es una utopía autodestructiva que con el neoliberalismo como ideología, lleva a un caos inevitable. Las pruebas de las afirmaciones de Samir son abundantes. Las refutaciones que se le hagan se sostendrán por la fuerza militar, financiera, tecnológica, publicitaria. Nada más las luchas sociales y políticas que identifiquen las contradicciones del sistema en los distintos escenarios determinarán el rostro del mundo de mañana. Es su respuesta.

En todo caso me doy cuenta que mi tema de la democracia universal y no excluyente tiene más problemas de los que cualquier escéptico imagine. La unidad en la diversidad frente a los obstáculos para una democracia representativa y participativa no escapa a nadie que se precie de constructivista radical o de democrata radical. Pero será tarea de muchos “pequeños y grandes mundos” conocerla y hacerla desde la propia especificidad y universalidad. De lo que estoy seguro es que no hay más alternativa que esa. Los bloques, los nacionalismos, los socialismos, los etnicismos sin un proyecto democrático de gobiernos plurales, respetuosos de los derechos individuales y sociales, de las ideologías y religiones distintas, capaces de controlar y orientar a los sistemas económicos para el bien común y el interés general, ni podrán resolver el problema del fin del trabajo como mercancía, ni podrán resolver el problema del agotamiento de los recursos naturales, ni podrán
resolver el problema de las migraciones, el hambre, el crecimiento ilimitado de la población, los suicidios en masa, los exterminios colectivos o, en fin, el ecocidio pesimista (sic) que acabe con la especie humana.

El problema práctico de que no ocurra “lo peor” sólo se podrá abordar con una teoría y práctica de la democracia que se acompañe de una pedagogía a la vez moral y política. Y aún así será necesario difundir e imponer, por consenso, la sobriedad en los modelos de consumo. Democracia y consumo sobrio, por consenso, implicarán el respeto práctico a la persona humana, a las etnias y pueblos, y a una cultura universal cada vez más rica en su unidad y su diversidad. Sólo así se podrá construir y conocer una democracia universal local y global no excluyente. Es más, sólo así se asegurará la sobrevivencia “humana”. No hay vuelta. Por eso es tan importante estudiar y respetar las alternativas democráticas que vienen de las etnias y los pueblos, como la de los mayas del EZLN en México, la de Lavalas en Haití, las de los municipios del PT y el movimiento de los “Sem Terra” en Brasil, o la de Kerala en la India con su programación democrática de la economía, o la de los hermanos budistas en Burma, o la del pueblo de Filipinas. Y paro de contar…

La historia está abierta con sus grandes opciones morales, políticas e intelectuales, aunque su salida quede en el campo de lo indeterminado y vaya a pasar por grandes turbulencias, como Wallerstein hace ver. En esa historia, las estrategias habrán de montarse sobre las tendencias—según observa Samir Amin. También habrán de atender al peligro que destacó el señor Alotta cuando dijo, ya casi para concluir el evento, que la dominación del mundo, más que por las fuerzas armadas o las organizaciones políticas, por las religiones o las ideologías, se está librando en el campo del pensamiento moral. El señor Alotta se refirió en particular al dominio norteamericano del mundo moral. Pero el problema es mayor y es básico: En esta Tercera Guerra Mundial, como en cualquier otra guerra, la desmoralización del enemigo es uno de los recursos principales de la victoria. Fortalecer la moral política y las prácticas democráticas permitirá ganar una gran guerra por la humanidad. Tal vez se pueda. El encuentro alrededor de Wallerstein y del Sistema Mundo indica que nunca el Sistema-Mundo había tenido tantas experiencias políticas y morales como ahora para una lucha por la democracia, la justicia y la dignidad.

Al terminar el encuentro, salgo del Palacio y me voy caminando por la avenida de Jenna en dirección a Passy. Al llegar a los jardines del Trocadero veo en la Torre Eiffel el enorme anuncio de focos luminosos. Faltan 981 días para el año 2000.
introduction

When Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) subverted the mid-1970s social science scene with his concept of the ‘world-system,’ development, the ‘master’ concept of social theory, suffered a fatal blow. Wallerstein’s critique of development emphasized its misapplication as a national strategy in a hierarchical world where only some states can ‘succeed.’ Wallerstein’s path-breaking epistemological challenge to the modernization paradigm reformulated the unit of analysis of development from the nation-state to the ‘world-system.’ To be sure, the past three decades have seen reformulations, coined to address the failures of the development enterprise: from basic needs, through participation in the world market, globalization, to local sustainability. But development, the organizing myth of our age, has never recovered.

The world-systemic critique of development succeeded in part because of its relevance to world conditions at the time. National developmentalism was unraveling as the shortcomings of the first development decade were becoming clear, and as a global money market formed. The currency of the world-system critique owed considerably to the terms in which it was...
made. By positing a broader analytical unit, world-system analysis was able to accommodate the phenomenon of the New Industrial Countries (NICs) at the same time as world inequality across the historic north/south division endured. And explaining world inequality was the overriding point of analytical departure.

Development was now posited as a systemic process, where core-periphery relations were the real development dynamic and core states were outcomes, rather than units, of development. Nevertheless, within the definition of the ‘world-system’ (an antinomy of states and a single division of labor), states manipulated markets with varying degrees of success, comprising the state-system hierarchy. The hierarchy is expressed geographically, and understood phenomenally, in developmentalist terms (where core states monopolize the benefits of accumulation). Arguably, the geographical dimensions of the concept of the world-system produce a developmentalist reading of the unequal outcomes of the systemic process.

In this essay I want to address this dilemma, which Friedmann (1980) once characterized as a problem of conflating the object and the unit of analysis, where the concept of the world-system merges with its empirical, or geographical dimension. This dilemma has grown with the accelerated compression of time and space associated with the current era of ‘financialization’ (Arrighi 1994). Hoogvelt observes that (from Marx) the annihilation of space through time (via circulation of money and information) now re-orders economic activities into two kinds: ‘real-time’ economy “where distance and location are no longer relevant,” and ‘material’ economy “where there is still some ‘friction of space’ that limits choice of location” (1997: 121). In this formulation, money itself is now a ‘real time’ resource, permitting an unprecedented degree of global mobility such that “the structure of core-periphery becomes a social division, rather than a geographic one” (Hoogvelt 1997: 121, 129).

I propose to address this dilemma by examining the ‘internal’ dynamics of capitalism, namely, the changing complex of monetary and wage relations across time, and how this is expressed politically. This approach avoids an empirical, or geographical (‘external’) point of departure, and reconstructs the world capitalist economy as organized by these fundamental relations. This difference is captured, for example, in alternative conceptual approaches to theorizing capitalism. Wallerstein (1979: 127) defined capitalist relations of production by ‘the relations of production of the whole system,’ including wage-labor as well as non-wage-labor, thereby asserting systemic primacy. Although this definition transcended the sterile definition of capitalism by wage-labor advanced by Brenner (1977), the ensuing debate about the status of wage-labor obscured the importance of distinguishing wage-labor as a theoretical concept and as empirical reality (cf, Tomich 1998). Theory and historical reality were conflated, and wage-labor itself was given no special theoretical significance.

While wage-labor is never the majority form of labor in the global economy, it is nonetheless the core of any historical theory of capitalism. Marx viewed wage-labor as the organizing principle of a world capitalist economy which included non-wage forms of labor, valorized through their relationship to wage-labor. In this essay, I explore this claim, not to resolve the debate, but because I believe it contains an indispensable methodological insight for developing historical theory. In relation to this discussion, it offers an alternative to the untheorized and historically unspecified concept of the relations of production of the whole system.

Wallerstein’s claim that the world-system (in particular its single division of labor) operated through a variety of labor forms, suggested a hierarchy of labor skills which empirically correlated with a hierarchy of productive activities or products. This view reproduces the notion of an (evolving) historical continuum, whereby states could move up or down the hierarchy, and it has given life to the commodity chains line of inquiry (eg, Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994). Insofar as the hierarchy privileges industrial technology, it has tended to correlate with state commercial and military power. However, now, when industrial and informational technologies are organized trans-nationally by strategic corporate alliances, and/or the fruits of such technologies are no longer guaranteed to their home states and citizens, world-systemic hierarchies coincide less and less with states and/or their labor relations. In order to address this discrepancy, which is deepened by the growth of ‘real time’ economy, I invoke a form of historical theory that does not presume a structure, but views structure as formed through specific historical relations. The method of ‘incorporated comparison’ is a vehicle of historical theory (McMichael 1990).
INCORPORATED COMPARISON

Incorporated comparison makes three particular claims. First, comparison is not a formal, ‘external’ procedure in which cases are juxtaposed as separate vehicles of common or contrasting patterns of variation. Rather comparison is ‘internal’ to historical inquiry, where process-instances are comparable because they are historically connected and mutually conditioning. Second, incorporated comparison does not proceed with an a priori conception of the composition and context of the units compared, rather they form in relation to one another and in relation to the whole formed through their inter-relationship. In other words, the whole is not a given, it is self-forming. This is what I understand we mean by historical specificity. Third, comparison can be conducted across space and time, separately or together.

Cross-space comparison specifies a single conjuncture as combining particular spatially-located parts of a global configuration (such as an international food order, a debt regime, or the commodity complex of oil, or wheat, or micro-circuitry). On the other hand, cross-time comparison specifies an era as composed of temporally differentiated instances or versions of a world-historical process (such as state-building, or revolutions). Arrighi employs an additional form of incorporated comparison in The Long Twentieth Century, where he compares cycles of accumulation that represent interconnected eras, or episodes, in “a single historical process of capitalist expansion which they themselves constitute and modify” (1994: 23). The comparison is employed not to contrast these episodes, as disconnected cases, but to inform analysis of the current era through the logic of comparative inquiry incorporated into the problematic itself. Here, episodic sequences are understood as distinctive precisely because history itself is cumulative.

In this essay, I employ the method of incorporated comparison to attempt to specify contemporary globalization. I start from the premise that since capitalism has always been global, the current emphasis on globalization and ‘free trade’ needs to be explained as well as historically specified. Using an incorporated comparison approach, I juxtapose the present era of globalization with that of the nineteenth century, when the British state sought to construct a ‘self-regulating market’ in much the same terms. I contend that globalization is a strategy of ‘market rule’ advanced by political and economic elites via institutional coercion. Such institutional coercion depends on a market equilibrating mechanism, combining wage-labor as the standard of value and a monetary form to express this standard. Present-day globalization repeats the British strategy for organizing world capitalism, but under quite different conditions, namely the absence of a world-money like sterling and a stable wage-labor regime.

The difference between conventional comparison and incorporated comparison is the point of departure and therefore the analytical outcome. Incorporated comparison views all objects of inquiry as historical and historically connected. Unlike conventional comparison, cases cannot be abstracted from their time/space location, via an experimental logic which juxtaposes cases ‘externally,’ in order to generalize from observed patterns. Rather ‘cases’ or instances are understood as relational parts of a singular (historically forming) phenomenon. Comparison is incorporated into the very process of defining the object of analysis, whether parts or whole. Comparative analysis incorporates historical time into the inquiry itself, so that the object of inquiry is historically distinct, either because the instances themselves (e.g. individual states) inhabit particular and uneven time/space relations, or because the combined process (e.g. state-system formation) is constituted by these distinct but related instances of state-building. In other words, the instances and the combined process are not independent of one another, and cannot be adequately understood outside of the historical relations through which they form.

In this case, British market rule and the current era of ‘globalization,’ or ‘free trade,’ are juxtaposed as episodes of (unstable) capitalist hegemony, where the price form and market rhetoric are the organizing principles of political economy. The point is to use the juxtaposition to specify contemporary globalization. The latter cannot be understood simply as a quantitative or qualitative change in the organization of world capitalism, rather it is a recurrence of an earlier episode, but via the resolution of its crisis. Comparison serves to relate the episodes as both a sequence and new specification. Since the goal is to specify globalization, the method is one in which comparison constitutes the substance of the inquiry rather than its framework.

MECHANISMS OF MARKET RULE

The British state was engaged in unifying the world through the market, but the world was not a universe of nation-states, as it is today. It was a
clustering of states, colonial territories and beyond. The British task was to construct a world market by institutionalizing market mechanisms in the practices of states and their colonial administrations. The gold standard was the key mechanism by which Britain unified the various political jurisdictions in the world market. All states and administrations were constrained to manage currencies in relation to the universal standard, gold price. As Polanyi (1957) points out, the standardisation of currency management was simultaneously a process of state-building; the currency was the nation. This national movement was indeed a form of globalization of market institutions and processes, but it was presented in national terms.

Today, the world market is already a unity, embedded in a system of national states. Arguably, this system of national states matured via a developmentalist project in which citizen-states subordinated markets to public goals. There was of course great variation in efficacy in this movement, especially as it extended to postcolonial states with less public capacity and immature home markets. Nevertheless, universally, capital was constrained by the priorities of rebuilding, stabilizing and constructing national economies. A compact with organized labor, and domestic social stability concerns such as full employment, rural subsidies and the social wage, were deeply imprinted in the state system of the mid-twentieth century. But the social and political constraints on capital became targets for a capitalist counter-movement in the last quarter of this century. By the 1970s there were rising demands for a reduction in these social priorities and constraints on capital, as the contradiction between wage-labor as a cost of production and as a source of demand grew in an internationalizing and inflationary conjuncture. Controls on the international circulation of capital were lifted, and states reduced their social responsibilities.

The attempt to (re)impose market rule required a different rhetorical and institutional strategy than the national developmental strategy associated with British hegemony. ‘Globalization’ emerged as a project asserting the global relations of capital, and a strategy for realizing these relations through removing political and social constraints. The disciplining of labor and the associated shrinking of the citizen-state are the central targets of the globalization project. The project of globalization is not simply a reflex by capitalist elites to rollback social claims on private profits. It is a historical response to the contradictions emerging within the Bretton Woods system of government controls on the circulation of money. While the Bretton Woods monetary regime privileged national economies and controls, private capital, aided by US dollar credits, developed transnational operations. Pressure on the dollar from transnational enterprise eventually undermined the Bretton Woods system of monetary controls, encouraging the decoupling of money capital from productive capital, and strengthening the foundations of market rule.

Market rule enlarges the space for circuits of money and commodities. The concept of ‘globalization’ implies a borderless world, where stateless money can pursue efficient, low-cost production, and/or speculation in active financial markets. In order to construct such a world, the proponents of globalization seek to institutionalize their rhetoric in structurally adjusted states, free trade agreements and global agencies geared to managing the world market.

Just as Polanyi argued, the attempt to impose market rule requires an institutional strategy. But Polanyi was addressing a very different context, where markets in land, labor and money had to be created through institutional means. In the present conjuncture, such markets have to be released from regulatory constraints. This does require an institutional strategy, but it is quite distinct from that of the nineteenth century. It expresses itself in the active decomposition of those social forms through which capitalism emerged and matured, namely, wage-labor and the nation-state. As I shall argue, these social forms are integral to one another, such that their decomposition is mutually conditioning. Further, understanding their current relations of decomposition requires understanding their formative historical relations.

The method of incorporated comparison allows us to analyze these two eras of market rule as composed of historically specific wage and monetary relations, with differential consequences for the nation-state across time. In short, the current era of globalization, however similar as a project of market rule, signals the decomposition of social forms that tend to be taken for granted, but are quite historically contingent.

BRITISH MARKET RULE

In Polanyi’s discussion of the attempt to install a ‘self-regulating market’ (SRM) in the nineteenth-century world, he implicitly suggests that it was a
confidence trick. On the one hand the SRM was a utopia, or a fiction, and on the other hand, the SRM had definite institutional footprints. That is, British and other national legislation instituted the gold standard as the key institutional mechanism unifying the world market. But the gold standard itself was a fiction, in the sense that its automaticity was impossible in reality (gold could neither be produced on demand in an expanding market, nor physically be able to settle all balance of payments deficits). Therefore, it had to be institutionalized in national banking systems empowered to manipulate the supply of credit money in response to changing trade relations. The overriding imperative was to avoid the deflationary potential of a real gold standard.

In a world market where national exchanges needed stabilization, the management of exchange rates in relation to the gold price maintained the fiction of a true world money. The ideal remained insofar as trading countries were constrained to hold sterling balances as equivalents of gold in order to stabilize the value of their currencies. Through this institutionalization of the ideal of a gold standard, Britain retained its hegemony insofar as sterling represented gold as the world money, and the City of London was empowered to manipulate sterling balances to approximate the relatively frictionless movement of a world money among states requiring foreign exchange.

The premise for this arrangement, whereby Britain administered world market rule through the sterling/gold standard (world money), was the ‘workshop of the world’ strategy to impose a new ‘colonial system’ writ large through formal and informal empire. Concretely, the 1834 Poor Law Act and the Bank Act of 1844 together institutionalized the English labor market and central banking system, stabilizing accumulation, while the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 stimulated cheap grain imports from the ‘New World’ to reduce the cost of wage foods. Together, these measures institutionalized the markets in labor, money and land that underpinned Britain’s prodigious commercial expansion on a global scale. In turn, Britain and the European states gained access to a broadening array of tropical products from the colonies (such as sugar, tea, coffee, oils, cotton, jute, rubber), and temperate products (grains and meat) from the settler states of North America and Australasia to fuel industrial capitalism (Friedmann and McMichael 1989).

While British measures to institute commodity markets subjected the nineteenth-century world to the dynamics of industrial capitalism, they also generated a protective cycle of market regulation across the world of constitutional states. In this movement lay the various national forms of regulation: land markets and agricultural trade generating agricultural tariffs (early food security politics); labor markets generating social democratic responses (in domestic labor legislation and early import-substitution industrial strategies); and a world money market generating currency management to stabilize national economic relations. Polanyi emphasized the “constitutive importance of the currency in establishing the nation as the decisive economic and political unit of the time” (1957: 203). In short, the protective response was formative of the nation-state. In these terms, the nation-state was a social form through which the world market was secured and capitalist relations were expressed politically.

Polanyi viewed the nineteenth-century world, through the prism of the SRM, as an ideal construct institutionalized in commodity markets in land, labor and money. His point of departure was the fetishism of commodity relations. But Polanyi, unlike Marx, never explained the source of this fetish. For Polanyi, by accepting the economistic fallacy, humans condemned themselves to the drastic unintended social consequences of market forces and counterforces. For Marx, commodity fetishism obscured the social relations underlying the market. That is, value relations between people and classes presented as value relations between things, in particular, commodities and their prices. Viewing market relations solely in terms of these phenomenal forms condemns the observer to an ahistorical understanding of the market. In this sense, one can say that Polanyi’s ‘instituted market’ is almost as ideal-typical as the economic liberal’s naturalized conception of the market (the SRM) against which he launched his critique.

Marx’s theory of capital posited a universe of commodity production and circulation, in which the regular exchange of commodities as use-values generates a universal commodity in which all commodities express their value. This is the money commodity, the mother of all commodities. By expressing and mediating the exchange values of a variety of concrete commodities, money assumes the value form and comes to be regarded as the embodiment of value. Theoretically, a world money is a money commodity through which all national currencies express their exchange value. In order
to sustain credibility, world money took the form of gold/sterling which, in the nineteenth century, became the standard in which currency values were expressed in order to facilitate their mutual exchange.

Again, theoretically, a universe of commodity production and circulation requires a generative principle by which value reproduces and self-expands. Marx’s conception of wage labor met this requirement insofar as it produced surplus-value through the property relation. The right to dispose of, and then to consume, labor-power fulfilled the double condition of the wage contract as a phenomenal relation obscuring the workplace relation of exploitation, wherein lies the self-expanding power of capital. The wage relation is both an act of exchange and an act of exploitation. Here, Marx’s concept of wage-labor as the source of valorization presumes a world of commodities on the one hand, and a historical process of expropriation on the other. Regularized market exchange and capital accumulation depend not simply on the perception (or fiction) of commodification, but also on a definite historical process whereby relations of private property stand behind a labor market. Under these conditions, capital is nothing without the wage relation through which to enlarge its command of value-producing labor. The value produced is theoretically determined by the relational concept of socially-necessary labor time whereby commodities express their social worth. Thus the wage relation is the conceptual key to valorization.

Historically, Britain’s market rule combined wage-labor with world monetary discipline in a single regime. Gold served as the universal equivalent, in value terms, of all national currencies. Through this mechanism this monetary regime incorporated other forms of labor into the wage relation. To the extent that states internalized the gold standard mechanism and organized their monetary policy around stable currency exchange, so they also imposed the requirements of capitalist valorization on their labor forces. For example, when the Turkish state levied taxes on its peasantry to deliver grain that in turn the state sold in European markets to earn foreign exchange (Luxemburg 1963: chapter 30) it linked the valorization process in Europe (proletarian consumption of wage foods) to the reorganization of peasant labor in Turkey, as mediated by world money. In other words, wage-labor was combined with peasant labor in a politically-mediated process of valorization: the instituted market.

Through this mechanism, a universal standard of money, expressing commodity equivalences, established the rule of the law of value in subjecting other forms of labor, such as slave labor (cf, McMichael 1991) and family farm labor (cf, Friedmann 1978) to the competitive dynamics of the industrial wage-labor system. Here, plantation production assumed an industrial rhythm (e.g., gang slavery) as factors advanced credit on delivery of cotton, and family farming depended on commercial inputs and world grain prices. While this regime combined diverse forms of labor, it was empirically centered in wage-labor, as the source of self-expanding capital. Through the circuit of world money, managed by national banking systems, non-wage forms of labor embodied the valorizing dynamics of wage-labor, and yet retained their different forms. In this way, wage-labor imposed its value requirements on non-wage forms of labor via the market rule of the gold standard. Under this regime, other forms of labor and national currencies expressed their value, respectively, through the wage form and gold. Historically, this global circuit of value of course depended on military force, the City of London’s pivotal role in organizing sterling balances, and England’s aggressive commercial apparatus (see Polanyi 1957, Ingham 1994).

Certainly, the world was complex and the world market was not exactly self-regulating (e.g., Britain used its positive balance of payments with India to sustain the world monetary role of sterling). But, proceeding from the concept of wage-labor to a historical account of the regime of wage-labor reveals the mechanism whereby capitalist valorization could be internalized by states within the gold/sterling monetary regime. In addition, the elaboration of such a regime, under the banner of ‘workshop of the world,’ indicates the global process of lowering the reproduction cost of wage-labor. By dismantling its Corn Laws, and determining the price of industrial labor by the cost of globally sourced wage-foods through the sterling-gold standard, British capitalism imposed a competitive valorizing logic on agricultural producers across this world.

THE BRETON WOODS REGIME

The collapse of the British-centered world economy in the early-twentieth century resulted from a series of counter-movements against market rule, culminating in national and imperial conflict among European states. The gold standard disappeared, and the world experienced an unstable period of wars and depression before the crisis following the collapse of market rule
was resolved. In the post-WWII world, monetary and wage relations were instituted nationally via the Bretton Woods regime of fixed exchange rates. This was a logical extension of the movement to embed the world market in national economic development priorities following the Great Depression (and/or the great transformation). Developmentalism was anchored in a class compromise which subsidized First World labor through the social wage and in imperial relations geared to replicating the wage relation in the Third World. Capitalism was to be stabilized in national forms of accumulation.

The Bretton Woods monetary system supported the Keynesian principle of national full employment policy, and included capital controls, preempting a world money regime like the sterling-gold standard. Dollar/gold convertibility was mediated by the IMF, from which member states borrowed short term to stabilize their accounts in accordance with their initial gold deposits. In addition, fixing the value of national currencies in relation to the dollar subordinated monetary relations to U.S. foreign and domestic policy, constraining central banks to support the value of the dollar (Marazzi 1995).

Formally, there was no institutional mechanism for the American dollar to replicate the British pound sterling’s role as a true world money anchored in productive value relations. The sterling-gold standard imposed monetary discipline directly upon firms via balance of payments adjustments, linking production and credit costs to world prices (of goods and currencies). Conversely, under the Bretton Woods monetary regime, macroeconomic policy mediated adjustment, protecting domestic economic agents through deficit financing to maintain national accumulation and the rising social wage. With 70 percent of world gold reserves, and a monetary regime geared to protecting the value of the dollar, American Cold War dollar credits sustained this process for a time—stimulating accumulation at home and abroad. But this could not be sustained for long, because fixed exchange rates compelled central banks to inflate their money supply to support the value of the dollar, and, with a growing Eurodollar market, international claims against the dollar (and its gold backing) ballooned. Dollar inflation revealed the political, rather than value, relations underlying the monetary regime. It also spawned an informal world money which eventually undermined Bretton Wood regulatory mechanisms (IMF adjustment and capital controls). International pressure from the Eurodollar markets forced the U.S. government in the early 1970s to decouple the dollar from gold parity, leaving an unstable system of floating currency exchanges (see Leyshon and Thrift 1997).

**Market Rule Politicized: The Globalization Project**

The current, post-Bretton Woods era, rests on a system of floating currencies, with no single world money (including gold) to discipline currencies. The growth of an unregulated global money market (increasing arbitrage opportunities and raising the opportunity cost of fixed capital) and the uncertainty associated with the decline of US hegemony encouraged the process of ‘financialisation:’ a contagious preference for liquid rather than fixed capital on the part of private and institutional investors (Arrighi 1994). The new global money market accompanied bank deregulation, the process of securitization (tradable debt) and the proliferation of a variety of financial instruments creating new money out of expected future income (Hoogvelt 1997: 82). National currencies, especially the dollar, serve as variable means of international payment, and as such, they are the object of intense speculation in the global money markets. Under these conditions, there is no standard of value to discipline markets. The value of money is no longer determined by its ability to create surplus-value through the wage relation, but by its ability to command credit, since the stability of currencies depends on financiers ongoing evaluation of national economic policies and on future income of borrowers. Such evaluation is political in two senses: in the assessment of potential for stable financial growth, and in the assessment of a state’s commitment to global circuits of money and commodities, relative to other states.

To the extent that the wage form no longer governs valorization, other forms of labor are valorized directly through political or non-market mechanisms as investors seek to evade or weaken organized labor. Labor forces across the world are cheapened, with the recursive effect of devaluing the wage contract through familiar mechanisms such as the ‘race to the bottom’ (see Brecher and Costello 1994). De-institutionalization of the wage form expresses the connection between the project of globalization and the specific crisis of late-twentieth century capitalism. The crisis is that “not only can the international currency—the dollar—no longer be converted into
Philip McMichael

World-Systems Analysis, Globalization, and Incorporated Comparison.

The first condition for loan rescheduling laid down by the IMF is currency devaluation. Currency devaluation, imposed via IMF supervision via Article VIII of the IMF Articles of Agreement (on about 90 member states so far), represents both an attack on the national currency and, following Polanyi, on national sovereignty. Devaluation compresses real earnings, as domestic prices of food staples, essential drugs, fuel and public services inflate. Governments are then constrained to pursue anti-inflationary programs, shrinking the state through reduction of public expenditure including social programs, and de-indexing wages to promote “liberalization of the labor market.” These conditions not only reduce national policy choices, but standardize them as well (to the extent that they do standardize in practice). They also demand political independence of Central Banks allowing the IMF to handle money creation, which means resuming dependence on foreign loans. In global terms, IMF conditions reduce the value of labor in hard currency, and adjust domestic prices upward, reinforcing the ‘globalization of poverty’ (Chossudovsky 1997:56-9).

The cumulative effect of individual country adjustment is a general global restructuring, whereby labor costs are ratcheted downwards through de-indexation and the elimination of social wage supports. With the realignment of domestic prices to reflect world prices, and the exposure of unprotected domestic labor forces to the depressive forces of a world labor market, market rule is instituted through the collaboration of multilateral power and domestic political and economic elites who profit from state privatization schemes and loan rescheduling. In effect, this unrestrained money power—unrestrained because money is now more a political relation than a value relation—privileges multilateral financial institutions (and TNCs) and reconstitutes state power around the implementation of monetarist orthodoxy (see Marazzi 1977:107).

THE DECOMPOSITION OF WAGE-LABOR

In a global economy where value is no longer rooted in the effective command of wage-labor, much generation of wealth is artificially created by credit, accelerating the concentration and centralization of capital and its technological base (devaluing wage-labor), and intensifying the consumption of productive and increasingly non-productive (e.g. symbolic) commodities.
The implementation of neo-liberal, supply-side, economics has generated a crisis of overproduction, as consumption has not matched the expanded global production base; for example, prior to the global financial crisis, in 1997 the global auto industry had the capacity for 80 million vehicles a year, for a marketplace with fewer than 60 million buyers. Such overcapacity puts pressure on firms to lay off workers and relocate to reduce their labor costs, further exacerbating the problem (Greider 1997).

The integration of the world labor force is a condition of global strategies of accumulation. Under the terms of the micro-electronics revolution, the production and appropriation of information has become central to accumulation. Not only do information technologies facilitate flexible global organization, but also this form of accumulation values, and depends increasingly on, market ‘place.’ Firms increasingly depend on the quality of their relational links (sometimes in alliances with competitors), their ability to extract market information, and their coordination of clusters of subcontracting relations. That is, the modern, vertical integration and pyramidal structure of firms is yielding to a more horizontal integration, where decentralized databases interlock and exchange information, and power diffuses into a series of connected command nodes, in which “to be powerful is to be in contact, in communication, and in which power is defined by influence and no longer by mastery” (Guéhenno 1995:62)—although firms retain production facilities that are essential for maintaining strategic control (Sengenberger and Wilkinson 1995:113).

The new industrial space has been characterized as geographically discontinuous, because of “the technological and organizational ability to separate the production process in different locations while reintegrating its unity through telecommunications linkages, and microelectronics-based precision and flexibility in the fabrication of components” (Castells 1996: 386). Unlike the world-system/commodity chain approach to global industrial organization, which focuses on a geo-politically derived hierarchical division of world labor in the conception and fabrication of a product, the notion of a space of flows situates hierarchies of innovation and fabrication in global networks. Here the “direction and architecture of these networks are submitted to the endless changing movements of cooperation and competition between firms and between locales, sometimes historically cumulative, sometimes reversing the established pattern through deliberate institutional entrepreneurialism” (Castella 1996:393).

A complementary perspective views corporations adopting a “loosely confederated network structure” in order to survive in and negotiate an environment where markets and technologies are in constant flux. Since the global market now integrates a global core of middle class consumers, corporations combine global coordination with regional marketing strategies (including purchasing local firms to establish a regional foothold). Informational technologies facilitate this, but are both expensive and rapidly obsolescent, “placing an ever greater premium on access to financial resources, multiplant production and extensive marketing networks” (Hoogvelt 1997: 110). The consequence is that companies (high-tech industries such as automobile, aerospace, computers, and telecommunications) enter increasingly into strategic alliances and joint ventures, giving rise to the ‘networked’ or ‘virtual’ firm. The virtual firm is governed by financial mergers and speculation, and a disregard for labor force reproduction in any particular place (Hoogvelt 1997:111, 113). In this configuration, social rather than geographical hierarchies (as understood in the classic international division of labor between north and south) organize a global production landscape that is fluid, unstable, and characterized by ‘jobless growth,’ overproduction tendencies, and recurring outbreaks of financial crisis.

From the enterprise point of view, the greater differential in labor standards encourages ‘rent seeking,’ whereby companies improve their profitability by “specializing in extracting concessions from workers, locally based firms and from communities” (Sengenberger and Wilkinson 1995:123). This practice, which contributes to the ‘race to the bottom’ dynamic, also expresses the financially-driven practices of what is appropriately termed ‘predatory capital.’ The U.S. stands as the model of this kind of rent-seeking versus new wealth creation: “federal law limits the ability of individual states to regulate corporations where labor standards vary between states, and where legislative changes and judicial judgements have made it increasingly easy to dislodge trade unions and to dismantle collective bargaining” (Sengenberger and Wilkinson 1995:123). Also, the U.S. government, unlike European states, allows companies to hire part-time employees without traditional full benefits, thus creating millions of new, second-class, jobs.

In a globalizing economy, firms in other states with more intact social rights are unlikely to stay put when they can gain access to global money markets and locate in regions where labor standards are more conducive to profitability. These conditions encourage the ‘export’ of the U.S. labor
model. The logic of the globalization project (including regional trade bloc formation) is precisely to universalize conditions for this kind of predatory capitalism by institutionalizing a global property regime—reducing government intervention in financial markets, and subordinating national laws to the rights of flow (in and out) of investment capital. Such a regime is currently under discussion in the stop-and-go MAI talks, initiated by EU states and businesses, with the support of the US and Japanese governments. 

The global property regime rests on the casualization of the wage relation—bringing wage-labor into competitive juxtaposition with increasingly casual, sweatshop, prison, slave and child labor. In China, for example, where almost half the world’s shoes are made, along with an array of garments, household gadgets and electrical appliances previously assembled in Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea, factory management is militaristic and punitive (Chen 1996:21). While there is great variation across regions and plants, the premium on flexibility encourages informal labor markets and conditions. In fact, across the world unskilled labor straddles the divide between the formal and the informal economy, with a more pronounced foundation for capitalist production in unregulated and highly-exploitative environments.

In a historical conjuncture where the wage form governs value production and exchange less and less, non-wage forms of labor become at once increasingly significant and increasingly tenuous. Included in non-wage forms is the semi-wage, or temporary hired worker. Collins has documented recent trends towards the feminization of Latin American agricultural workforces. Agribusiness firms hire women to combine high-quality labor with the lower costs associated with the flexible employment patterns of women, which is related to their primary responsibility to provision their household—in other words capitalist social relations are not simply market relations, but implicate household relations also as part of their conditions of reproduction. Collins concludes: “Agribusinesses use gender ideologies to erode stable employment and worker rights where women are concerned. Of equal significance, employing women provides the employer with a way of invoking institutions beyond the workplace to extend and reinforce labor discipline” (1995:217).

My point is that in a world market where valorization has to be managed, social and cultural conditions beyond the formal labor market enter directly into the construction of labor forces vulnerable to human and labor rights abuses. In Chile, the show case of structural adjustment, the Labor Code formally resembles the informal practices in the U.S. labor market, that appear to be the latest American export. That is, it allows “employers to fire workers at will, individually or en masse, for ‘business necessities,’ eliminating, according to the architects of the code, the ‘monopoly’ many workers had on their jobs...the right to organize was extended only to workers employed for at least six consecutive months” (Wells 1996:160). This includes the much-heralded Chilean fruit industry where women work a few months a year, on a piece rate basis—a standard feature of a labor market where the wage relation is not regulated by the law of value.

The revival of sharecropping in California can be interpreted as a class strategy on the part of growers to undercut the power of organized farm labor. Not only are sharecroppers “essentially employees with a share feature to their wage contracts” (Wells 1996:302), but also they use labor contractors to hire devalued labor: “research shows that the use of contractors lowers wages and benefit levels, impedes labor organizing, increases worker dependency, and reduces the likelihood that employees will pursue their rights under the law” (Wells 1996:299). In world-historical context, the decline of the Californian wage contract and the rise of sharecropping articulates with the Mexican subsistence, or informal, sector, which subsidizes severely underpaid and underemployed laborers on sharecropper plots (Wells 1996:285).

Here the decomposition of wage-labor expresses contradictory, politically-mediated relations between states, firms and labor. The diversity of labor forms suggests something more than simply a new era of flexible capitalism, pursuing lower labor costs, resources and perhaps quality control. Arguably, these developments are quite specific to this world-historical conjuncture. Wage-labor is less and less an anchor of capital accumulation, which depends more and more on undercutting wage-labor with bastard forms of labor from around the world. The relations of production of the whole system are certainly relevant, but, in my view these relations are only understandable as governed by the counter-movement of capital against wage-labor and its power, as historically institutionalized in state social policies. In other words, the systemic relations of production need to be situated historically, within a comparatively informed understanding of the conditions that formed and now deform the wage-labor relation.
**Conclusion**

Contemporary ‘globalization’ is a multi-dimensional class project. Institutionally, it matured during the 1980s debt regime, and it repeats the attempt to install a self-regulating market, this time in place of nationally instituted markets. Market freedom today means a frontal assault on the institutions of the nation-state (or citizen-state). However, states are not being eliminated, rather they are being restructured from nation-states into what I shall call ‘global’ states, that is, institutions geared to securing global credit, and circuits of money and commodities, and usually legitimized by ‘consumer citizens.’ This is clear enough from the European initiative to establish a single currency via the centralization of monetary policy.

I have argued that the decomposition of the nation-state is synonymous with the decomposition of wage-labor as a social institution. Through the process of instituting the self-regulating market in the nineteenth century, the formation of the nation-state was conditioned by the existence of a global political-economy pivoting on the wage-labor relation. The ideology of development, the process of decolonization, and the construction of social-democratic, and developmentalist, state forms all depended on the unification of the world market via the maturing wage relation. The rise of social labor was central to the universalization of the nation-state, which combined Fordist/Keynesian state forms with the stabilization of the global economy via developmentalist states in the non-European regions of the world.

The ‘globalization project’ reversed this historical process by de-institutionalizing monetary relations and wage relations. Relaxing national labor standards and financial controls is clearly destabilizing. The ‘Washington consensus’ is no longer a consensus—especially since the Asian financial debacle, which the World Bank blamed on the IMF and U.S. policy. Since money is no longer governed by commodity values, but rather by speculative circuits of financial capital, the globalization project also means avoiding financial collapse. National debt is underwritten and rescheduled on a decedently *ad hoc* basis: as exemplified in the emergency bail-out of beleaguered Asian-Pacifi c national banking systems, by IMF packages supplemented with northern financial assistance. The IMF’s role is to extract financial adjustment in the assisted states to sustain global capital flows, bailing out the banks at the expense of citizens.

The lesson here perhaps is that capital is unable to regulate itself without a world money commodity as the vehicle of the law of value. In its place, we have powerful debt security or bond-rating agencies, like Standard and Poor, and Moody’s (combined listings of 3 trillion US dollars), and financial speculators, who privately regulate the disposition of investment funds and the value of national currencies, respectively, according to financial orthodoxy (Sassen 1996:15-16). And, in the event of poor credit ratings, and short-term money flight, the IMF steps in as *de facto* lender of last resort. In other words, the need to preserve money increasingly governs institutional politics in global and national arenas, at the expense of the substantive social policies identified with the era of wage-labor and the nation-state.

In this essay I have attempted to problematize globalization as a historical project, by comparing two periods of market rule. In addition to the sequential, historical relationship between the nineteenth-century ‘self-regulating market’ episode and the late-twentieth century era of globalization, there is a conceptual relationship between these episodes. This relationship is imminent in the history of wage-labor, and can be understood via two methodological devices. First, there is the method of political economy, which posits wage-labor as the conceptual key to the history of capital and its many social determinations. Second, the method of incorporated comparison brings these two episodes into relation to one another via analysis of the wage relation, understood as a global political construct with quite distinct social and institutional determinations across the two historical times. In this way, history is theorized via concepts that are relationally formed and therefore comparable in and across historical time.

**References**


There are fashionable terms that are at once misleading and revealing. The “third way” is one of them. There was a time when this concept had a genuine meaning. Back in the 1950s, for the so-called “revisionists” in Eastern Europe it spelled the search for democratic socialism that had nothing to do with its Stalinist perversion but was not a return to capitalism either. For some radical dissidents in the West it had the same significance: it was their way of telling Moscow and Washington “a plague on both your houses” during the period of the Cold War. But that conflict is over, the neo-Stalinist empire has collapsed and capitalism is triumphant. In its new reincarnation, the “third way” does not even envisage the dismantling of capitalism. All it proposes is to put a coat of varnish on top. As applied by its chief practitioner, the British prime minister, Tony Blair, and as interpreted by his guru, Anthony Giddens, the model has been described, unkindly though not unfairly, as that contradiction in terms—“Thatcherism with a human face.”

But it is not just a fraud; it is also a symptom. The term became fashionable once again when, on the international scale, the establishment began to lose the full control of the situation. Capitalism, now spread all over the planet, faced its most serious economic crisis since the war. In Western Europe, the drive to impose the American model was at once intensified while also meeting increasing resistance. The ruling ideology had lost some of its effectiveness. It was no longer enough to repeat that there is no exit...
from our society, for people simply to resign themselves passively to their fate. This was one of those situations when the rulers must follow the advice given by the hero of Tomasi di Lampedusa in *The Leopard*: change everything so that nothing be altered. Or, to put it differently, the “third way” is akin to those non-alcoholic drinks, like Canada Dry, designed to give the consumer an illusion of alcohol instead of the real thing.

An instrument for deception then? Undoubtedly, but also the sign of an opportunity. The fact that, in 1999, thirteen out of the fifteen states of the European Union have “leftish” governments, including Social-Democratic ministers; that in eleven of them² leftists have a dominant position; that only Spain and Ireland are still ruled by conservatives; all of these have their significance. It means that people in Western Europe are rejecting the American model, that they are yearning for something different. True, it is the role of the Social-Democratic governments to temper their mood, to channel the discontent so as to prevent it from challenging existing society. But they need not necessarily be successful. With the gospel of globalization shaken by the Asian crisis and its consequences in Russia, Latin America and beyond, with the *pensée unique*, as the French call the ruling ideology, losing its monopoly for the first time in years, a new New Left now has a possibility to help the movement from below to search for an alternative that is both radical and internationalist and thus to put pressure on these governments. In other words, it can restore the “third way” to its original meaning—the search for a socialist resurrection.

We are living a complex period of transition, watching at one-and-the-same time the apparent revival of Social Democracy and its deepest crisis. To understand what is happening, and what is at stake, we must look at it all in a historical perspective. But I shall limit this recollection of the past to a minimum because those who are interested in my views on the subject can find them in a recent book.³

The quarter of a century or so after the last war was for the western world a period of unprecedented expansion, the so-called ‘golden age of capitalism’. For Western Europe in particular these were years of deep trans-

² Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Austria, Greece and Portugal.

formation: mass migration from country to town, the infl ow of immigrant workers, major shifts in the patterns of consumption. Above all, it was a period of rapid growth, with the national product rising at an average annual rate of around five per cent. Part of that increment was passed on to the working people. Within a generation the Western Europeans acquired the symbols of the American dream: the car, the fridge, the washing machine, the TV set. Let us not idealize that “golden age”; with overcrowding, insecurity and the painful pace of assembly lines there were plenty of reasons for popular discontent. Still, as living standards were climbing, it was possible to argue: why change society when you can make so many changes within the existing social relations.

The social-democratic mood that prevailed at the time rested on that argument. I am not using here the term social democracy in its historical connotation. After all, Lenin, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were social-democrats. I am taking it here in the form it has acquired since the last war, namely the reformist management of the existing capitalist society. As long as in an expanding economy there was room for concessions, the climate was social-democratic even where the Socialists were not in office. The mood was contagious. After 1968 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia, with the Soviet model totally shattered, even Western Communists were resigned to the idea of merely seeking improvements within the capitalist framework.⁴

In any case, the historical paradox is that this general conversion to capitalism coincides with the end of an era, the end of economic and social developments which inspired that conversion. One may debate whether the actual turning point came at the end of the 1960s, with the profit squeeze, or at the beginning of the following decade with the jump in the oil prices. However, it is undisputed that a quarter of a century of unprecedented growth is over and the age of painful restructuring begins. True, at the beginning, in the “seventies,” efforts were still being made to salvage the smooth system of class collaboration that had been yielding such nice divi-

⁴ Francis Fukuyama with his *End of History*, after all, simply codified and pushed to the extreme long-standing propaganda. It is interesting to remember that the concepts of an unsurpassable capitalist horizon, and the absence of an alternative, existed well before the collapse of the Soviet Empire.
dends. The “eighties” witnessed the all-out offensive of capital against labor. It started in the United States with Reagan’s attack against Patco, against the striking air-controllers in 1981-82, and it climaxed with Thatcher’s ruthless defeat of the miners, after an epic battle, in 1984-85. Yet these were only highlights in a campaign waged on all fronts. Domestically, it involved anti-labor legislation to weaken the unions and, to use buzzwords, downsizing, re-engineering, the introduction of *kanban*, the Japanese system of just-in-time organization of work and of *corporate governance*, the new American methods of management for immediate profit and a good quotation on the Stock Exchange.

In Europe, to provide scope for profit, public property was privatized on a vast scale, starting with steel or banks and ending with railways and telecommunications. Everywhere the function of the state was changed—let us emphasize, not diminished, but altered; its role as the pillar of the existing system, if anything, strengthened, but its powers to control capital greatly reduced. Deregulation was the order of the day and it affected international as well as domestic relations. Foreign trade barriers having been removed earlier, controls over the movements of capital were almost entirely lifted. This led to a huge expansion of these transfers and to a frenzy of financial speculation, with investment banks, pensions and hedge funds leading the way. It also strengthened the power of the employers, notably the transnational corporations, thinking and acting globally, over a labor movement thrown on the defensive and lagging behind the demands of the new international situation.

Such a tremendous upheaval would have been unthinkable without a simultaneous effort by the establishment’s mighty propaganda machine. A visitor from Mars returning to the western world after a thirty years’ absence would not recognize the place, so great has been the political swing to the Right, so deep the change in the ideological climate. Gone is the talk about capitalism with a human face, growing eternally without crises and thus turning us all into a middle class. We are back to the laws of the capitalist jungle, where profit is the only judge and private enterprise the only value, where the winners take all and the losers deserve their fate. After years of steady rise in living standards, the official preachers found it difficult to sell the public a new model, based on increased polarization and involving mass unemployment in Europe or the spread of the working poor in America. In the circumstances it was indispensable to convince the people that they had no choice and this was achieved with impressive success. The new philosophers’ *gulag* campaign, the collapse of the neo-Stalinist empire presented as the funeral of socialism, the end of history, all this helped to consolidate the triumph of T.I.N.A. — “there is no alternative,” or Tina, the nickname given Maggie Thatcher (you know, the lady who gave tea and cakes to General Pinochet). This premise, alas, has been accepted as the very foundation of our political debate.

How did the *gauche respectueuse*, as the French nicely called the Left respectful of the established order fit into this new pattern? At first, it was bewildered. It stuck to the middle of the road, to compromise and collaboration, while the radicalized Right had completely altered its strategy. Then it resigned itself to the new order of things. The electoral victory of the French Left in 1981 was probably the last one achieved with a program of fairly radical reforms. But as these were not conceived with the new economic situation in mind, and as nothing was done to mobilize a mass movement to back them, the experiment rapidly ended in total surrender. Indeed, where in office, like in France or Spain, the “socialist” governments took an active part in deregulation and, in opposition, in Britain, Germany or Italy, the leftist parties followed the same trend. The Respectful Left everywhere was ready to play according to the new rules of the game. (The Swedish Social Democrats were the last ones to fall into line).

The snag is that this respectful Left was now being asked to switch from the reformist to the counter-reformist management of capitalist society. Its job was not to make new concessions but to take back those that had been made in the period of prosperity. This, in turn, probably implied the transformation of Europe’s traditional mass political parties into electoral machines like in the United States. The Americanization of Europe, it was argued, suggests taking the Democratic Party as a model. We shall see that the leaders of the European parties have been following this road with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The blessing of the leaders, however, was not sufficient. While the pressure existed earlier, the nineties witnessed a

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5 By analogy with J-P Sartre’s play, *La Putain respectueuse*, the Respectful Whore.
real campaign by the international financial establishment urging western Europe to follow the American example, to dismantle its welfare state and to deprive the working people of all safeguards interfering with the newly sacred “flexibility of labor.” But this drive met popular resistance. When Silvio Berlusconi, the tycoon turned prime minister, attacked their pensions, the Italians staged huge demonstrations in 1994. Two years later, when they felt their rights threatened, the German trade-unions showed their strength. Yet the ideological turning point, at least in my opinion, was reached in 1995, during the French winter of discontent, when Paris was paralyzed by a transport strike and the French provinces shaken by mass demonstrations. If that is the future you are offering us and our children—the French protesters were really proclaiming on that occasion—to hell with your future, alternative or no alternative. This was in fact the first big rebellion against T.I.N.A.

At the end of the millennium the moderate Left thus finds itself in a complex and contradictory position in Western Europe. On one hand, as we saw, the leaders of that respectful Left have fully endorsed the new rules of the game, heavily twisted in a reactionary direction: bowing to the gospel of globalization, they accepted the uncontrolled flows of capital over frontiers and, domestically, they became the eager practitioners of the religion of the market and of the cult of private enterprise. On the other hand, they got into when this new orthodoxy began to be questioned and when the international financial crisis could no longer be concealed. Furthermore, their own victory introduced a new factor. Hitherto, a Socialist prime minister in France or in Spain could claim that his intentions were genuinely progressive, but he was helpless on the European stage dominated by Conservatives. Now that center-left governments are dominant, notably in the four key states of the European Union—Germany, France, Britain and Italy—that plea can no longer be used. Social Democracy faces its real test, its moment of truth.

Its leaders knew that they would be judged by their capacity to reduce unemployment and to defend the welfare state. Hence their temptation, once in office, to promote expansionary policies. These, however, clashed, particularly in the new framework of a single market and a common currency, with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty and the Stability Pact imposed by Chancellor Helmut Kohl. In fairness, it must be added that,

after years of retreat and concessions, just merely to revive Keynesian policies or to defend—not to expand, but to maintain—social benefits would now require a mass mobilization of support and an international strategy that none of these parties had practiced for years. It is this contradiction that offers scope for a New Left within the labor movement, but in order to appreciate this opportunity we must first take a closer look at the ruling Social Democracy to perceive beneath its uniformity the genuine differences, say, between Britain with its pure version of the Third Force and France showing the political consequences of a social movement.

To see how far New Labour has moved to the Right it is worth glancing at the little book mentioned earlier, written by the director of the London School of Economics, Anthony Giddens, and supposed to provide the theoretical justification for Tony Blair’s practice. Theory is a big word for this exercise in political propaganda. The argument of Mr. Giddens rests on all the fashionable cliches of the recent period such as “the final discrediting of Marxism” or the “dissolution of the ‘welfare consensus.’” The question he puts on the agenda is what should one do in a world where, by definition, “there are no alternatives to capitalism”? Where, then, does the Third Way, his solution, lie? Between neo-liberalism—read Reagan or Thatcher—and the old Social Democracy “with its ethos of collectivism and solidarity.” Where is that? While rejoicing over the fact that a growing number of issues now “escape the left-right divide,” Professor Giddens still talks about such a division, though the line he draws can hardly be seen. He is in favor of occasional state intervention but for the sake of building “an infrastructure needed to develop an entrepreneurial culture.” “Providing tax breaks for corporations…utilizing the dynamism of the market…a society of responsible risk takers…responsible business ethos.” The style is so eloquently obvious that it needs no elaboration. Our professor would accept a reduction of working time, but “not in the form of limits on the working week fixed by government.” He is, naturally, against “an obsession with inequality.” Indeed, if you take away the local gimmicks (the old British hat about the “radical center” and the now fashionable references to “civil society”), this is a boring discourse that would not disturb anybody in the American Democratic Party, or even at the local Rotary Club.

Tony Blair is undoubtedly a skillful performer, yet how can he get away with such a shoddy script? The answer does not lie simply in his charisma,
his gift for sound bites and the skill of his spin-doctors. The deeper reason is that, in all of Western Europe, it was in Britain that the labor movement had suffered its most serious setback. It started with the defeat in 1981-82 of the attempt by the Labour left, headed by Tony Benn, to radicalize the party and render it more democratic by giving more power to the militants, to the rank and file. A year after, in 1983, the Tories won another election and a triumphant Mrs. Thatcher at once prepared for a major confrontation with the labor movement. The miners took up her challenge, but without the full support of the party and union leadership they were doomed. After a year of bitter struggle, the striking miners were defeated. Conflicts of that nature and scope leave their mark on the political life of a country. In such a climate it was easier for the allegedly leftist Neil Kinnock to proceed with the normalization of the Labour Party, thus preparing the ground for the Americanization of New Labour by Tony Blair. Naturally, even traumatic experiences do not last forever and there are already some signs that the Blair euphoria may be coming to an end. But there is so much to be redressed that time will be needed and, meanwhile, smooth Tony can act as the peddler of the American model dressed up as the third way. Or, to put it in the language of his guru: since “Thatcherism shook up British society” rendering “political discussion…more free thinking…the British could be a sparking point for creative action between US and continental Europe.”

The trouble is that the continentals are not enthusiastic buyers, with the French usually singled out as the example of that reluctance. Not that Lionel Jospin is a sans-culotte or a builder of barricades. Very far from it. He was an important member of Francois Mitterrand’s team which tamed the French labor movement. The miners took up her challenge, but without the full support of the party and union leadership they were doomed. After a year of bitter struggle, the striking miners were defeated. Conflicts of that nature and scope leave their mark on the political life of a country. In such a climate it was easier for the allegedly leftist Neil Kinnock to proceed with the normalization of the Labour Party, thus preparing the ground for the Americanization of New Labour by Tony Blair. Naturally, even traumatic experiences do not last forever and there are already some signs that the Blair euphoria may be coming to an end. But there is so much to be redressed that time will be needed and, meanwhile, smooth Tony can act as the peddler of the American model dressed up as the third way. Or, to put it in the language of his guru: since “Thatcherism shook up British society” rendering “political discussion…more free thinking…the British could be a sparking point for creative action between US and continental Europe.”

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The trouble is that the continentals are not enthusiastic buyers, with the French usually singled out as the example of that reluctance. Not that Lionel Jospin is a sans-culotte or a builder of barricades. Very far from it. He was an important member of Francois Mitterrand’s team which tamed the French Left and normalized the Socialist Party. Fundamentally, Jospin accepts the rule of capital in its current globalized version as does his English counterpart, but whereas the British prime minister is the ultimate result of a defeat of the labor movement, the French one is a by-product of a relative success. Without the strikes and mass demonstrations of the French winter of discontent in 1995, there probably would have been no snap, anticipated parliamentary election in 1997 and no government of the “plural Left.” New Labour accepts the heritage of Thatcherism and tries to fit into it. Unlike the attempt by the Labour left, headed by Tony Benn, to radicalize the party and render it more democratic by giving more power to the militants, to the rank and file. A year after, in 1983, the Tories won another election and a triumphant Mrs. Thatcher at once prepared for a major confrontation with the labor movement. The miners took up her challenge, but without the full support of the party and union leadership they were doomed. After a year of bitter struggle, the striking miners were defeated. Conflicts of that nature and scope leave their mark on the political life of a country. In such a climate it was easier for the allegedly leftist Neil Kinnock to proceed with the normalization of the Labour Party, thus preparing the ground for the Americanization of New Labour by Tony Blair. Naturally, even traumatic experiences do not last forever and there are already some signs that the Blair euphoria may be coming to an end. But there is so much to be redressed that time will be needed and, meanwhile, smooth Tony can act as the peddler of the American model dressed up as the third way. Or, to put it in the language of his guru: since “Thatcherism shook up British society” rendering “political discussion...more free thinking...the British could be a sparking point for creative action between US and continental Europe.”
be forced and the phony experiment turned into something more serious — provided a new, radical Left proved able to help the movement from below in its search for a genuine alternative.

In Western Europe, the space to the left of the Socialists is not empty. You have the many ex-Communist Parties, like Spain’s Izquierda Unida (United Left) or Sweden’s Left Party (the Vanster Partiet), or splinters from the CP like Italy’s Rifondazione which, seeking new horizons, have opened their ranks to feminists, ecologists and fragments of the New Left. You have the various groups of the revolutionary Left, alternative Greens and different shades of progressive Women’s Liberation. I am not listing them all not only because of lack of space but also because I think the potential of that new New Left is infinitely greater than its present reality, a point I shall now try to illustrate with the admittedly particularly favorable example of France.

In the first poll of the presidential election of 1995 the rest of the Left captured almost as many votes as the Socialist Jospin. The Left received 17.4%, (Communist Robert Hue 8.73%, the Trotskyist Arlette Laguiller 5.23% and Dominique Voynet, the Green 3.44%) compared with Jospin’s 23.31%, but at the last moment many people switched to the Socialist so as to have a candidate of the Left in the second round, when only the two top contenders are allowed to compete. By now the Greens and the Commu-

ists are junior partners in the plural government dominated by the Socialists and in the regional elections staged last year—an unfavorable occasion for small parties—Trotskyist candidates again got around 5% of the vote. This repeated success was not a sudden conversion of the French to the ideas of the prophet of permanent revolution. It was a warning—dangerous for the CP and serious for the Socialists—a reminder that they were elected to change things and not just to carry on as before. One could also add to this list of warnings a perceptible change in the ideological climate, criticism of globalization, the popularity of books questioning the pensée unique, the development of associations defending the interests of the sans, of those without (without a home, without identity papers, without a job), notably the entry of the unemployed on the political stage at the end of 1997.7

The problem facing the new radical Left throughout Western Europe is not one of potential support. The problem concerns its capacity to offer an alternative that is credible, coherent and comprehensive. In other words, it must break the persistent stranglehold of Tina. As long as one accepts profits, the market, and private enterprise as the foundations of our society, radical proposals rapidly reach their limits. This is particularly true now in the European Union with its single market and its common currency. If you propose higher taxes on profits, bonds or shares, it will be objected that you merely encourage the flight of capital. For a firm to remain competitive, it will be argued, a reduction of the work week must be combined with greater “flexibility,” notably the calculation of overtime on an annual and not a weekly basis. As to a decent minimum income for everyone, irrespective of whether she or he has a job, it is clearly incompatible with the workings of the labor market. I am not suggesting that one should abandon these objectives. On the contrary, however, the movement must be aware that their fulfillment, in the long run, clashes with the logic of our system, that these demands take us beyond the confines of capitalist society.

Indeed, it is important that people should learn this contradiction through their own daily struggles, not just the industrial workers defending their wages, their employment and their welfare. The Greens must discover in their own action that the rule of capital, its mechanism of accumulation, driven by exchange value and not human needs, is incompatible with the ecological limits of our planet. The feminists must find out that, ultimately, they cannot eliminate the oppression of which they are the victims, within the hierarchical framework of capitalist society. It is only when they have learned it through their own experience that the different social movements can really get together and work out a joint project, elaborate a common vision, strive to gain mastery over their fate.

But are we not smuggling through the back door our old friend—the model handed down from above to obedient rank-and-file? I don’t think so, firstly because the project is to be elaborated democratically, from below, with the active participation of the people involved; secondly, because the project will not be a neat blueprint to be implemented, but rather a draft to be revised time and again as the movement advances and develops its political consciousness while it proceeds. People, let us have no illusion, won’t be converted at once by a program, however beautiful it may be. It is through

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7 See Marie Agnes Combesque: Ca Suffit, Plon 1998, and Bernard Poulet: A gauche de la gauche in Le Debat nr.103, January-February 1999
their own struggles, their setbacks that they must learn their lesson, realize that their demands, desires and dreams cannot be fulfilled within the confines of capitalist society. Besides, nobody now envisages the transformation as an instant revolution, the seizure of the Winter Palace followed by immediate results. Profits will not vanish at once, the market will not disappear overnight, the state will not wither away within a season. The important and crucial point that the new radical Left must develop from the start is that there is, or at least there could be, another logic, another coherence, that something can be built beyond the capitalist horizon. It must also revive the idea, once fairly common, but today cleverly stifled, namely that people can change their own lives by reshaping society through collective political action.

It is the logic of our times
No subject for immortal verse
That we who lived by honest dreams
Defend the bad against the worse.

I think these words of Cecil Day-Lewis in Where Are The War Poets?, though written long ago, are perfectly suitable for our bewildered age, today more than ever. The complaint should not be interpreted as meaning that we should now stop voting for Labour against the Tories, for France’s respectful Left against the Right, for Italy’s Olive Tree against the coalition of the ex-fascist Fini and the tycoon Berlusconi. But this is not all nor is it the most important. For the radicals to erect this defense of the lesser evil to the rank of a categorical imperative is a form of political abdication. To carry any weight whatsoever, they must make it quite plain to the alleged leftists in office that some concessions and compromises are unacceptable, that beyond a certain point they will lose their support.

In order to exercise a real influence on the moderate Left, and hope one day to take its place, the radical New Left must go much further. Rather than revive the poet’s “honest dreams,” it must provide the vision of another society, a radical alternative, a realistic utopia. In doing so, it will show this caricature of the “third way” for what it is, the latest gimmick of the capitalist establishment to perpetuate its rule. With the Stalinist model shattered, and the social-democratic one bankrupt, it may, by the same token, give this term back its original significance—the search for a socialist solution. The fact that there are now new opportunities does not mean that the New Left will be up to its task. The challenging period at the turn of this millennium will be a test not only for Social Democracy.
Towards a Democratic Theory of the World-System: Democracy, Territoriality, and Transnationalization

Teivo Teivainen

A concern for the possible futures of the modern world-system has been a recurrent theme of world-systems analysis. There has, however, been relatively little effort to think about these futures in terms of democratic theory. In this article, I will explore some of the issues that need to be tackled to take radical and cosmopolitan questions of democracy better into account in world-systems analysis. In particular, I will point out some problems that need to be confronted in the collective process of locating and making visible the politics of “nonpolitical” spaces, such as the ones constituted by transnational business communities and their corporate bureaucracies.

To rely on the meaning of “politics” as something that necessarily deals with state governments is becoming increasingly restrictive in our transnationalizing world. While this argument as such is hardly original, its spatio-political implications for the future of the world-system are frequently left unspecified, referred to only in passing, or hidden under the often deliberately vague terminology of postmodernist suspicion. I intend to explore some of these implications from a viewpoint that assumes the need to search for democratic alternatives to the hierarchical power structures of the capitalist world-system.
I shall argue that to analyze and participate in today’s—and especially tomorrow’s—transnational political struggles, we need to move beyond exclusively territorialist accounts of social space and focus on the political multidimensionality of the world-system. We need multiperspectival conceptual maps that help us locate and analyze the formation of overlapping political spaces—be they called “political communities,” “political superstructure of the world-system,” or something else. The single-perspectival mapping of the world and the socially constructed dichotomy between “political” and “economic” spaces have all too often seduced us into assuming that territorial states constitute the politics of our world.

Deconstructing the discourse according to which the undemocratic praxis of the “private” transnational corporations and the “strictly economic” global financial institutions is somehow nonpolitical can help undermine their legitimacy. According to the mainstream tradition of western political thought—which many of the leaders of these institutions claim to honor—democracy is a valid norm within the realm of politics. By showing that the actions of these institutions are by no means beyond the realm of politics, we can at least in principle open up the spaces constituting their praxis for democratic demands. If our collective immanent critique is taken seriously, it should become clear they have not really honored the principles they have paid lip service to.

This would leave the rulers of the undemocratic institutions with a dilemma. Either they would have to admit that they in fact prefer authoritarian political rule to democracy, or, more ideally, they would have to participate in the democratization of their institutions. The latter possibility is hard to envision, but I think it is possible to at least partially achieve the former one. By focusing on the inherently political nature of the transnational and global “economic” spaces and by insisting on the thereby legitimized need to democratize them, the ideologically empowering banner of democracy may be taken out of capitalist hands.

In terms of constructing democratic futures, my emphasis on formulating arguments to politicize the transnational spaces of power is certainly quite limited. For example, I shall not deal with the crucial issue of political strategies for getting the radically democratic discourses heard in the largely corporate-controlled media networks of the world. My focus will be on the more modest issue of what we should say, or to be more exact, where to look to find adequate categories for mapping our world, with the hope that some of the ideas formulated with these categories might be translated into a language more useful to the political struggles than our academic jargon.

After a rather general overview of how political theories and international relations literature have tended to assume away some politically relevant spatial implications of the transnationalization and deterritorialization processes, I shall pay specific attention to the world-systems approach. I shall argue that in order to face the political and theoretical challenges of the futures of the world-system, the modernist map of political space used by the traditional world-systems approach needs to be redrawn. I use the term “modernist” to refer to the territorialist and single-perspectival conception of social space. I shall conclude with some remarks on the importance of imagining institutional features of transnational futures.

**Transnationalization and Deterritorialization**

In the 1990s, we experienced a proliferation of books and articles that focused on the restrictions that the transnationalization process places on the functioning of democracy within particular nation-states. Even if the majority of the analyses has considered any talk of transnational, global, or cosmopolitan democracy to be hopelessly utopian and therefore irrelevant, this trend in democratic theory has been opening up new debates across the academic walls. There are many reasons for optimism when democratic theories are cross-pollinated with theories of international relations, global economy, or world-systems.

For those of us concerned with working towards a theory of radically democratic praxis and its constraints in the transnationalizing and globalizing world, a simple articulation between existing accounts of the “inside” and the “outside” is, however, not enough. Certain assumptions that are becoming more and more incompatible with today’s social processes have been generally shared on both sides of the academic walls. The “modernist” idea of a strict territorial division into internal and external areas as regards particular political spaces is one of them. I shall argue that the analytical usefulness of this kind of spatial categories is being undermined by the twin processes of transnationalization and deterritorialization.

Transnationalization is a process that transgresses the borders of nation-states, and it must be analytically distinguished from globalization.
and internationalization. Transnational spaces—or “spatial extensions”—often have territorial forms, as in the creation of transborder regions that connect geographically close actors across state borders. In many transnational processes, however, territorial proximity is becoming less important for the definition and explanation of social proximity. Transnational spaces are increasingly assuming deterritorialized—or relatively nonterritorial—forms. This by no means denies the fact that, for example, the main office locations of leading investment banks tend to be concentrated in certain territorially limited areas.

Making the distinction between deterritorialized and territorial forms of space is an important antidote to certain accounts, often but not always postmodernist, in which the crisis of territorialist categories has been misleadingly interpreted as a growing irrelevance of space per se. Nevertheless, the distinction should not be interpreted in too dichotomous terms. It is rather a question of degree, and deterritorialized spaces certainly maintain many territorial links, even if they cannot be defined by any coherent territory that they cover. A deterritorialized space is not necessarily less material than a territorial space, and—what is more relevant to my argument—it is by no means inherently less political.

According to Robert David Sack’s useful formulation, territoriality is “the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area.” Furthermore, when metaphorical spatial concepts are booming in social theory, it needs to be specified that territorial area is a space with boundaries that are relatively coherent from the viewpoint of a “normal,” two-dimensional map. In a deterritorialized space, such as the Internet or transnational financial networks, the actors are effectively tied together, even if it is difficult or impossible to locate any coherent space formed by their links on a flat-surface map.

It is often assumed that late modern processes are limited to the “already developed” west, and have little relevance for analyzing the “still developing” areas of the world. Even if there certainly are many differences and inequalities in terms of power and material resources between different areas of the world-system, this assumption is somewhat misleading. For example, some of the so called post- or late modern characteristics of the western world may have been part of the Third World reality for a long time. Deterritori-
What they do signal is the crisis of single-perspectival territorialist accounts of the spatial units of the world.

Even if it is today almost a truism to say that financial transactions increasingly escape territorial borders, the fact that these transactions also constitute systems of rule is largely ignored or assumed away. In most theories of democracy, systems of rule are tightly contained within the theoretically privileged political communities called nation-states. Between and beyond these territorial containers, in the realms of global economy or international relations, there supposedly exists either a space of nonpolitical economic transactions or an anarchy where politics is assumed to be somehow less authentic than within the territorial states. The pursuit of political goals such as democracy is thereby assumed to be possible only within the “public” sphere of national governments.

Transnational corporations and global financial institutions cannot be regarded as direct substitutes for the interstate system, but because of their flourishing production of normative discourses and authoritative control over capital flows, many of them can be regarded as communities, or at least communities-in-the-making. Many critical social movements are also organizing transnationally, though generally to a much smaller degree than the business elites. These transnational linkages increasingly include processes that create feelings of belonging together, which is producing deterritorialized communities within, to name a few examples, labor movements, “gay nations,” religious organizations, and antinuclear coalitions. Many of these linkages are undoubtedly created on a short-term, ad hoc basis, and could well be described as loose advocacy networks. Some are, however, producing communities that will have longer-term effects and increase the political multidimensionality of the world-system.

One of the traditional yardsticks of the state as a political community—the means of violence—is undoubtedly still very much under state control. It remains to be seen to what extent transnational nonstate actors will be able to have their own enforcement troops. I would suggest that a Robocop-3-like scenario, where a transnational (Japanese) corporation uses its own police forces to control riots in a “foreign” territory (Detroit, largely owned by the corporation), is a reasonably plausible vision of the future. A significant increase in terrorist actions by (quasi)religious groups that cannot be located in any coherent territory is another possible future that should not be underestimated.

Rethinking the World-Systems Approach

The world-systems approach—defined at this point as its Wallersteinian version—provides us with many tools that help us locate and analyze global as opposed to national praxis. Through its attempt to break free from the territorial boundaries of the central object of social science—the national society—the world-systems approach has greatly enriched our spatial imagination. Besides the direct contributions of the approach in building a conceptual framework, its appearance in the mid-1970s had an impact that has ever since encouraged nation-state-centered theories to confront the globalization problématique.

Even though I shall argue that the traditional world-systems scheme of Wallerstein is based on some problematic assumptions about the political/economic boundary, I disagree with André Drainville, who mistakenly argues that in world-systems theory the world economy is conceptualized “simply as a bridge between national social formations.” To prove his argument, he quotes Wallerstein as saying that “[t]o be ‘social’ [is] to be ‘national’.” However, Wallerstein was referring to the strategies of the great social revolutions of the twentieth century, in which “[t]o be ‘social’ they had to be ‘national’.” A few lines below the misquoted statement, Wallerstein expresses his own view: “The capitalist world-economy as a totality—its structure, its historical evolution, its contradictions—is the arena of social action.”

By emphasizing the continuities of the modern world since the so-called long sixteenth century, the world-systems approach has been an invigorating antidote to the excesses of the new-global-world vision of many globalization theorists. A somewhat stubborn insistence on “it’s all business as usual” may, however, also imply an analytical straightjacket. Globalization as such is not as new as some would make us believe, but there are changes occurring in the late twentieth century that demand an analytical sensitivity that sometimes tends to disappear in the long-term structuralism of the world-systems approach. In other words, the “modern” world-system analyzed by Wallerstein might be transforming itself into a “late modern” world-system,
and if so, some of the modernist baggage in the Wallersteinian framework needs to be transgressed.\(^2\)

The incongruity of the present world-system with modernist spatial categories is due more to the transborder character of much social interaction than to the global reach of the system. In much of the recent literature that deals with the globalization process, there exists an implicit or explicit division into two discrete dimensions of it: scope and intensity. Globalization becomes, somewhat tautologically, global in scope when it operates world-wide. Its intensity refers to the intensification in the levels of interaction, interconnectedness, or interdependence.\(^3\) This distinction as such is a useful analytical tool, but it becomes problematic when it is assumed that only the former process has spatial implications. It tends to be forgotten that the intensification of *transnationalization*, as opposed to *internationalization*, creates spatial extensions that break the picture of social space divided into mutually exclusive territorial containers.

Even if *world-systems* analysis has focused on many transnational processes in a more sophisticated way than most of the recent theories of globalization, it has been less successful in theorizing the political relevance of *transborder* flows than in analyzing the world-wide scale of the social division of labor. This is perhaps most obvious in the spatial division of “one world-economy” into “multiple political units.” The multiple political units form the “political superstructure” of the world-economy, and they are exclusively defined as “sovereign states.”\(^4\) Even though this division is not necessarily always regarded as an absolute one, the categories imply an understanding of politics as something that happens within specific territorial containers. Correspondingly, transnational processes have been approached through unnecessarily depoliticized theoretical lenses.

By emphasizing that the modern capitalist world-system is by definition a world-economy, the *world-systems* approach has been vulnerable to accusations of economistic bias.\(^5\) The view that the Wallersteinian concept of world-economy can be interpreted as referring to a social system in a wider sense, and not only to the “economy” of standard economics or everyday language, is generally not taken into account by critics. The confusion is often increased by writing world-economy (or world-system) without the hyphen. The difference implied by the apparently insignificant hyphen is perhaps clearest in the romance languages: *économe mondial* vs. *économie-monde* or *economía mundial* vs. *economía-mundo*. The latter, hyphenated terms imply a rather holistic unit (“world,” which could perhaps be used synony-
mously with “social space”), whereas the former ones are practically synonymous with “global economy.”

The ambiguity is increased by the fact that Wallerstein sometimes does use the term world-economy to refer to the standard understanding of “economy.”\(^6\) Somewhat in passing, he has noted that conceptualizing the “effective social division of labor” as an “economy” is “code language,”\(^7\) which, I would suggest, translates to a need for an uncoding of world-systems terminology. As with most of the theoretical problems implicit in the world-systems approach, an important part of this problem of rigid categories has been noticed and emphasized by Wallerstein himself:

> Theoretically, the issue is simple. Everyone in the social sciences uses regularly the distinction of three arenas: the economic, the political, and the socio-cultural. No one believes us when we say there is but a single arena with a single logic. Do we believe it ourselves? Some of us, no doubt, but not even all of us. And all of us fall back on using the language of the three arenas in almost everything we write. It is time we seriously tackled the question.\(^8\)

Tackling this question, unthinking this nineteenth-century holy trinity,\(^9\) is certainly an urgent and difficult task. For reasons of clarity, I focus on the implications of the dichotomy between “political” and “economic” arenas. To separate the category of economy, even in the more nuanced version of “world-economy,” from the category of politics, is to prevent oneself from analyzing the always political nature of what the apologists of capitalism have wanted us to regard as technical, apolitical and natural issues.\(^10\) I do not attempt to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of the “language of the three arenas” here,\(^11\) but would instead like to point out that tackling the problem has consequences for the spatial framework of the world-systems approach.\(^12\)

To simply replace the problematical concepts of the “three arenas” with new ones and continue as if nothing else needed to be rethought would clearly be a nonsolution. If we take Wallerstein’s invitation to “unthink” seriously and accept that it is not useful—not even for the sake of theoretical exposition—to characterize the bureaucracies and power-networks of the transnational corporations as somehow less political than state bureaucracies, we need to question the assumption that territorial states exclusively
constitute the multiple political units of the world system. There indeed are many reasons to claim that “private” transnational corporations are no less political than “public” state institutions. The fact that the dominant version of liberal discourse tries to construct a dichotomous theoretical wall between the private corporation and the public state is understandable because of the generally accepted view according to which democratic claims are not valid within the private sphere. For a radically democratic theory, it should be obvious that this wall has to be deconstructed.

The praxis of the capitalist corporations disguised under the discourse of economic neutrality needs to be analyzed as political praxis. To the extent that this praxis is transnational and it constitutes social spaces such as transnational business communities, we need to account for transnational political units as parts of the “political superstructure” of the world-system. This by no means implies that the interstate system would be withering away very soon, or that it would have no specific characteristics that distinguish it from other power networks of the world-system. Nevertheless, marking the distinction between states and transnational corporations with the political-economic dichotomy is highly problematic. Emphasizing the territoriality of the states would be a more useful way of distinguishing them from transnational and deterritorialized political spaces.

The territoriality question has not been left totally unanalyzed by the world-systems approach. In their book on antisystemic movements, Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein do pay close attention to the “transterritorial economic command” of the transnational corporations and distinguish it from the “typically ‘territorial’” political command of the states. It is, however, too simplistic to reduce the power-effects of the transnational corporations to the category of “economic command” as opposed to “political command.” This reduction diminishes our ability to analyze their political praxis—such as media control, production of normative discourses, authoritative planning of intrafirm trade, political use of investment strikes, and also the possibly increasing reliance on their own enforcement troops.

The dichotomy between “political command” of the state and “economic command” of the corporations will probably become more problematical in the future, if the state bureaucracies, by becoming business-like, will increasingly be following an “economic” logic, and if large business organizations will increasingly assume functions that have at least in principle belonged to the state. As regards the labor force, transnational corporations can assume state-like functions for example by providing pensions, child care, health insurance, job security, seniority systems, and procedural “citizenship” rights for their workers. By assuming that the territorial mosaic constituted by states is all there is to the “political superstructure” of the world-system, the political multidimensionality of the late modern world-system is all too easily overlooked.

The analysis of the “long twentieth century” by Giovanni Arrighi is a fruitful attempt to break some of the spatial rigidities of the traditional world-systems approach. His distinction between the “space-of-places” of state governments and the “space-of-flows” of business organizations corresponds to a certain extent to the distinction between territorial and deterriorialized space. In his framework, the division of the world-economy into “competing political jurisdictions” is regarded as somewhat more contingent and less absolute than in the traditional world-systems approach. By acknowledging that “[state] form of territoriality as the basis for organizing political life seems to be torn apart by a non-territorial, functional space,” Arrighi is able to transcend much of the territorialist bias of the traditional world-systems approach—even if some of his statements still seem to rely on a rather depoliticized understanding of economy.

To what extent the transnationalization and deterritorialization processes have by now decreased the usefulness of the modernist and territorialist spatial framework of world-systems analysis should, of course, also be analyzed empirically. My generalizing analysis has certainly overlooked, for example, the differences between various kinds of transnational corporations, or various kinds of states. Depending on the indicators, I might be accused of overemphasizing the late modern characteristics of the world-system, and it might even be difficult for me to deny all the charges. In terms of the future of the world-system, however, the relevant question is whether the late modern processes under analysis in this article will continue and intensify. My conceptual critique has been encouraged by the prediction that they will.

Institutional features of transnational futures

My focus on how to politicize and undermine the spaces of corporate power has one further limitation, perhaps the most crucial one. Beyond
deconstruction, we need reconstruction. In many of the most innovative approaches to late modern transnational politics, such as William Connolly’s, the political prospects of “multifarious spatialization of democratic energies” are projected in terms of “democratic politics of disturbance.” Disturbance is good, when directed at unaccountable power, or at our own inadequate categories. To make the unaccountable accountable, however, we need to imagine institutional features of possible futures.

One probable explanation for the reluctance of many critical minds to engage in the imagining of institutional features of transnational futures, is that institutional aspects have been the bread and butter of theorists working with restricted notions of formal democracy. The radical liberation of democratic imagination is often conceptualized in terms of “authentic” or “participatory” democratic processes as opposed to the “formalist” or “electoralist” models of democratic institutions. I certainly think that democratic theory and praxis should indeed emphasize popular participation. Democracy, however, is about forms of rule, and an outright rejection of “formalism” may imply throwing the baby of defining radical forms of democratic accountability out with the bathwater of conservative attempts to imprison democracy within the national and territorial imagery of the “public sphere.”

The political usefulness of formulating models of transnational, cosmopolitan, or global democratic institutions of the future is not only that they can provide inspiration for those who might struggle for their realization. Such models are also important for the deconstructive politics of undermining the existing networks of power, because the legitimacy of the latter, especially after the “victory of democracy over totalitarianism,” is largely based on the there-is-no-alternative discourse. In this sense, deconstruction and reconstruction are two sides of the same coin.

I would like to share a personal experience to illustrate the political relevance of imagining democratic models of transnational futures. In an otherwise boring seminar on a dark and cold winter morning in Helsinki, I had an exchange of opinions with a charming French gentleman named Michel Camdessus, whose job is to manage and direct the International Monetary Fund. His discursive strategy was an example of, on the one hand, the attempts of the rulers of our world to deny that they might somehow break the norms of democracy and, on the other hand, when the denial becomes impossible, to point to the lack of alternatives.

When I asked about the lack of democratic accountability in the IMF, Camdessus categorically denied the charge. “In the IMF, we have a high degree of democracy.” He could, of course, have used the discourse of economic neutrality to deny the relevance of the democratic norm in the “non-political” IMF. But he did not, perhaps because the political role of the IMF in the system of global governance had become quite obvious even in the speech delivered by him a few minutes earlier.

It was not particularly difficult to argue that Camdessus was wrong. The degree of democracy in the IMF—governed by the one-dollar-one-vote principle—is about as high as the temperature was in the streets of Helsinki on that particular winter morning. Therefore, he had to switch to another discursive strategy. “Look at the alternative. The United Nations General Assembly is governed by the democratic principle of one country one vote. Would it not be absurd, if Fiji and Monaco had the same voting power in the IMF as the United States has?” After these words, he left the stage, amidst applause, smiling.

It would certainly be somewhat ridiculous to claim that true democracy on the global level could be achieved by giving to “Fiji” and “Monaco” the same voting power than to “the United States.” Correspondingly, most participants in the seminar were probably convinced that a democratization of the IMF would indeed be quite absurd. In our collective imagination, there was no democratic alternative in matters of global governance, because it was easy to see the democratic deficit of the only existing alternative, the one-country-one-vote model.

If the participants had read a book such as W. Warren Wagar’s *Short History of the Future*, which describes a future world-system where global institutions are governed by popularly elected delegates, roughly corresponding to the one-person-one-vote principle, the atmosphere in the seminar room might have been different. It might have been more difficult for Camdessus to delegitimize the delegitimizers, to deconstruct the deconstructive argument by using the there-is-no-alternative discourse.

The relevance of the “commonwealth” model envisioned by Wagar is not that it would necessarily be the most feasible or even desirable blueprint for a radically democratized world-system of the future. In the model, the system of global governance is based on a projection of a territorial state on the global level. It assumes a spatial homogeneity between a modern nation-state and the world state, except that the latter is bigger than the former.
It overlooks the possibility of finding transnational forms of democratic accountability that are not defined by territories they cover. In the Commonwealth World, the capitalist “megacorps” have been consolidated into democratically controlled state corporations. If we assume that some of these corporations extend transnationally, we could, and in my opinion should, also imagine transnational nonstate forms of democratic accountability.

For example, the corporations could be controlled by their workers’ transnational assemblies, perhaps together with other people most directly affected by the issues the corporations deal with. In a parallel fashion, we could claim that communities affected by a particular state’s actions should have a say in its decisions, even if they do not live within its borders or belong to its citizenry. Of course, it can be difficult to define the boundaries of such communities if they cannot be located in any coherent territorial area. This difficulty makes it convenient to rely on territorial units when trying to imagine democratic futures. Nevertheless, the apparent convenience of confining democratic accountability within territorial containers should not prevent us from imagining less territorialist models of democracy.

The importance of Wágár’s achievement, and that of the very few other models of global democracy, should not be dismissed because of their problems and ambiguities. Their relevance should be seen in terms of opening up an emerging political space, constituted by those of us who want to engage in and identify themselves with the collective project of building such models. The multiplication and proliferation of the models will help us undermine the there-is-no-alternative discourse and thereby empower us to engage in “politics of democratic disturbance” beyond the limits set by postmodernist scepticism. At the same time, of course, they will empower us to imagine possible futures. Imagine, in order to construct.

ENDNOTES:

1. On the confusion between different understandings of “politics,” see Roberto Unger, Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 145-146. For him, the narrow meaning of “politics” can be stated as “conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power.” To analyze the politics of practices and spaces other than those directly related to state governments, it is more useful to rely on the broader meaning, which he defines as “struggle over the resources and arrangements that set the basic terms of our practical and passionate relations.”

2. On how an emphasis on the spatial dimension can lead to “mystique of spatiality” in radicalized sociopolitical analyses, see David Slater, Territory and State Power in Latin America (Houndmills: Macmillan), p. 10. The same phenomenon can also be found in more mainstream analyses of globalization, where it often misleadingly seems that “globalized spaces” somehow become actors that have causal effects. See also David Slater 1989, ‘Peripheral Capitalism and the Regional Problematic’, in Richard Peet and Nigel Thrift (eds.), New Models in Geography: The Political-Economy Perspective (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp 267-294; and the critical remarks on “making a fetish of the spatial” in John Urry, ‘Social Relations, Space and Time’, in Derek Gregory and John Urry (eds.), Social Relations and Spatial Structures (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 20-48. In my approach, space is considered a product of social relations, and it has no causal effects of its own.


4. The normative basis of democratic politics is the principle that people should be able to make systems of rule that affect their lives accountable to themselves.

5. For innovative contributions to the strategy of using the modern democratic tradition to criticize the antidemocratic capitalist praxis, see Chantal Mouffe, ‘Democratic Politics Today’, in Chantal Mouffe (ed.), Dimensions of Radical Democracy (London: Verso, 1992); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Democracy & Capitalism: Property, Community, and the Contradictions of Modern Social Thought (New York: Basic Books, 1986). From my perspective, these approaches, usually labeled as radical democratic, are too nation-state-centered and do not pay enough attention to the spatial implications of transnationalization and deterrioralization.

6. In my terminology, globalization is synonymous with transnationalization, except for the assumption in the former term that the transnational processes have a global reach. Therefore all globalization is transnationalization, but not necessarily vice versa. In some of the recent globalization literature, transnational processes tend to be interpreted from an unnecessarily totalizing and homogenizing perspective. Internationalization is a more narrow term, and refers to relations between states.

7. On effective distance as opposed to “simple geographical distance,” see Malcolm Waters, Globalization (London: Routledge, 1995). This is, of course, a rather narrow usage of the term “geographical.” One example of territorial transborder regions is the growth of maquiladora industries near the US-Mexican border, though they are certainly also part of the deterritorialized networks of transnational capital. On the “existential uprootedness” of the maquiladora workers, see Primitivo Rodriguez, ‘The Uprooted from the Land’, in Towards a Democratic Theory of the World-System.


1. Even if “determined” should strictly speaking refer to spaces that have previously been territorial, I extend its usage to cover also those relatively nonterritorial spaces that have no “territorial history,” such as the Internet. Therefore, “(relatively) determined” is synonymous with “(relatively) nonterritorial.”

10. See e.g. Waters, p. 3, who claims that a globalized world will be "a society without borders and spatial boundaries"; and Luke, p. 240, for whom flows are despatializing.

11. See e.g. John Gerard Ruggie, ‘Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations’, International Organization (47, 1, 1993): 129-174, who refers to a “non-territorial ‘region’ in the world economy” (my emphasis), which, if taken literally, is an exaggeration. See also a response to Ruggie, which shows that "home country control" plays an important role in the “extranational” activities of banks. Ethan B. Kapstein, ‘Territoriality and Who is ‘US’?’, International Organization (47, 3, 1993): 501-503.

12. On how “capitalism is continually reterritorializing with one hand what it was determinedizing with the other” and on the “tension within the geography of accumulation between fixity and motion,” see, respectively David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, pp. 236-239; David Harvey, The Geopolitics of Capitalism, in Derek Gregory and John Urry (eds.), p. 128-163. On the continued geographic concentration of corporate headquarters in the dominant cities of the most powerful capitalist nations, see Robert W. Cox, Global Perestroika, in Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch (eds.), Socialist Register (London: The Merlin Press, 1992), pp. 26-43; Roger Friedland and Deirdre Boden, NowHere: An Introduction to Space, Time and Modernity?, in Friedland and Boden (eds.), NowHere: Space, Time and Modernity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 1-59, who synthesize their argument with the—somewhat dichotomous—thesis that “[w]hile capital has conquered space and time, capitalists have not.”

13. On this point, I disagree with Luke, p. 240, who claims that determinedizing flows or dematerializing forces. One sad example of the materiality of the largely electronified networks of determinedizing spaces is that in 1990 the electronics industry contributed to 45% of the world’s CFC output. See Greenline (August 1991).


16. An interesting question, which I can simply mention here, is to what extent the core, semiperipheral and peripheral areas of the world-system are territorially bounded. The Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, ‘Founding Statement’, in John Beverley and José Oviedo (eds.), The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 110-121. To be exact, nation-states as such are not being determinedizing, because they are by definition territorial units.

17. There certainly is more to the determinedizing process today than a “mere replication” of colonial experience. For an analysis of the differences between the seventeenth and eighteenth century joint stock chartered companies, which specialized territorially, and the present-day transnational corporations, which specialize “functionally,” see Giovanni Arrighi, The Long Twentieth Century (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 73-74.


19. See Ruggie, p. 149; Sack, pp. 6-9.

20. For a convincing argument that it is precisely the shift in the form of capital, from productive capital to capital held in the form of money, that is producing a change in the relation between the territorially fixed nation-states and the global movement of capital, see John Holloway, ‘Global Capital and the National State’, Capital & Class (No. 52, 1994): 23-49. For a historically long-term analysis along the same lines, see Arrighi.

21. See Ruggie, p. 172, who defines the “non-territorial ‘region’ in the world economy” as a “deteriorated yet integrated space-of-flows, operating in real time, which exists alongside the spaces-of-places that we call national economies.”


23. In their analysis of capitalist economy as a system of governance, Bowles & Gintis, p. 65, quote economist Abba Lerner’s article in American Economic Review (1972) as a representative example of the neutrality assumption behind liberal economic theory: “An economic transaction is a solved political problem. Economics has gained the title of queen of the social sciences by choosing solved political problems as its domain.”


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28. My reading of Wallerstein's approach is here mostly based on his theoretically and politically oriented books and articles rather than his magnum opus. One of the reasons is that the Modern World-System concentrates on earlier centuries, and my focus is on more recent changes.
31. This is not to deny that Wallerstein finds many new features in the present stage of the world-system, such as the increasingly chaotic, as opposed to deterministic, nature of social processes, which is linked to the decreasing amount of new space (territory) for the expansion of capitalism.
32. Wallerstein has indeed characterized the present "era of disintegration of the capitalist world-economy" as something that is following the "era of modernity." Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The Collapse of Liberalism', in Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch (eds.), pp. 106-107. It is therefore somewhat surprising that the spatiopolitical categories of his approach are still framed in fairly modernist and territorialist ways.
36. e.g. Wallerstein, The Capitalist World-Economy, pp. 272-273; Wallerstein, Geopolitics and Geoculture, p. 191.
41. For an insightful and meticulous deconstruction of the category of the "economic," within broadly defined historical materialism, see Michael Ryan, Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).
42. An interesting effort to deal with these problems has been provided by Kurt Burch, 'Invigorating World-Systems Theory as Critical Theory', Journal of World-Systems Research, http://jwsr.ucr.edu/ Vol 1, No 18, 1995.
43. See e.g. Bowles & Gintis, pp. 64-67.
44. If we deconstruct, or "unthink," the dichotomy between political and economic spheres, the base/superstructure metaphor obviously becomes problematic, especially if "base" refers to the "economic base." I do not claim that the metaphor necessarily needs to be discarded, because it might be possible to construct a model where material production (or something else) could be referred to as a "base," even if the metaphysical category of "economy" is not used. Of course, the metaphor would still maintain some of its dubiously deterministic connotations.
45. For a somewhat farther vision of the future, see Luke, p. 243, who claims that the majority of the nation-states will probably prove to be "no more than varying nominal guises of actual invariant transnational flows."
47. If, as Arrighi et al. seem to imply, "political" is by definition "territorial," one part of the conceptual problem is obviously solved. But, if so, why not simply define state power as territorial power, and avoid unnecessarily narrowing the usage of the category of politics?
48. Besides Robocop 3, the possible future in which "we shall see [...] the expansion of private protection armies and police structures [...] by the corporate production structures [...]" has been envisioned by Wallerstein, 'Capitalist Civilization', Lectures as Wei Lun Visiting Professor, Chinese University of Hong Kong, November 19-21, 1991. The implications of this scenario for the "political superstructure" of the future world-system are, however, left unspecified in the Wallersteinian scheme.
50. See Arrighi, p. 23, and pp. 33-34. There are, however, differences between Arrighi's definition of territorialism as a logic of power and mine. For example, he emphasizes the acquisition of additional territories in his definition of territorialism more than I do.
51. Ibid, p. 80.
52. Statements like "as networks of accumulation expanded to encompass the entire globe, they became increasingly autonomous from and dominant over networks of power" seem to depoliticize the power of the business organizations—though it is not easy to understand how something could be "dominant over networks of power" and not be a network of power itself. Ibid, p. 86.
56. Wagar himself points to many contradictions of the world-state model, and also envisions its breakdown into a much more decentralized world. See also Teivo Teivainen, 'Universalism and Ambiguousness: Comments on Wagar's Praxis of World Integration', Journal of World-Systems Research, http://jwsr.ucr.edu/ 2,1, 1996.
57. See Walker, pp. 135-136, for the problems of this assumption, which he refers to as "the theme of Gulliver."
58. Wagar, p. 149. It is not clear whether he refers to the world state, or to the
administrative districts of between 2.5 and 3.0 million people that in his scenario have replaced the nation-states, but this does not really matter for my argument.

59. To what extent the struggles to democratize specific transnational and deterritorialized spaces can succeed if the world as a whole has not been transformed into a relatively democratic place, is a formidable question I cannot but simply mention here. In my vision of a relatively democratized future world-system, some of the institutions would at some point have to be truly global, but this as such does not imply a need for a Wágarian world-state or a Kantian federation of states.

60. One of the most ambitious models of global democracy can be found in David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995). One of the problems in Held’s model is that he emphasizes the separation of political and economic interests as a desirable feature of the future, whereas from my radical democratic perspective this separation should be abolished.
“Globalization” and the “Permanent” Process of “Primitive Accumulation”: The Example of the MAI, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment

Claudia von Werlhof

Introduction

At the 1985 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in Washington, I had, at the invitation of Immanuel Wallerstein, the opportunity to present my theses on the subject “Why Peasants and Housewives do not Disappear in the Capitalist World System” (Werlhof 1985). Some years later, in an article with the same title, I dealt with the basic thesis of the presentation at ASA for the entire process of accumulation, namely the permanent relevance of processes of so-called “primitive accumulation” (1991). I am glad to come back to the subject in my contribution to this commemorative volume, though I shall deal with it in a new context: the so-called globalization debate. Thus a process is coming full circle: It began towards the end of the seventies, when we met Immanuel in Germany, continued when we organized a conference at the University of Bielefeld with him and a team from Binghamton, and ended when we finally published a few things together (Smith, Wallerstein, Evers 1984; Review 1980 and 1983). In 1985, when my habilitation was to be published, Immanuel wrote a preface to it, in which he pointed out that it was necessary to understand
that the world was seen “upside down,” and that it was, therefore, our task to make this fact with all its consequences as clear as possible (Wallerstein 1985). Today, fourteen years later, the necessity of analyzing these “perver-
sions” has become even more indispensable, since the processes within the  “capitalist world system” are constantly gaining speed, moving towards a point which is diametrically opposed to all predictions of a positive path to increasing prosperity and democracy, and less violence in our world society. Therefore, I want to go back to my approach to the “permanence” of “primitive accumulation” and its global dimensions and try to analyze today’s so-called process of “globalization,” especially the “Summit of Globalization” (Kommitte Widerstand gegen das MAI 1998), the “Multilateral Agreement on Investment,” the MAI (OECD 1997, 1998).

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF “GLOBALIZATION”: THE MAI

The MAI is a draft text of an agreement which, since 1995, has been negotiated in Paris by the 29 largest industrial states organized in the OECD (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development), entirely outside of the public gaze. In 1997, the draft was leaked to the public by deliberate indiscretion and it reached the world public through the analyses of Tony Clarke from Canada and Martin Khor from Malaysia (Clarke 1997, Clarke and Barlow 1997, 1998; Khor). Since then international resistance to signing the draft agreement, which had to be postponed several times, has been growing constantly. Thousands of environmental, women’s, third world, church and other “civil society” groups (Korten 1998) in OECD countries, as well as an increasing number of groups of the South, are engaged in opposition to the MAI. The last round of negotiations in Paris, in October 1998, was paralysed by the French Prime Minister, Jospin, who declared his country’s secession from the negotiations following his reading of a report on the potential consequences of the application of the MAI (TAZ 15.10.1998). At present, there is speculation as to whether the MAI is finished on account of this last round of negotiations, whether it should be put back onto the level of the WTO (World Trade Organization) where it originally came from, or if it will come up again in different international contexts such as the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the so-called “Transatlantic Market Place,” or other institutions that would be established.

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In the meantime, there is one thing the MAI has made clear: the interests behind it still exist and they continue to push toward its realization. The effort to formulate an “agreement on investment protection”—which has the character of nothing less than a new political world constitution—could hardly be explained otherwise. For the MAI does not, as it seems, regulate investment activities, instead it regulates politics. The MAI is a “License to Loot” (Mies and Werlhof 1998) for big business at the expense of the rest of humankind and nature. It is the final consequence of neo-liberal globalization, and the permanent codification of the reversal of everything else that has so far been claimed to be the aim of economy and politics, such as democracy, prosperity, freedom, self-realization, human rights and a bright future for everybody. Without any explanation, let alone any apology, the MAI shatters these illusions.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The MAI—according to my understanding—underpins and formalizes the new political economy required by the main actors of the world economy under conditions of monopoly and a new “industrial revolution.” In the decades after the second World War, and particularly since the seventies, new conditions of production and politics favorable for capital have emerged, conditions which stand on the brink of becoming a new global norm or standard. These new conditions include certain kinds of use and organic composition of capital, as well as the orientation towards a certain profit level which, viewed historically, is very high today because it has adjusted to something like an “average” speculation-profit. To maintain this level, an adequate global political constitution must be established, producing the “necessary” prerequisites for the realization of such a phase of the world-economy, including adequate sanctions (that is, the use of violence against “deviant” parties). As a result, the MAI has been negotiated by the nation-states’ governments, which seems paradoxical because the MAI is doing away with large parts of national sovereignty. It is these very governments that—from the beginning of the contemporary world-economy, the “Capitalist World-System”—have been concerned chiefly with producing and enforcing sovereignty. The nation-state and international division of labor have from the very start worked together, such that the nation-state can be analyzed only from an international and colonial perspective (Waller-
The same is true today: it has always been the “world-system” and not the nation-state, which forms the analytic entity that informs us about our present situation (Wallerstein 1974b). Since world economic conditions have changed in the meantime, the nation-state constitution should or must be adjusted to the new development.

So much for the political side of political economy; let us now look at its economic side.

Seen historically, changes in the world political economy are nothing new. The economy of the modern period—capitalism—began as a worldwide process, namely as colonization by Europe and within Europe (“external” and “internal” colonization). The process was described by Karl Marx (1974) as a process of “separating the producers from their means of production,” a process of so-called “original” or “primitive” accumulation. This process was considered to be the historical prerequisite for the subsequent process of “capital accumulation proper.” Rosa Luxemburg (1971) applied this analysis to the entire world. For not only in Europe, but also in the colonies peasants and craftsmen, the producers in those days, were “separated” from their opportunities, means and traditions of production which, if not destroyed outright in the course of this process, had to be handed over to the new masters: the colonial rulers or land owners.

Feminist research has extended this analysis, bringing into this process women, who, by witch hunts in Europe and by colonization outside Europe, were the first to be separated from their work and production means, their culture, their knowledge, and their skills, and from control over their own labor and even their bodies because of their reproductive capacities. Thus, in a very special way, women, too, lost control over their immediate living conditions and even themselves as living beings, having been transformed into “housewives.” Since this process is still taking place today and, in order to be effective, “must” be forced anew upon every new generation, we have coined the term worldwide “permanent” primitive accumulation (Warlhöf 1978; Mies 1986 is calling it the “ongoing” process of primitive accumulation). The extension of the term helps to recognize the extent to which modern political economy, up to the present, builds upon the producers’, men’s, and even more so women’s, permanent worldwide expropriation and deprivation of power. They have not only historically been robbed by “original accumulation,” they are still robbed, again and again. The process of capital accumulation still depends on “primitive accumulation,” which, therefore, cannot only—as Marx did—be understood as earlier or preceding accumulation, but must always and simultaneously be seen as a necessary part of ongoing accumulation. Thus, original accumulation is not only chronologically but also logically an integral part of accumulation and possesses a clearly capitalist and not a “pre-capitalist” or “non-capitalist” (A.G. Frank) character. In other words, a component of capitalist accumulation is always “original accumulation.”

For the first time in history since the beginning of processes of original accumulation, the immediate producers are not fundamentally producing to mutually provide for themselves and for each other locally or regionally—a form of economy based on so-called “subsistence production”—but are used (exploited) as raw material (producers) for the entire process of capital utilization and accumulation. This does not occur evenly and uniformly over the entire world; rather, there is an inherent tendency toward homogenization and uniformity which has become the principle of economic and political behavior. It is in this way that the political economy of the “capitalist world system” has come about: Africa produced the mass of the labor force that as slaves—the “raw material” of labor—produced the raw material of colonial commodities in America, especially in the form of agricultural and mining products which, in turn, served as material for European industrialization on the basis of proletarian wage labor. The latter includes the most-forgotten “inner” colony of “housewives” (Bennholdt-Thomsen, Mies and Warlhöf 1988), who during their lifetimes had—according to the “African model”—to work without wages for the “(re-)production” of the next generation of labor.

After original accumulation had robbed many people of their culture, and crucially of their means of production, the process continued in attempting to separate them from their labor and even their bodies. Those who after the first phase of original accumulation were at least paid for their labor often forget that such payment is based upon the twofold expropriation of those who, at the lower end of the accumulation process, bear the full brunt of “permanent” primitive accumulation. This is the reason why trade unions have never tried to organize “precarious” employees, such as foreigners and women, to say nothing of housewives. For this same reason, leftist theory

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has seen only wage labor as central to accumulation and value production. Similarly, leftist politics has only focused on “free wage laborers”—the industrial proletariat—particularly those in the core, according to the (false) notion that everything else is part of the past and belongs to the historical phase of original accumulation, to be overcome soon since progress consists in universalization of free wage labor conditions over the entire globe (Vorhuf 1984).

In this context, “housewife-ization” (Hausfrauensierung, see Mies, Benthof-Thomsen, and Vorhuf 1988) of women subsequent to witch hunts shows, for the first time, how “international” conditions reappear on a “national” level or, to put it differently, how already in the initial stage of the world system the same things occur in microeconomics as in macroeconomics. It is exactly this “de-geographization” of conditions which generally characterizes the present “globalization.” Compared to the historical international division of labor, globalization means that the North-South difference disappears, but not to make room for supposedly “civilized” conditions everywhere. On the contrary, it disappears geographically, but survives and prospers as a principle; as such it is celebrates its universal “globalization.” Now it can roam anywhere, disconnected from continents or countries. Globalization, therefore, does not mean universalization of wage labor and the abolishing slavery and unpaid labor—such as housework. On the contrary, it means global extension of colonial conditions, namely slavery and unpaid labor or, to put it differently, it is the “housewife-ization,” including men’s labor, all over the world, and for one reason only: to lower labor costs and to increase profits.

The new political economy announced by the MAI rests on the same foundations laid during colonial times, a fact rarely recognized. With the new expansion of “permanent” processes of original accumulation, the principally, and not only initially, violent character of our world-economy is again coming forth with increased force in the centers, too. Throughout history, immediate producers have never parted voluntarily with their culture, their means of production, their labor power, let alone control over their own bodies. Such violence of expropriation, was called by Karl Marx primitive accumulation’s “secret,” one shared as well by the globalized economy of today. It was not by chance that the MAI was conceived under a shroud of secrecy in a Parisian cellar.

“Investor” and “investment” are the fundamental concepts in the MAI (Vorhuf 1998). The document works to defend their limitless freedom, their absolute protection and their 100 percent security; “safer investment.” In reading the relevant passages, one does not immediately suspect anything bad, so long as one does not know the scope of the definition of investment and the extent to which investment activities are considered to be an almost absolute standard for all social life. The MAI defines investment as “every kind of asset owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by an investor.” Such an investment need not necessarily have anything to do with job creation. It does not refer to useful activities supplying the needs of a population, nor does it refer to the protection of resources or to any of the things the average person may have in mind when thinking of investment. In the MAI, “investment” is everything done by an investor, focussed simply on the increase of the investor’s property and his control over resources. It does not matter whether he speculates or deals in drugs, arms, women or money laundering; whether he penetrates or monopolizes existing markets or creates new markets under his control; whether he exploits local mineral resources and gets hold of the land to build up new agricultural industries; or whether he takes for himself a patent out of local “intellectual property,” the so-called TRIPS, (“Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights”) (Shiva 1995). The MAI seeks to give the investor limitless access to everything everywhere, including the so-called “virtual” spheres. The investor’s main interest seems to be in property, namely the acquisition of available opportunities for profit maximization. In this sense the Canadians, for example, have, after four years of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association, called the “little MAI”), learned that investment activities consist mainly of the purchase of, or elimination of other business companies followed by cost-cutting dismissal of employees (Clarke and Barlow 1997). Promises from NAFTA-advocates to create 200,000 jobs remain unkept while 400,000 jobs have been eliminated in the U. S. A. alone (Wallach and Naiman 1998).

The market structure reveals itself as power structure: monopolies, oligopolies and cartels dominate. “Mega-enterprises” destroy competition (Noé 1998). National anti-trust offices do not object to “companies getting
bigger and bigger…since the others are doing the same” (ibid.). “We are in danger of putting ourselves at the mercy of a steadily decreasing number of private power centers and their globally acting managers who call themselves, full of self-confidence, ‘Global Players’” (Kartte, former president of the cartels office, quoted in Noé, ibid.). Such “looting associations” (Noé) are seldom criticized these days, even though Adam Smith, founder of modern economic liberalism, explicitly warned of the formation of monopolies. For Smith, free trade was only possible if enterprises were owned locally, with their roots in the communities (1976). To an increasing extent this is no longer the case. The investor the MAI has in mind must rather be compared to the “absentee landlord;” with investment looking more like a colonial “enclave,” run anonymously like an alien property whose owner cannot be reached, sometimes disappearing overnight together with his “business,” a practice made possible by “capital-flexibility” under present technological circumstances. In any case, such owners aren’t affected by damages done locally, and as is known from experience, in case of doubt feel no responsibility for such damages (e.g. Seveso in Italy and Bhopal in India; Korten 1996). Because the principles of “permanent” original accumulation have always been clearest in agriculture, it is no coincidence that a certain phase in the history of the agrarian sector resembles the actions of the MAI-investor. This phenomenon is still mistaken for “feudalism” or Third World “traditionalism,” whereas, in reality, these processes are the most profitable of the modern economy (Werlhof 1985; Werlhof and Neuhoff 1982).

This “investment” has already spelled death for local business enterprises all over the world, a process which, with the advent of the MAI, will only increase in the future, paradoxically, threatening “free enterprise.” Entrepreneurs and business people expecting protection from the MAI as investors do not seem to understand this process; but why should big international corporations let smaller investors have their profits? The crux of the matter is that the investor sees himself as a (legal) person or institution characterized by one and only one interest, namely maximizing profits with no restraints. Thus profits will be exported rather than left in their country of origin when advantageous (Engels et al. 1998). Such “de-regulation” and “de-bureaucratization” of investment activities are considered to be particularly positive aspects of the MAI. Therefore, “the temptation for business companies” is increasingly “to become so gigantic that they present themselves as duchies for strategic market arrangements. When these arrangements are successful…competition is dictated by capitalist dukes and prince electors and takes place at the expense of the many nationally and regionally limited, so-called middle-class producers and services that look for credits.” (C. Noé, op.cit.; “capitalist” added by C. v. W.) At present the 500 biggest companies control 80 percent of the world’s investment activities.

The investor’s interests are not only given highest economic priority but top social priority as well. “The investors’ gains are the highest human value, everything else is of second order.” (President of United Technologies, Gray, according to Chomsky 1995, p. 18). The protection of this species is, therefore, seen as “free trade” (ibid.) and not as protectionism, which, with respect to the rest of the market participants, is ridiculed as anachronistic. “Investment protection,” within the MAI, does not mean protection of labor, the environment and nature, or human rights and the vital interests of the people (B. Mark-Ungericht 1998); it stands exclusively for the protection of the investor-monoculture. The protection of non-investors is considered a restriction of investor freedom.

Present troubles of capital valorization—the result primarily of the enormous increase of no longer “productively” covered finance capital and oversized profit expectations—are apparently so deep (Third World Resurgence 1998) that at a time when “the ecological limits of growth” push people to search for a “sustainable,” even “subsistence-oriented” economy (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1997), the MAI would establish a radically opposite approach as the universal model and world constitution. With globalization, the race for the last resources of the globe has entered its final ruthless phase.

Globalization is not the fulfillment of the illusions of progress. On the contrary, it is the rapid and brutal disposal of the social advances made from the beginning of the industrial revolution until now. There are already eighteen million people unemployed in Europe, child labor amounts to one and a half million, and in England the “state of labor conditions” and “wage differences” mimic the figures of 1886 (Halimi). It seems that MAI provisions for investment can principally, and to a large extent, do without free wage labor. The key examples of this are the “free production zones,” “world market factories” or “maquiladoras” of the South, where chips, electronics, and textiles are produced using a cheap, female labor force under conditions of forced
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Claudia von Werlhof

labor (Mies 1986; Gabriel 1998). This colonial treatment of labor is spreading right at the time of a new technological development, or a so-called third industrial revolution which makes such colonization possible. The new technologies of computerization make it possible to drastically reduce labor—with reductions as high as 80% (Martin & Schumann 1996)—and to use the cheapest form of untrained labor. High tech combines with low wage; a new form of slavery—home worker—appears in a high tech outfit. “Real” subsumption of labor under capital, in the sense of free wage labor, is being replaced by “marginal” subsumption of labor with marginal remuneration (Bennholde-Thomsen 1980), labor “un-free” insofar as it no longer faces capital as a “free” and “equal” contractual partner. Critics of modern technologies are dismissed as anachronistic “Luddites” (Noble 1985; Ned Ludd from Nottingham, England, was the first to attack machine production and automation in the early decades of the 19th century). Apparently technology and progress are still happily accepted although they have broken all their promises. Thus, for instance, “the end of labor” must be understood as the end of the wage.

It is therefore not surprising to see what in the MAI is called as “most-favored nation-principle,” “non-discrimination,” and “equal treatment” of investors and investments. Nothing must stand in the way of investor and investment, no matter what their objectives might be. It must be codified that those unequal competitors, namely corporations and smaller investors, are globally considered to be “equal.” They are given the globally most favorable conditions, which is nothing but systematic “positive discrimination” for the great and the multiplication of their competitive and power advantages. The same result will be achieved by the fact that under certain sections of the MAI, certain branches, business firms, areas or regions will no longer be publicly supported or subsidized because the equal treatment or non-discrimination clause implies that any other investor has the same right to the support. Since, of course, the means for such “limitless” support are not available, the support mechanism as such breaks down and the survival chances of those who had been supported earlier will also be reduced to zero. The end result will be the abolition of welfare state elements such as health provisions, pensions and education.

Within such a political economy of monopoly-capital, which with the MAI would have only rights and neither duties nor responsibilities, there can no longer be any talk of the best possible provision of people and households in the “market economy.” The “Fordist” model of paying wages that enable the workers to afford a Ford (Hirsch, Roth) is no longer necessary within a globalized economy because the markets are, from a global perspective, always big enough to absorb any production (Martin and Schumann 1996), at least so long as there is no depression. Therefore, the trade union’s strategy of “re-distribution” will, on the whole, have no great chance of success. This strategy did not question the conditions of production as such (so-called investment) anyway, and was thus prepared to accept looting and exploitation.

THE MAI-POLITICS OR: THE WORLD AS COLONY OF CORPORATIONS. SO-CALLED “EXPROPRIATION” AS THE ONE AND ONLY STANDARD OF POLITICAL ACTION

The MAI economy can only serve “investors” if it is supported by policies that correspond to permanent “primitive accumulation.” If primitive accumulation is understood as creating the prerequisites for “accumulation proper” by concentrating the relevant means of production in the hands of those who, on this basis, are able to accumulate, then, especially today, it becomes obvious why this process has not come to a historical conclusion, as Marx believed. On the contrary, particularly under the MAI, politics is clearly defined in such a way that “primitive” accumulation is carried out on a comprehensive, global scale under modern conditions. Such politics and policies enforce severe re-distribution from bottom to top, in all areas of the economy and by all means, violence and military intervention not excluded (Europäisches Parlament 1996). This political process, which is also part of the prerequisites of so-called globalization in general, has to be expected, particularly under the MAI-regime:

- Separation of small, medium-sized and even larger firms or investors from their capital; an increasing number of firms collapsing, “unfree” enterprise (for instance, new forms of sub-enterprises), credit-induced “contractual” production, new quasi self-employed people such as home-workers, “alternative” businesses, a general trend towards a “lumpenbourgeoisie” (Frank 1968; Bennholdt-Thomsen 1988; Werlhof 1983).
- Renewed separation of farmers from their land; expulsion of farmers, abolition of agrarian reform laws (as presently in Mexico); coercive
introduction of genetic and new reproduction technologies in agriculture, animal raising and plant growing; patenting of life forms; robbery of “intellectual property” of indigenous producers (Shiva 1998; Mies and Shiva 1993; Forum on Land, Food Security and Agriculture 1998).

- The technological separation of women from their bodies: coercive introduction of genetic and reproductive technologies for eugenic purposes, generally further reduction of women’s control over their own bodies and continued experiments to break women’s child-bearing “monopoly” (Bergmann 1992; Werlhof 1997a).

- Separation of workers—men and women—from their work place, their wages, and their labor power as such: “wageless commodity production,” generally precarious employment conditions such as part-time work, 620-DeutscheMarks-jobs, “flexibilization” of work; work paid below the subsistence level; exploitation of unpaid work according to the model of a housewife’s work in the form of expanding “house-wifeization” of employment conditions; general marginalization of labor force or “lumpenproletarianization” and general reduction of people to mere and simply potentially usable “raw material” which, according to demand, can be utilized or destroyed (Anders 1980; Benholdt-Thomsen 1979).

- Separation of the public hand (local communities, states, central governments) from its property; “privatization” in favor of private monopolies. Sale of land, buildings, public enterprises, community property and the “commons” (Clarke 1997).

“Expropriation” is, next to “investment,” the central category of the MAI and it is equally widely understood as well as equally perverted. “Expropriation” in the MAI is a collective term for circumstances that are to be avoided because they are considered detrimental or obstructive to investment activities. The term is not only used in the classical sense of nationalization or socialization or even “socialist expropriation.” According to the MAI, the term of expropriation even includes “indirect” (“creeping”) expropriation which is already the case when expected profits do not occur or occur only partly, for instance, on account of the validity of existing laws, common law, or because of disturbances. Therefore, the MAI provides that all laws and regulations which at some time and some place could hinder the investor’s freedom, and would thus not conform to the MAI, would have to be abolished retroactively (“roll-back” clause). Of course, no such new laws and regulations must be introduced for the 20 year duration of the contract (“stand still” clause), which makes any policies of non-conformity with the MAI impossible. Finally, any investor who feels hindered can at any time resort to the MAI dispute settlement mechanism to enforce his interests before an international court of arbitration which puts itself out of reach of any democratic control. The investor may sue for damages against any local community, country, government or other investor because of “expropriation,” meaning in his eyes he is hindered by the defendant in realizing his freedom of investment. As we know, the MAI arbitration tribunal is constructed in such a way that it will, in any case, support the “requesting” investor, for otherwise he could resort to the relevant local or national courts. Furthermore, there have been precedents in Canada and Mexico in which it has been argued that the investors’ rights have precedence over potential health hazards to the population affected (for example, the case of the U. S. Ethyl Corporation in Canada, in which the company has won against the Canadian state; Toronto Star 1998).

As for the MAI’s treatment of the term of expropriation, the following consequences must be mentioned: “Expropriation” does not really refer to the threat of expropriation of the investor, but to the investor threatening others with expropriation. In fact, non-investors as well as smaller and medium-sized investors are expropriated in favor of large investors. This is the classical case of robbery in the sense of primitive accumulation which, however, with the MAI, becomes a legal procedure if not the legal standard. The MAI thus affirms and legalizes a tendency that so far has grown ruthlessly, but has always been treated ambivalently by the judiciary. Those who attempt to fight the sacrifice of their health, nutrition, welfare and vital interests must risk classification as potential criminals under the MAI.

The MAI is, in the eyes of its advocates, not only a “political” contract but almost the materialization of a “natural law.” From this angle, the MAI is a long “necessary” act to enable globally pure capital utilization liberated from any natural and social restrictions. It is the “level playing field cleared of all obstacles and bumps,” the “operating theatre,” the purified battlefield. The MAI defines anew what is “nature” and what is “culture.” In addition to women, peasants, and colonized people, everybody else is defined out of cul-
turing and back into "nature," apart from a tiny minority who exclusively claim the achievements of culture and "civilization" for themselves. Since "nature" as such is seen as having no "value," the labor and lives of "naturalized" people seem to have no value either (Werlhof 1988).

The MAI would be the basis of a new political world order or world constitution and a new nation-state: the MAI-state. It defines the fundamental conditions of legal and political actions—the "mono-pol-itics"—for the next twenty years. With the MAI, governments on all levels are not simply divested of their sovereignty, as is often complained (Clarke and Barlow 1997; 1998). By signing the agreement they are trying to rob the people of their sovereignty or to "separate" them from their sovereignty, which, according to the idea of democratic constitutions, is impossible. At the same time signatory governments lose much of their sovereignty by allowing investors not only a status equal to the standing of the nation-state but of even greater power and higher order: in dispute settlements with private investors they can be the losers. Governments also reduce their economic power by allowing the privatization of public property that is already being sold to private investors not only to fill up the state treasury or public purse but also to partly enrich corporations. With the MAI, governments even allow the order of competition and their legal cartel regulations or anti-trust laws to be sacrificed to private monopolies by considering the political order problem of monopolies (or oligopolies) only in the area of public or state monopolies and not as referring to private monopolies. According to the MAI only state and not private monopolies have a negative connotation.

The state shall not, however, be abolished. It will always have to take care of the investors' primitive accumulation (as well as its own). In this sense, the state turns into the "pimp" for its own population and for more "resources," which it can offer to investors at globally most favorable conditions. "Poverty is the criterion for securing the location of investment" (Zumach 1996). Since force and violence (must) dominate at that level, the state progressively turns into a police state, a military state (s. the Tindemans-Report of the European Parliament 1966). It will (have to) "educate" (Halimi) its population as far as possible to identify with the investors' interests and to internalize these interests to the extent that civil disturbances, which might get the state into the trouble of being sued for damages by an investor, are repressed even preventively. In case this education—which could form the basis of a new educational system in MAI-states—does not do its job, the MAI does not restrict the state in establishing law and order. On the contrary, the areas of "inner security" are the only areas that are explicitly excluded by the MAI.

The "MAI-revolution," therefore, implies that the modern nation-state of the center, turns into a ("semi")peripheral" colonial state to guarantee that inside it primitive accumulation can take place on a large scale, whereas corporations turn into "nation-states" of central importance, forming the top of the new global pyramid of the "capitalist world system." The MAI proves that capitalism and democracy appear and stay together only so long as the colonial regime or primitive accumulation has not yet been established everywhere for everybody. It also proves that its starting point is a contradiction between "investments" and human rights or vital interests of the population (cf. the Harvard study quoted by Drake et al. 1998). The Zapatista movement in Mexico, which started with NAFTA (Werlhof 1997b), calls this development a "New World War" and speaks of a "war against all peoples, against human beings, culture, history…Neo-liberalism (is) a process of renewed conquest of the land…the conquerors are the same as 500 years ago…they tell us that we are an obstacle, we are not only dispensable, we are an obstacle to progress" (Marcos 1995). Since then, the Mexican government is said to have been asked by the Chase Manhattan Bank in the U. S. A. to liquidate the Zapatista movement by military force, since it is a threat not to the state as such but to the investors' belief in political stability in Mexico (Pérez 1998).

With the MAI a similar development may occur in North America and Europe. The term "permanent" primitive accumulation is an analytical instrument to explain the political consequences of the MAI and to understand its logic of the "necessity" of permanent political violence. In this kind of "expanded" primitive accumulation the state is given a new order in which there is a tendency to abolish the traditional division of powers and in which its power no longer comes "from the people" but is rather systematically turned against the people. This tendency is also growing in the "centers." Real political power is, with the MAI, "legally" taken from the people and given to big corporations, thus creating a new "corporatism," a new form of co-operation between state and capital that particularly characterizes modern dictatorship (Boulboullé and Schuster).

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CONCLUSION

The discussions, disputes and struggles which we may expect for the near future will, therefore, not only concern the "distribution of the loot" from the process of (primitive) accumulation, nor will it be about extended "participation" in a changing political order. It will primarily have to deal with the abolition of "permanent" primitive accumulation and as such it will also deal with the secret basis of the entire process of accumulation: In the final analysis we will no longer be concerned with participation in capitalist "productive" property which has for quite some time now turned out to be "destructive" property. This is why property and "prosperity" exist not for more and more, but for fewer and fewer people. A world "economy" plundering the planet cannot last forever. Therefore, we will have to desert the "TINA"—There Is No Alternative—"syndrome" (Shiva 1993) and re-conquer the true means (of subsistence) which we need for our daily lives.

The universal quasi-religious belief in technological progress, economic "growth," corporate "rationality," and its outcome money, will increasingly contradict reality (Binswanger 1998). "Greed does not feed" (Prakash and Mourin 1998). The global economic crisis can no longer be "triggered" by "financial warfare" (Chossudovsky 1998). Finally, the pre-condition of western confidence in the "capitalist world-system," the old patriarchal utopia of being able to replace the "bad world" with a man-made "brave new world" will be recognized as lethal fraud. Therefore, the main problem—with and without the MAI—will consist in finding again a "real" economy, an economy not organized around profit, competition and the colonization of people and nature. At the end of progress we will have to approach the end of violence and recreate a culture built on co-operation and co-existence (Wallerstein 1991). For that purpose we need what capitalism and patriarchy have tried to "separate" us from: a "dissident" mind based on the radical acceptance of life.

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Rethinking Current Social Sciences: 
The Case of Historical Discourses in the History of Modernity*

Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas

“World-systems analysis intends to be a critique of nineteenth century social sciences…”

Since 1968, it has been apparent that the entire “system of branches of knowledge” regarding the social domain, which dated from 1870 to 1968, has entered into a total and irreversible crisis. Established in the last third of the nineteenth century, and having been deployed during the first half of the twentieth century, this particular “episteme” regarding the social domain—which conceived the latter as a sum or aggregate of spaces, segmented, distinct and even autonomous among one another; spaces that in turn corresponded to the different and equally autonomous social sciences or disciplines—was progressively questioned. It finally began showing its general epistemological limits, permanently entering into an insurmountable crisis period as a result of the impacts of the 1968 cultural revolution.¹

The general crisis of the system of social knowledge has manifested itself during the last thirty years in two ways. First, via the proliferation

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exists among the social sciences and their ultimate general foundation. This would be the very project of capitalistic bourgeois modernity, the precise modernity which has unfolded for the last five centuries as the most general and determinant framework of the very activity of the social sciences, whose successive historical modalities we are trying to understand and explain.

In this fashion, and as a simple contribution to a collective effort which is still underway today, we would like to review how the different fundamental historical discourses of modernity itself were thus constituted and evolved. These discourses within history, which in the course of accompanying, and to some extent expressing, the vital curve of bourgeois modernity, also provide us with more general clues to comprehend the corresponding evolutionary curves of the system of social knowledge as well as of the system of knowledge and sciences in general. With this, we shall also have some new elements for rethinking current social sciences and the possible alternatives for their immediate future reorganization.

I.

There is extensive debate in pinpointing the birth of modernity. Following Marx’s conceptualization, we are able to date its origin in the sixteenth century by conceiving of capitalism as Braudel explained, as a “long sixteenth century” extending approximately from 1450 through 1650. It is precisely from this broad dissemination of the capitalistic manufacturing system which was occurring in Europe during this long sixteenth century, that the first characteristic forms of capitalist modes of production, as well as the very organization of their successive differentiation and specifications, under the regime of what has been called the “two” and later, the “three” diverse cultures.

It’s a global crisis of what we could call the “episteme” of knowledge in vogue during the last one hundred and thirty years, opening up space for debate regarding the necessary and urgent general reorganization of our current sciences and branches of learning. This debate then appears in the field of social sciences as a radical revision of the foundation constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century. By cross-sectioning and autonomizing the different spheres, activities or spaces of the human-social ambit, this foundation began attributing different parts of the cross-section to the then emergent or renewed sciences of history, psychology, economics, anthropology, political science, geography, law, sociology and linguistics, among several others.

In all other respects, the revision not only inquires into the very roots and process of such progressive segmentation of the human-social ambit into different autonomous “objects” that correspond to the different contemporary social sciences. It also inquires, even more clearly, into the general conditions and more profound causes that explain the emergence of this segmented and cross-sectioned social approach, within which our current reflection is still imprisoned.

To be sufficient, the radical debate and revision of the “non-explicit premises” of construction of those very same social sciences is obliged to go back to the examination of the most general relation which has existed and...
approximation to historical facts. Secondly, the figure of the different empirical and objective histories, which—from Mabillon on through the positivism of Leopold von Ranke—were displayed constantly as the organizing schema of historiographic results.

These two variants of historical discourse are characteristic of the first long stage of modernity, which in turn express two of the central strokes that singularize capitalist bourgeois society, distinguishing it from all the previous historical stages in the long chain of pre-capitalistic worlds and societies. Compared to all “societies that precede the existence of the capitalistic era,” characterized as they were by the predominance of projects, histories or routes which were local, specific and particular, capitalism has, for the first time in human history, asserted an abstract and homogenizing universalism that, in a general sense, corresponds to the leveling and generic universalism asserted in the economic environment with the general validity of the principle of value and its self-reproduction.

Modern capitalist society is built around the objective of the incessant appreciation or assessment of value through the process of the accumulation of capital, making possible—and even necessary—an unlimited worldwide geographic expansion of this capitalist society. Because value is always compatible with any possible use value, its concrete deployment knows no limits and can well extend to the entire length and breadth of the world itself, embracing under its abstract and homogenizing logic all of the goods and practical values produced in the most diverse circumstances, and therefore, all civilizations and peoples. Thus, the construction of a true network of the modern world market is undoubtedly an historical conquest of capitalism, and with it, of the material bases of a genuine and organic universalization of human history itself.

This is a necessarily antithetic and broken universalization, in practice imposed with the intent of leveling and subjecting all countries to one unique particular civilizing project, undoubtedly the Western European one. This nevertheless asserts itself as a gigantic step forward compared with the localism and limitations of all the previous pre-capitalist histories, histories marked by particularities regarding religion, territory, personal dependence or hierarchy.

It is in this fashion, supported by this cosmopolitanism and universalism peculiar to capitalist modernity, that the different philosophies of history referred to above were constructed. In their attempt to encompass the entire set of previous local histories in one sole panorama, these philosophies, for the first time, conceived human history as unity, and therefore, as organic and true world history. This history of humanity should be viewed as a process, and thus a set of developments and efforts which, though local and diverse, are to a certain extent teleologically interconnected and marching (perhaps in an unconscious manner) toward increasingly complex figures. These are equally universalistic and recurrently abstract philosophies of history, which in an attempt to build global and coherent systems for the explanation of that universal voyage will establish different blueprints for the global itinerary of the human race. Such schemes are always organized around one or a few integrating global principles—i.e. the struggle between reason and obscurantism, the alienation and progressive reconciliation of the absolute idea, the constant struggle between the eternal principles of liberty and authoritarianism, the repeated recurrence of cycles that have already been experienced, etc.—the object of which is to give meaning to the previous pre-capitalist histories in terms of a particular idea of progress, conceived as linear and unidirectional, culminating in all cases with the assertion of modern bourgeois society.

In the same manner that value encompasses the entire complex and diverse world of use values, and that capitalist world history was constructed by subjecting all of these histories of pre-capitalist nations, empires, races, groups and local societies to its own logic, in this same way, the different philosophies of history of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appear as efforts to organize all human histories previously experienced according to the specific historic project of modernity.

Therefore, if the ultimate foundation of the historiographic discourses displayed under these philosophies of history is the abstract universal character of the logic of value-capital in movement, then, on the contrary, the ultimate foundation of the second variant of the modern historic discursive strategies is constituted by one of the main consequences of the concrete actualization of such movement and action of capital: that of the limited domination of nature by means of the development and productive exploitation of the new experimental science. If it is true that value can be combined with use value in order to convert it into its own carrier, this potential could only be actualized were it able to overcome the terrible imprint of natural scarcity that
characterizes all pre-capitalist societies.\textsuperscript{9} Centered on the progressive appreciation of value, capitalist society necessarily presupposes that both producers and societies as a whole have already exceeded the level of elementary self-subsistence and internal consumption which is only made possible at a certain level of development of the productivity of social labor.

This level of productivity was only achieved once humans were able to invert the millenial and trans-secular domination of society by nature, that is once humans managed to domesticate the principal natural forces and compel them to serve instead as productive forces of the capital structure itself. The fundamental strategy and essential support lever of this domestication is precisely the new experimental science which also developed in a parallel fashion with the progressive growth and assertion of modernity.

This experimental science approached nature instrumentally,\textsuperscript{10} developing a species of knowledge guided strongly by essentially practical objectives, the existence of which had been known to the natural sciences for the previous four or five centuries. This knowledge attempts to construct factual truths based on experience and experimentation. By always submitting these truths to the proof of the facts it has built a specific notion of knowledge as something that is objective, empirical, verifiable, instrumental and useful in pragmatic and productive terms.

This new species of scientific knowledge has not only made possible the increasing domination of nature, but most importantly, it has emancipated the social realm from its subjugation to the natural environment. As Marx explained, bourgeois society is the first in human history in which the social and historical element dominates the natural element, a contention that becomes clearly evident in the fact that, for the first time, the city dominates the country and industry dominates agriculture. It is also apparent in the radical process of desacralization of the natural world, in the invention of a temporal framework of a primarily social character, in the progressive domestication and regulation of instinctive behaviors or the direct and brutal expression of immediate emotions and passions, among so many others.\textsuperscript{11} This promotion of the historic-social element to the position of dominant element also explains the possibility of thinking the social separately in regard to the natural and thereby establishes space for the division between the two “cultures”: the “exact”, “natural,” or “hard” sciences, and the social or human sciences.

The above mentioned strategy of experimental science, with its diverse consequences, is also reflected at the historiographic level. The second variant of the historic discourses asserted in the first stage of modernity was an empirical and objective history, which, in its attempt to reproduce the model of the experimental natural sciences within the social domain, attempted to develop a history focused on critique of sources and the rigorous screening of written documents and diverse testimonies. This history sought the uncontestable truths of historic occurrences—finely dated and chronologically arranged—which, submitted to the internal and external critique of the documents, could be used for reasserting national identity and values. These were, of course, advantageous for the education of a citizenry and for the justification and legitimization of existing dominant powers.

This was an objective and empirically focused history that approached the historian’s work as that of a judge—in as much as both (based as they are on confrontation and critique regarding testimonies) attempt to establish an objective and irrefutable truth regarding facts\textsuperscript{12}—which ultimately led to the progressive dissolution of ancient legendary, mythical and religious histories that were, little by little, totally abandoned in favor of “real” history.

This history, by discriminating and separating the literary or fictional sources and elements, in the face of the strictly historical and “objective” sources or elements, also attempted to overcome historical anachronism, forbidding the mixture of elements from different periods, and asserting the absolute validity—also within history—of the new modern bourgeois Newtonian notion of time. This time was unidirectional, unique, irreversible, continuous, and progressive, establishing the precise chronology, succession, and progression of the diverse historical occurrences, phenomena, epochs, and realities.\textsuperscript{13}

These are the models for the development of historiographic discourses, probably reproduced in other fields and domains of social thought during these same three centuries, corresponding to the foundations of the project of modernity itself, accompanying it throughout these three centuries which constitute the ascending branch of its specific curve of global life.
II.

If, from this same point of view, we now analyze the fate of these two modern variants of the discourse on history, we can observe that the nineteenth century represents for both, within the ambit of European culture, a pinnacle. With the Hegelian philosophy of history, modern bourgeois thought reached its highest possible peak, developing global and totalizing models for all of human history. As such, the celebrated *Lessons on the Philosophy of World History* represent the most successful model of the philosophy of history (conceived *a priori* as the product of the “genius” of a great thinker) “utilizing” historical facts to legitimize their validity. As simple “illustration” of the validity of the general principles that organize said philosophies (principles always supposedly universal, eternal and void of temporality) the lessons construct a system of universal explanation.

The Hegelian philosophy of history greatly overshadowed the subsequent, and by then very limited, attempts carried out by authors such as Oswald Spengler or Arnold Toynbee. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the philosophy of history entered increasingly into discredit and evident decadence as a modality for the explanation of historical realities. In this period it took refuge as a marginal and little-traveled line of the more vast field of philosophy in general, surviving with a peculiar longevity in a few national cultural arenas, e.g. the English milieu.

In a parallel fashion to the maximum expansion and subsequent contraction of the modern philosophic-historic discourse in the nineteenth century, a similar rise and decline of objective and empirical history discussed earlier also occurred. Here, the French Revolution played the main role. This event, which eliminated the royal and monarchic power of the old regime, also precipitated a true revolution in accessibility of information for historians by converting all of the ancient archives of Europe’s monarchies into public archives. This greatly democratized access to the documents, providing objectivist and empirical historians with a truly monumental mass of new primary sources.

The nineteenth century (which was not called “The Century of History” by mere coincidence) can be considered, in regard to erudite and objectivist history, as the peak of the developmental curve of this history. Although this erudite and positivistic history survived through the twentieth century and up to the present, over the last hundred years it has experienced virtually no qualitative progress worth mentioning, and has reproduced itself almost statically, subject to the same models and precepts adopted under the Germanic positivistic project of the second half of the nineteenth century.

This double peak, of both philosophical discourse and erudite discourse on history in the nineteenth century also expresses—in a complex manner, but clearly and directly—the underlying movement of capitalist modernity itself to its own historical climax, within the boundaries of the small European continent. If we once more voyage through the history of modernity using long-lasting “seven league boots,” we would see that inside Europe—and only inside this European space and not at the global level—this modernity reached its culmination and highest development precisely during this rich and complex nineteenth century.

Such culmination embraces in a parallel way the geographic sphere achieved by the capitalist world market encompassing the entire planet in its network as well as the cultural sphere (attained with the Encyclopedia and the Enlightenment, and the recodification of the entire system of knowledge and sciences in keeping with modern bourgeois parameters and their logic of reason). Without any doubt it also passes through the economic sphere, where the capitalist mode of production was consolidated with the Industrial Revolution; the social sphere that constitutes the definitive class structure of modern society, and of the diverse and many-sided world of modern civil society, and of course, through the political sphere, which sustained the French Revolution, created the finished figure of the modern state and the global space for the corresponding political relations. All of this precisely during the nineteenth century, which also, and not by chance, was to be the century of the birth and initial assertion of Karl Marx’s critical thought and global conception.

Marxism was born in the second half of the nineteenth century, and with it, the entire horizon of the vast family of expressions of contemporary critical thought, which, as Frederick Engels remarked, could only emerge at the time when bourgeois and capitalist modernity had exhausted its ascending cycle, displaying the entire collection of inputs, elements and contributions that together constitute its historic-civilizing heritage. This exhaustion came about with the inputs rapidly set forth above, precisely around the first
half of the nineteenth century, establishing the climax of the general vital
curve of modernity itself.

Marxism became the main intellectual expression of the “bad” or nega-
tive side of modernity itself, the expression of an intrinsic and more pro-
found denial carried by modernity within its own innards, destined to
demolish and destroy itself from within in order to later overcome and tran-
scend itself radically.

In view of the fact that Marxism is necessarily a demolishing critique
of all the positive discourses of bourgeois modernity, it is only logical that
within the field of history it should also have established itself as a double
frontal critique, a demolisher both of the erudite modern discourse and the
previous philosophic discourse on history.18 This double critique, already
explicit in the early text of The German Ideology, intended to reassess the
erudite and objectivistic history (which is “only a collection of dead facts”), a
necessarily interpretative and explanatory history of the complex human facts,
a history inquiring into the causes of historical facts and the general sense
of the long voyage of the history of man. Against the Hegelian philosophy
of history, and any philosophy of history developed as an a priori construc-
tion, only “giving free rein to the cult of speculation,” Marx defended a critical
and rigorous analysis of the “demonstrable empirical facts.” This analysis, by
means of a complex process of comparison, epistemological generalization
and dialectical synthesis, worked out these “general abstractions” or global
models of explanation and interpretation of man’s social history.

This Marxist discourse on history has been developed, recycled, deep-
ened, debated and also deformed, vulgarized and simplified during the last
hundred and fifty years, always maintaining itself live and present within the
most diverse and heterogeneous landscapes of national historiographies all
over the world to this day. On the other hand, and quite to the contrary,
the two types of historiographic discourses that modernity created and pro-
moted beginning in the seventeenth and through to the nineteenth century
have either entered into a clear process of decay and exclusion, as is the
case of the philosophic discourse, or they have simply come to a standstill,
being limited to reproducing themselves without any essential innovation or
modification, as is the case of the erudite and positivist variant of that same
discourse.19

III.

This overall process has extended its influence throughout the “cultural”
environment. In our opinion, it is this more general process, developed as of
the second half of the nineteenth century, that opens up the space for the shap-
ing of the segmented and autonomized “episteme” of contemporary social
sciences.

What the different philosophies of history expressed was precisely the
“universalist-abstract” side of modernity. This side, based on the equally uni-
versal and abstract logic and nature of value, asserted itself as civilizing-his-
toric progress when confronting the localism, particularity and isolation of
the different histories of pre-capitalist nations and societies. With the nine-
teenth century, the colonization and conquest of the entire planet carried
out by capital, which brought about mainly the creation of a capitalist world
market, came to an end, and with it, the progressive-historic process of his-
torical universalization accomplished by modernity.

For this reason, as of the last third of the nineteenth century, there were
no longer any more “Americas to be discovered” for capital. All that was left
was a struggle, purely material and to the death, for the redistribution of the
already known spaces of this same and finite planet called Earth. It is here
that the “progressive historic function” of modernity ends, closing the cycle
of its ascending curve of development and opening a descending branch of its
decay, through which we have lived during the last hundred years.

However, if the process of historic universalization comes to an end and
modernity’s civilizing task reaches its culmination, the bourgeoisie can no
longer claim this “universalism”—even in its abstract and antithetic form—
which characterized it during its ascending stage of development. Instead,
this universalism transferred to the field of negative or critical thought of
that same modernity.

It is precisely this transfer that explains the birth and development of
contemporary social science, relegating the formerly claimed universalism to
a secondary plane. These social sciences shall now be constructed as a simple
virtuous cultivation of the specialization of the clearly delimited object
of study, of the exclusive and non-transferable methods, of the unique and par-
ticular techniques, and even the language, terms, concepts and theories that
only correspond to this or that well defined gambit of the social scheme.
It is a process of segmentation, specialization, particularization and autonomization of the different social sciences that at the same time turns its back on the more universalistic and global social visions. This continues cultivating and reproducing the second stroke that characterizes modernity and that we have previously evoked as the general foundation of the experimental science project. Unlike the “bourgeois universalism” that is linked to modernity’s progressive task, the project of domination and exploitation of nature through the application of the scientific-experimental approach is connected more with the repeated and growing necessity of its own and more elemental auto-reproduction. Thus, this project cannot be abandoned by modernity, nor even during the descending phase of its vital cycle, which on the contrary, permanently accentuates and re-actualizes it.

It is perhaps this permanent re-actualization of the experimental approach to nature and to the world which might explain the fact that all the “new” social sciences of the last one hundred and thirty years have at some time “dreamed” of being as “rigorous”, “objective”, “exact”, and “precise”—that is to say, as “scientific”—as the natural or hard or exact sciences themselves, the model of which constitutes the more or less confessed paradigm of the entire group of new social disciplines or sciences that exist nowadays. It is a paradigm that was never reached in practice, nor could it have been and is now revealed as entirely illusory on the basis of the rethinking of these sciences, themselves mistakenly known as “exact.”

The rearrangement of reflection on social questions developed during the second half of the nineteenth century, at the same time that it consistently alienated and reduced the formerly encouraged abstract universalism, and strengthened the more “experimental” and empirical-erudite feature, which was the dominant line in social sciences during the last hundred and thirty years.

As we know, this dominant line coexisted all the time nonetheless with various and very diverse expressions of resistance, open critique and rejection. For example, multiple authors and a multiplicity of intellectual trends of thought, beyond that fragmented and specialized “disciplinary episteme,” defended, sponsored, and even implemented visions that were always more global, comprehensive, and more uni-disciplinary. Thus, from Freud to Carlo Ginzburg, and from Wittgenstein to Immanuel Wallerstein, and passing through Claude Levi-Strauss, Norbert Elias, Marc Bloch, Walter Benjamin, Fernand Braudel or Michel Foucault, among so many other thinkers, there were always authors—and with them sometimes intellectual trends—that have not respected the standard episteme, passing freely and critically among the different human social-historical disciplines.

In the double movement that these different “sectorialized” social sciences displayed there were those that, according to the nature of their particular “object of study,” formed attitudes either “imperialistic,” or “deterministic” with respect to the remaining social sciences. Thus, the sectorialized social sciences, even though they occupied themselves with investigating more “vast” objects (such as history, sociology, or anthropology, whose respective concern is the study of human past, of societies, or of man himself) always displayed “imperialistic” tendencies in attempting to encompass the entire group of social sciences under their domain or field. They did this without renouncing their defined social “space” and their singular “specialized” focus, which in any case was claimed as articulator of the set and as dominant over all the other sciences, necessarily conceived under this scheme as “auxiliary” sciences.

The segmented social sciences always claimed diverse and multiple “determinisms” where the dominant motor or essential determinant of human processes was always their particular object of study. In this way, the divided social sciences nevertheless maintained a minimum remnant of the old, and now almost eliminated, universalistic vocation.

Finally, and as a third form of rebellion against this divided episteme, multiple and very heterogeneous versions were developed of what we could call the diverse Marxisms of the twentieth century. Although some of these “Marxists” or “Marxisms” succumbed to the effect of this episteme, characterizing themselves as “Marxist” sociologists, historians, philosophers, economists, geographers, etc., many of them claimed the profound and inevitably globalizing and universalistic critical perspective which characterized the most genuine foundation and heritage of original Marxism.

This dominant line of the fragmented-specialized episteme of social knowledge asserted itself among all of these converging lines of opposition, which it undoubtedly managed to subordinate and control without ever eliminating completely. This then defined a permanent tension within the development of the social sciences over the last thirteen decades, a tension which surfaced and was liberated, with all of its consequences, following the 1968 Cultural Revolution.
For the past thirty years we have been involved in a complex process of reorganization of the entire system of scientific branches of knowledge, both of the so-called natural sciences, and of the social sciences and humanities. To further speed this process, it might be useful to try to recover, and at the same time transcend in a new synthesis and within a radically new scheme, the positive aspects of abstract universalism as well as those of experimental particularism, achieving a true improvement or Aufhebung of both approaches in the Hegelian sense. Is it possible to attempt this synthesis? By recovering the global and universalistic visions of the last four or five centuries, this synthesis would attempt to provide them with a foundation derived from the concrete experience of that detailed and meticulous recognition of what is multiple, different and singular, and of the possible coexistence of many logics and of diversity, in order to advance the construction of a new concrete universality of an also necessarily distinct and renovated system of human knowledge.

In our opinion, it is precisely this line of an original, and as yet unknown, perspective of a concrete universal science that is clearly delineated and outlined in the act itself of the birth of contemporary critical thought, in the emergence of original Marxism—a project that represents the “last of the universal Encydlopedisms” but also the most rigorous and erudite of the intellectual efforts at a truly nuanced and concrete comprehension of reality. This critical Marxist project, after the death of its founding craftsman, traveled multiple and complex paths, always stalking among the spaces in the Marxist project, after the death of its founding craftsman, traveled multiple and complex paths, always stalking among the spaces in the perspectives of a new concrete universality of an also necessarily distinct and renovated system of human knowledge.

In any case, it is our opinion that it is a line of intellectual exploration that, beyond its specific cultural affiliations, is worth the effort of development by social researchers and scientists, a group each time more dissatisfied and discontented with the current system of knowledge that still dominates.

ENDNOTES

1 In regard to this, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein et al., *Open the Social Sciences*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1996.


7 This antithetic and limited character has been very sharply captured, especially by authors belonging to the Frankfurt School. By way of simple examples, cf. the essay by Theodor Adorno, “Progreso” in the book *Consignas*, Amorrortu Editores, Buenos Aires, n.d., and Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectica del Iluminismo*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 1969.
A radical critique of such a simplistic idea of progress can be seen in Walter Benjamin, ‘Tesis de filosofía de la historia’ in Discursos interrumpidos, Planeta–De Agostini, Barcelona, 1994.


12. This interesting line of comparison has been developed by Carlo Ginzburg in several of his works, for example in El juez y el historiador, Anaya-Muchnik, Barcelona, 1993, “Provas e possibilidades a margem de ‘Il ritorno de Martin Guerre’ de Natalie Zemon Davis” y “O inquisidor como antropólogo: uma analogia e as suas implicaçoes,” both in the book, Amicro-histórie e outros ensaios, Difel, Lisboa, 1991 y “Aristotele, la storia, la prova” en Quaderni Storici, no. 85, year 29, fascicle 1, April, 1994.

13. For an interesting development of these problems, see Reinhart Koselleck, Futuro Pasado. Para una semántica de los tiempos históricos, Paidos, Barcelona, 1993.


20. Regarding this problem, see the works of Prigogine and Stengers cited in notes 2 and 3.

The Rise of East Asia and East Asian Social Science’s Quest for Self-Identity

Su-Hoon Lee

1. INTRODUCTION

The once highly lauded ‘East Asian Miracle’ turned sour after some East Asian economies, together with Southeast Asian countries, suffered from currency and financial crisis in 1997. It triggered a great deal of discussion of what both local and foreign analysts called ‘Asian crisis’. It generated numerous questions and issues that troubled not only policy-makers but also the social science community. The discussion continues even today and perhaps will continue forever without any definitive conclusion.

While the general tone of analyses and discussion by Western scholars tended to be cynical, emphasizing corruption and crony capitalism, the local social science community regarded this incident as a ‘crash’ of social science. The incident represented the failure of two main attributes of social science, economics in particular—i.e. explanation of economic realities and predictions for their future. In the case of Korea, the near default of its economy in December 1997 disclosed an irrevocable blunder of the social scientists, who rightfully received criticism and responsibility.

In a sense, the Asian crisis represented an opportunity to slow down the ‘rush to development’ (Hart-Landsberg 1993) and to collectively reflect
2. THE ORIGINAL SIN: IMPLANTATION OF WESTERN SOCIAL SCIENCE IN EAST ASIA

The intellectual tradition of East Asia is known to have been very rich in the areas of humanities and social and political thought. Neo-Confucianism, which today is much lauded as the prime cultural source of the “East Asian miracle” by both Western analysts and local scholars, represents simply one stream of East Asian traditional thought. There are many other streams of thought and ideas as well. Because of the actual abundance of social knowledge and a long tradition of social respect for scholarship, East Asia has been very capable of developing its own system of social knowledge.

The critical blow to the indigenous formation of social science in East Asia was the seventeenth century scientific revolution in Western Europe and its influence on the emergence of “social science” in Europe. The application of “science” to study “social” issues had enormous and far-reaching consequences (Wallerstein 1991). More than anything else, what Europeans did in the name of social science gained unquestionable status in the scholarly world. Almost simultaneously, all other forms of social knowledge in non-Western societies were downgraded as “non-scientific” and thereby something to be eliminated as soon and as totally as possible. Most non-Western forms of social knowledge were devalorized or demoralized. Suddenly, the rich and abundant social knowledge of East Asia which had existed for centuries was relegated to a category of thought which should be discarded or replaced by “social science.” Needless to say, at the center of this entire process lay the dominance of Europe in the capitalist world-economy.

Indeed, Western social sciences were introduced or implanted in East Asian societies like most other Third World societies. This process of introduction or implantation of social sciences including sociology was by no means a smooth process. East Asians took an ambivalent posture toward what the Europeans represented. Of course, the three East Asian countries were not exactly the same in terms of their postures or their attitudes toward accepting ideas from outside. The basic view on European (including North American) civilization held by the East Asians was that it represented advanced technology symbolized by gunboats. The East Asians believed in
their superiority in the sphere of scholarship (or in their own words, “spirit”).
In so far as they believed in their spiritual superiority, the compromise,
which once again was no smooth process, with European civilization (repre-
sented by technology or “utility” and “tools” in Asians’ terminology) was not
a painfully ashamed solution. The fallacy of the Asians was that through
gunboats they saw only Western technology but not Western social science.
Perhaps they did not want to recognize the latter because such recognition
would have made their inevitable compromise very difficult.

After all, the asymmetrical meeting of the East Asians with Europeans
during the last decades of the nineteenth century ended with a practical
and political compromise termed “Eastern Way and Western Technology”
or “Chinese Body and Western Utility.” It may be noted that among the three
nations in East Asia, China and Japan both demonstrated a more flexible
and pragmatic attitude towards what Europe represented, while Korea was
more reluctant to compromise with the West. It is widely recognized that
China, historically the central country in the region, has always been fl ex-
ible. This flexibility was exercised to a degree that helped it to gain self-
asserted centrality. This flexibility and pragmatism has once again been
demonstrated by Deng Xiaoping’s “Socialist Body and Capitalist Utility” to
invent and justify the unfriendly hybrid phrase “socialist market economy.”
Why and how Japan showed a similar attitude is another subject to be
studied. The successful Meiji Revolution (1868) might be a factor. In any
case, Japan went to extremes in dealing with Western civilization. Unlike
China and Chosun (today’s Korea), Japan swiftly transformed its policy
position “Away from Asia and Toward Europe.” The Meiji Restoration and
this speedy switch enabled Japan to take an ultra-nationalist and militarist
path later, and eventually become a non-Western colonial power, the con-
sequences of which were disastrous for the neighboring Asians as well as
the majority of Japanese people. Some analysts trace the economic success
of Japan today back to the Meiji period, paying particular attention to how
Japan responded to the European capitalist civilization. The relevance of
this remains open to question but the path that the Japanese elites took to
construct a complex regional structure was full of contradictions and subse-
quently did irrevocable psychological damage to the Asian peoples.

3. issues of irrelevance/relevance

The fact that social science emerged in Europe and that it was implanted
in East Asia presented many problems and raised a number of issues. One
of the key issues we like to discuss is the question of irrelevance. Implantated
social science inevitably raises the issue of irrelevance as a consequence
of the encounter between Western theories and East Asian realities. The
epistemology of the “invaders” is something to be questioned in terms of
its applicability, pertinence and attunement to East Asian political and cul-
tural contexts. The issue of irrelevance concerns not simply the discordance
between implanted social science and local/national/regional realities, but
also the chronic lack of creativity and originality in social science in East
Asia. To overcome the lack of creativity and originality is an enormous task.
More than anything else, it presupposes the construction of a relevant social
science. Before we move on to specific ways to construct a relevant social
science, it is imperative to discuss this issue (Alatas 1996) in the context of
East Asia.

In the case of sociology, it has to be responsive to the social reality and
history of East Asia (Park 1983). History in this context is not necessarily
temporal. Thus, it does not have to be limited to the past. History in this
context becomes synonymous with social reality. Even if one studies a con-
temporary social phenomenon, if he/she puts it into the pressing historical
context, we can say the study is responsive to historical and social reality. For
example, if sociology in Korea were not responsive to historical social reali-
ties, it should be regarded as “irrelevant.” When it lost its relevance to histori-
cal social realities, it was questioned and pressed for transformation.

In essence, sociology is about social change. To say that social change is
eternal and normal is a cliche. We all recognize the constancy and normality
of social change. What this implies in terms of our practice as sociologists
is that we ought to capture changing social realities with our epistemology.
Social change precedes our ability to decipher and place it in a systematic
mode which makes sense. The gap or lag is almost inevitable. The question
is how wide or narrow the gap is in reality. The wider it is, the greater the
extent to which social science departs from (historical) reality. When the
gap is somehow bridged, we may say that we are practicing a history-rele-
vant sociology.
As a subfield of social science, sociology in East Asia also aspired to become a science, although it never succeeded in coming close to being “scientific.” Science means different things to different scholars. But in general, science has often been interpreted as meaning construction of law-like theories. Theory-building, many argue, requires elegance and parsimony. Detailed descriptions are detrimental to theory-building. In-depth research, which in reality is actually very rare, is encouraged, but the way in which such research is presented ought to be concise. Data should be “processed” as much as possible, which after all represents a reduction of materials. Richness must be sacrificed for the sake of a succinct explanation.

One of the negative outcomes of the emphasis on theory-building is that in East Asian sociology, history has never been a serious matter of concern or interest in spite of the fact that East Asia has a long and rich history which has been relatively well-documented. History presents an excellent opportunity to sociologists whose main interest is social change. This is not to assert that history has been entirely outside the realm of sociological research. Indeed, some Korean sociologists, for instance, albeit few in number, have used history as their object of research. In the 1980s, Korea saw a surge in the sociologists of social history. Nevertheless, legitimate historical sociology is a very difficult subfield to practice. One has to have a special skill, e.g., the ability to decipher Chinese, which requires an enormous input on the part of sociologists. Contemporary Chinese sociologists are no exception.

History which was used in sociological analysis in the case of Korea is limited to the past. This means they use historical materials as their primary sources of analysis. In a sense, time is not at the center of sociological analysis. Time has not been treated as “highly fluid social creations…critical to the understanding of social structure and historical transformation.” (Wallerstein 1991:3) Time is an entity of multiplicity. Some historians deal with the future (Wagar 1992). The present is one such multiplicity too. Sociologists tend to pay attention to the present. Afterall, this tendency has been one of the key factors causing us to divert attention from history. But if we look at the present from a slightly different angle, it has a lot to do with history. History-relevant sociology is more than taking the past as our subject of research. Ultimately, it concerns a historically conscientious understanding of social reality.

The Rise of East Asia

It is important to note that East Asian countries are deeply integrated into the world market. Japan and South Korea are frequently referred to as trading states. Since 1978, China has been rapidly incorporated into the world market through its neo-mercantilist policies. As such, they are vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the world market. The vulnerability is quite visible in our everyday life. Let us take South Korea for example. In 1996, the Koreans vividly experienced how deeply Korea (North as well as South) has been dependent upon the capitalist world-market. In early summer, journalists and economic commentators (including some academics) expressed their worry about the Korean economy, highlighting the rapidly increasing trade deficit. Soon this worry expanded and leveled out to become a discourse on “economic crisis,” the meaning of which is always ambiguous. The trade deficit was due to a sizeable price fall in one single commodity, semiconductor chips in the world commodity market (Lee 1998b). This is a critical feature of the “miraculous” Korean economy. In the following year, Korea had to go to the IMF for a rescue fund.

The point is that without relevance to the world-system, Korean social science can be relegated to a narrow epistemology, lacking pertinence to the holistic reality. Korea has been deeply placed in the capitalist world-system, both in economic and in political terms. This will continue to be so. In this regard, Japan is no different from South Korea. And now China appears to follow the footsteps of her neighbors. Thus, in East Asia as a whole, social science should be sensitive to the dynamics of the world-system.

4. THE RISE OF THE INDIGENIZATION DISCOURSE

Relevance is closely interconnected with indigenization. When we speak of relevant social science in East Asia, another critical issue to be discussed is that of “East Asian” (indigenous) social science. One can easily discard this issue because what East Asian social scientists do as scholars is automatically East Asian and because East Asian social science is and should be East Asian. Note that this is already a sort of tautology. Discussion of the issue can be endless and thereby takes us nowhere. But it is not that simple.

More than anything else, the question of what we mean by the phrase, “East Asian,” arises. It does not refer to a combination of the characteristics of the three societies. It should be used to refer to some unique identity which is very fluid and ever transformative. In East Asia, identity seems to be very elusive. When someone claims to have captured the “East Asian”
identity, they have generally left out many important elements of East Asia. This has a lot to do with the nature of the East Asian regional structure which is very complex because of the contradictory nature of its history. Of course, no region in the world has a simple structure, but we believe that in East Asia the regional structure is much more complex than the case of Africa or Latin America.

In East Asia, nationalistic sentiment is very strong and it stands against the search for an East Asian identity. The critical blow to the East Asian Sinitic world order came around the seventeenth century with the two major wars waged on the Korean peninsula, first the Japanese invasion (1592) and second the “Manchu Invasion” (1636). Following these wars, there were great changes in the East Asian regional order (Choi 1996:198). In Japan, the Tokugawa Shogunate rose and in China the Ch’ing dynasty replaced the Ming. But the Chosun dynasty on the Korean peninsula stood firm without any significant change. The ruling elites in Chosun were successful in keeping the emerging democratic energy under control. In any event, the two wars did irrevocable psychological damage to the Korean people. In addition, Japanese colonial rule during the first half of this century humiliated the Korean people once more. The scar left in the Korean psyche by these humiliations cannot be easily masked. It is not surprising that nationalism is very strong in Korea.

Interestingly, in China and Japan, nationalism is very strong too. China always claims its centrality in the world. A continental center’s nationalism is unwarranted. As an interesting aside, the Chinese centrism now seems to have been groundless with the recent archeological findings in East Asia revealing the fact that the construction of the Chinese civilization was the collective outcome of very diverse “groups” who resided in the territory. The thesis arguing the Chinese origins of the East Asian civilization is now seriously questioned. Nationalism in China stems from both western intrusion, Japanese invasion and domination over some parts of the Chinese territory in this century. How then can we explain Japanese nationalism? Is nationalism not an ideology of the oppressed? How should one explain the strong nationalism of invaders and oppressors? Are they not supposed to be more benign towards the neighboring victims of their aggression in the past? Japan once tried to sever its membership in the Asian region altogether and to join the European imperialist circle. In fact, Japan is the only non-Western colonial power to dominate its neighbors and attempt to reconstruct East Asia under its hegemonic leadership. Should Japanese nationalism be explained by the forced opening at the gunpoint of Commodore Perry in 1854, and/or by their emperor’s humiliation in front of General MacArthur in the summer of 1945?

The collision between the expanding European world-economy and the East Asian regional system involved fierce resistance and violence. The treaties Japan and China had to sign with the Europeans were all unequal. But Korea vehemently sustained its closed-door policy and resisted incorporation into the capitalist world-economy. A squadron of three ships from the French naval fleet based in the Pacific was defeated by the Koreans in 1866. Koreans burned down the American-armed commercial ship “General Sherman” and fought against American troops in 1871. Oddly, it was Japan that forced Korea to open up its port in 1876. How was it that the same Korea that was so firm in its policy towards the Europeans and actually defeated French and American forces knelt down to “barbaric” Japan so easily? Perhaps some of the reformist Korean elites saw Japan as a possible model to be emulated, that is, the Japan that absorbed the European shock while making significant domestic reform (Choi 1996:192). Of course, this turned out to be a misperception. Japan was not at all different from the other foreign powers. What course of action Japan took in the ensuing years needs not to be repeated.

We believe that at this moment it is naive to conceptualize an “East Asian” social science, for there is not any kind of regional identity which we can define as “East Asian.” Today’s regional geopolitical and geoeconomic situation very much resembles the situation a century or so ago. All that exists, now and in the foreseeable future, are national social sciences.

This grim diagnosis should not keep us from seeking East Asian social science. Because of the lack of a regional identity, there is ample opportunity to pursue a collective identity and build a collective social epistemology. Here we are not talking about parochialism. Quite the contrary. The call for an “East Asian” social science goes beyond constructing a narrow and parochial knowledge. There may be elements of nationalism/regionalism and “self-centrism” imbued in the call. But who can blame us for that?

With that premise in mind, let us discuss the rise of the indigenization discourse in East Asia. As we analyzed earlier, there is no such thing as “East
Asian social science.” Therefore the indigenization discourse should not be discussed in a unitary way. In this article, we focus on the case of Korea and limit ourselves to the discipline of sociology to illustrate the rise of indigenization discourse in the region.

Among the community of Korean sociologists, the word “Korean” denotes tension and perhaps animosity in the community. It is a complex, which some Korean sociologists have attempted to disentangle and others have tried to ignore. A struggle among Korean sociologists has been waged, in a few isolated instances explicitly but in other instances silently, over the prevailing epistemology (once again we are not arguing this has been unitary) of Korean sociology. Obviously, power and control have been placed at the bottom of this struggle. Perhaps a more important element involved in the struggle was the struggle against Korean sociologists themselves. In a way, it was a collective reflection or self-criticism on what they did and should do. They constantly rethought what they had done in the name of sociology. Both the struggle between different epistemologies and the inner struggle were most acute in the 1980s in Korea.

The essence of this issue is about indigenization, or more accurately, about decolonization (this latter term was not used prior to the 1990s). Note that the issue of indigenization is very closely related to the issues of relevance—relevance to social reality and relevance to history—which we have already discussed at some length.

In the Korean sociological community, the issue of indigenization has long received certain attention. For instance, as early as the 1972 Korean Sociological Association annual meeting, the issue of indigenization was a focal theme. The consensus reportedly drawn from the meeting was that a “methodological and epistemological transformation” was necessary for the indigenization of Korean sociology. In the 1970s the epistemological dependence of Korean sociology on Western (more often than not equivalent to American) sociology began to be seriously questioned. Since then, the issue of indigenization has persisted as one of the most critical issues in the Korean sociological community.

In a way, social science in East Asia is analogous to a child born without labor. It never underwent the painful process of endogenous development. There were no battles over the institutionalization of social science in East Asia. It was an entity introduced from the outside as we emphasized earlier. Precisely because of the nature of its birth, social science in East Asia was bound to be distant, and neither indigenous nor endogenous. Inevitably, social science in East Asia had to imitate foreign social science, be it European or American. Imitating the social science of others per se represents no major problem. After all, knowledge is accumulated through learning. Learning is basically imitating. Creative minds can be cultivated by imitation. So why does imitating Western/American social science represent a major block to the advance of indigenous social science?

Once again in the case of Korea, those who raised questions about the wholesale uncritical adoption of Western ideas and methods (in sum, American sociology) were concerned with “copying” it. Copying leaves no space or opportunity for thinking and reflection. Copying does not allow the development of a “creative mind.” It only permits the reproduction of a “captive mind” (Alatas 1972). Worse, it prevents creative minds from emerging and asserting their presence. The problem of copying is the production of a captive mind or, in other words, the eradication of creative minds and the destruction of the potentials for originality.

Some obviously consider the call for indigenization to be marginal and unimportant. They quest for decolonization. To them, the Third World is an academic colony where Western social science is practiced. Colonial social science is a crucial cultural instrument for facilitating colonialism. The quest for decolonization is thereby the quest for liberating Third World social science from imperial domination. Areas including metatheory, methodology, theory building, empirical research, interpretation, writing, and policy formulation, etc. ought to be liberated.

In addition to dependence on ideas and theories that are derived from the West, academic dependency has a lot to do with the lack of material wealth and political power. Why social science emerged in Western Europe in the 19th century, why it consolidated itself in the United States after World War Two. And why social science in East Asian societies has been inundated with Western (American) discourse can not be appropriately understood unless we take into account the historical evolution of the world-system and the way in which East Asia has been incorporated into it. This is not the place for a thorough discussion of this issue. At least, we would like to point out that social science in East Asia has never taken a serious posture or taken concrete steps toward bringing this issue to the
center of our analysis. In recent years, there have been a few analysts who took the world-systemic factor into account. But it was always treated as an external factor which somehow had some impact on the internal processes in question.

Dependency reversal is not an easy task for East Asian social scientists. They still tend to utilize ideas and theories which originated from the European countries or the United States. Technological dimensions of academic dependency should not be ignored. Japan may be an exception in this regard, but in the cases of Korea and China, there is little innovation in the development of curricula and instructional materials. Decent textbooks that are locally developed are difficult to find. Investment in higher education is incomparable to the situation in Europe and North America. The research environment in East Asian universities is dismal compared to that of American and European universities. A few Japanese universities may enjoy an advanced level in terms of research and teaching. It is no surprise therefore that the production of ideas and theoretical models continues to be the activities of social scientists working at research and teaching institutions located in the core of the world-system and that social scientists in East Asia continue to be importers of them. As Alatas aptly states, there is “a core-periphery relationship in world social science” (Alatas 1996:12).

5. THE QUEST FOR AN EAST ASIAN IDENTITY

History tells us that the great economic powers are also the great social science powers. In the modern world, European (including North American) societies have been the centers of social science. In our introductory remarks, we noted the rise of East Asia in the capitalist world-economy since the 1970s. East Asia as a whole has already entered the semiperipheral zone of the capitalist world-economy. Some argue that at the turn of the century the region will move up to the core of the world-economy. The acquisition of a new status on the ladder of world economic power by East Asian states has many implications, one of which concerns the quest for an East Asian identity. Let us not lose our focus on social knowledge, in particular, social science.

The poor fit between Western theory and East Asian realities is a consequence of implantation of Western social science in East Asian societies. Thereafter social science in East Asia has unfolded in the form and content of irrelevance and academic dependency. Irrelevant social science keeps East Asian social scientists from developing ideas and theories that fit local/national/regional realities. Academic dependency forces East Asian sociologists to rely upon ideas that are produced in the Western world.

The contemporary call for indigenization in East Asia is a call to overcome irrelevance and to reverse academic dependency. The call is to decolonize the much Westernized social science discourse in the region and subsequently to practice relevant social science. The call for indigenization is a call for creativity and originality.

More than anything else, the call involves the collective quest for an East Asian academic identity. The quest seems to be the outcome of self-reflection rather than self-confidence. Initially, self-reflection was possible because of the economic achievements of East Asia. Now the economic troubles that some of the countries undergo appear to be an additional input to self-reflection and identity search.

There appears to be one strategy (or academic practice) that emerges among the proponents of East Asian academic identity construction. It is that of revisiting or reinterpreting East Asian tradition and culture. Proponents of this strategy try to pinpoint useful traits and attributes in traditional Asian concepts and ideas and to reinterpret them. They argue that East Asian indigenous concepts and ideas can be sources of modern theory development (Kim 1996). Their call is not a call for a return to tradition. Rather, they emphasize the critical accommodation of East Asian tradition to enrich the contemporary social and human sciences, and examine ways to tie East Asian cultural elements to the modern social world. The increasingly popular neo-Confucianist discourse in the West and in East Asia is a case in point.

The quest for an East Asian intellectual identity involves a complex task because what we mean by “East Asian” is never straightforward. As much as East Asia as a region is a complex historical construct, the concept “East Asian” cannot be single-handedly defined. So social scientists in East Asia who advocate the call to indigenization and relevant social science should always be alert to these issues in their academic activities. They should be constantly aware of the pitfalls that the very concept of indigenization contains. They should realize that indigenization is ultimately about the universalization of social science. We know that the universalization of social science in the past meant the universalization of European social science.
Universalism has been Eurocentric. Social scientists in East Asia can make a contribution to universalize social science only by being indigenous. Indigenization does not collide with the universalization of social science. They are one and the same project. What is required on the part of practitioners of social science is “openness” (Wallerstein, et al. 1996).

Even though the future has never been entirely alien to social science, it has generally eluded serious social science research throughout much of the history of the discipline. Nevertheless, concern with the future is very close to the heart of many people in East Asia, including social scientists. In fact, the hopes and fears of the people in East Asia hinge so much upon the prospects of the coming century that the students of social science in this region may well share this concern. The pride that East Asians take in their economic and political achievements should be respected. But the East Asians must guard themselves against becoming arrogant and complacent. The emerging discourse on “Asianism” should be very carefully approached in order not to repeat the catastrophic path that Japan has taken. The specter of early twentieth century Asianism, advocated by Japanese elites, is very alive in the consciousness of contemporary Asians. We must be aware that Asianism has many pitfalls. The return to Asia should not be confused with an expanded view of nationalism. We must guard ourselves against any vision and idea, suggested by the Asians, that has even a remote chance of turning itself into an expansionist, hegemonic, or supremacy-seeking project. Before social scientists in East Asia embark on any academic or practical project now and in the next century, they must first maintain an attitude of humility (the age-old virtue of East Asian scholars) and self-reflection.

The so-called ‘Asian crisis’ is hitting East Asian societies very hard. It causes dangerous social impacts—unprecedented rates of unemployment, the collapse of the middle class, worsened income distribution, family disruption, increased crime, leaving the vast majority of population in the region with anger and frustration.

However, there is another meaning of ‘crisis,’ i.e., the opportunity. What opportunity? We would like to emphasize a critical moment for collective self-reflection. On the part of social scientists, it is a moment to rethink our primary mode of academic and intellectual activities and to construct our academic practice of socio-political relevance.

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First Postulate: The production and reproduction of the structures of knowledge has been a process constitutive of and constituted by the Modern World-System.

From the beginning of the long sixteenth century, the practices of knowledge production took the form of a complex of processes which produced over time an intellectual and institutional hierarchy within which authoritative knowledge was progressively defined as the “other” of societal/moral values. These processes of knowledge formation, in articulation with those sets of processes associated with the “economic” and “political” spheres, account for the dominant relational setting “disciplining” human cognition, and thus the “cultural” parameters of action. This long-term pattern of the modern world-system we shall call the structures of knowledge.1

A determining micro-fluctuation indicating the direction of the transformation that the far-from-equilibrium modes of knowing would take

1. Terence K. Hopkins discussed the “two sets of processes,” processes of the “world-scale division and integration of labor” and “processes of state-formation and deformatio... that constitute the system’s formation and provide an account, at the most general level, for the patterns and features of its development” (1982: 12). Hopkins, Wallerstein et al., however, also claimed that there was “a third fundamental aspect to the modern world-system...the broadly ‘cultural’ aspect...even though little is systematically known about it as an integral aspect of world-historical development...[and] much preliminary conceptual work needs to be done” (1982: 43).
during the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe was the emergence of the "modern fact" as the primary epistemological unit of valid knowledge and cultural authority. The creation of the modern fact enabled the metamorphosis of the merchant into the capitalist by establishing the legitimacy of profit rooted in the virtues of "balance" inherent in the system of double-entry bookkeeping. With profit distinguished from usury, the accumulation of accumulation could take off. At the same time, however, there were collateral effects that redefined the structures of knowledge.

The modern fact could be affiliated with both specifics (of commerce) and their generalization (within a system which ordained the individual creditworthiness of merchants and their credibility as a group). The possibility of such a double identity defined the contradiction between the particular and the universal that drove the processes of rationalization (which, depending on circumstances, might be labeled "scientization" or "secularization") to produce and reproduce the structures of knowledge over time. This contradiction has constantly reappeared embedded in an array of distinctive intellectual antinomies, such as subjective-objective, anarchy/chaos-order, value-truth, agency-structure, which, although formally homologous, have taken on the tonalities of the communities of discourse in which they have been deployed.

The pursuit of objectivity—the view from nowhere; the erasure of agency and history, in short, of subjectivity in whatever form (see Megill 1994)—arose as the confederate of the process of rationalization and embodies the progressive privileging of formal rationality, disinterested calculation as a generalized means of instrumental action, over substantive rationality, the normatively-oriented pursuit of specifically situated ends.

With the common purpose of mastering nature, two avenues in the search for truth independent of received values (signaling the decline of rhetoric on which the authority of generalizations drawn from deracinated specifics had originally been erected) were charted in empiricist appeals to the senses and an inductive method and rationalist espousals of reason and a deductive method. During the eighteenth century, the medium-term, Newtonian fusion of these two antithetical modes produced a tense synthesis of experiments and empirical approaches with hypotheses and mathematical demonstrations. Classical science henceforth would be concerned with the discovery of universal laws governing a regular and constant nature that would lead to the prediction of change, both future and past. With the displacement of the divine viewpoint to man, the humanities, not concerned with the ordered certitude of regularities in the world of nature but with the chaotic finitude of the unique and unpredictable in the human world of conflicting values, could appeal to individual creativity for a "rational" understanding of emergence and change. Along these two lines, the long-term intellectual and institutional structural opposition of the sciences and the humanities, what has come to be called the "Two Cultures," reached a clear delineation over the course of the nineteenth century.

Second Postulate: The social sciences emerged in the nineteenth century as a medium-term solution to the tensions internal to the structures of knowledge.

To envision a static world in the aftermath of the French Revolution was inconceivable; however, modes of interpreting social change in the human world, as marked off from the natural world, made uncomfortable appeals to values. The possibilities, expressed in the form of a mutually exclusive opposition, were either order achieved through the authority of tradition or chaos arising from unfettered democracy, and neither offered a consensual solution to the political confrontations between conservatism and radicalism that threatened capital accumulation. Eventually, from the late nineteenth century, the objective, value-neutral, problem-solving spirit of science was advanced to resolve the standoff in the English-speaking world and the connection between meaning or values and systematic knowledge was argued rigorously in the Methodenstreit, especially in the Germanies. The result was the institutionalization of a set of disciplines, the social sciences, which would function to guarantee ordered change in the name of “progress”
through scientific control, exercised by “experts” and based on “hard facts”; in practice, this amounted to liberal incrementalism maximizing accumulation and minimizing class struggle.

The evolving hierarchical structure of the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities privileged, as authoritative, the universalism of the sciences, the empirical and positivistic sphere of “truth,” over the particularism of the humanities, the impressionistic and anarchic realm of “values”. The social sciences came to be situated in-between, resolving in the medium term the crisis of social knowledge formation of the nineteenth century. Although economics, political science and sociology leaned more toward the sciences while history, Oriental studies and anthropology tended to be more humanistic, even within the disciplines there was no consensus on the composition of their data (quantitative, qualitative), or the appropriateness of their methods (statistical, narrative), or the nature of their “scientific” universality (discovery of laws, elaboration of descriptions) on which they based the legitimacy of their claims.

At crosscurrents with a holistic experience of social relations, the social sciences divided the study of the human world into isolated domains separated intellectually in disciplines and institutionally in university departments. Oriental studies and anthropology were concerned with the great civilizations and the “tribes” of the non-modern world respectively; history handled the past of the modern world; the present of the modern world was further divided among economics, political science and sociology which treated the market, the state, and civil society as isolated fields.3

However, from the moment of the greatest intellectual and institutional success of this structure in the period immediately after 1945, the scholarly

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3 Immanuel Wallerstein has set out this organizational structure in a number of the articles listed below. In 1971, he declared that “[t]here is no such thing as sociology if by sociology we mean ‘a discipline’ that is separate and distinct from anthropology, political science, economics, and history (not to speak of demography and so on). They are all one single discipline which I suppose we may call social science” (1971b: 328). He has continued to write extensively on the past and future of the social sciences (see especially Wallerstein et al. 1996; Wallerstein 1991, 1998a and 1999), the questions of objectivity and truth (e.g., Wallerstein 1971a and 1979), and the two cultures split (e.g., Wallerstein 1998b).
they do, the disciplinary range of challenges to the long-term structures of knowledge. Although over the course of the twentieth century relativity and quantum mechanics undermined the presumptions of classical science at the level of the very large and the very small, it is (again) only since the 1960s that Newtonian dynamics has been challenged in the macro, humanly perceivable, non-relativistic, non-quantum domain. The present rethinking marks a transition away from the world view emphasizing the equilibrium and stability inherent in time-reversible natural laws to a reconceptualization of the (natural) world (to more closely resemble the social world) as one of instability, complexity and self-organization, a world whose deterministic yet unpredictable development exhibits an arrow-of-time (see Prigogine 1997).

Thus, on the one hand, it may be said that the frontier between the humanities and the social sciences is collapsing. The uniquely modern concepts of independent object and autonomous creator have come under serious attack from the humanities and that social construct, the self-interested but responsible individual, the liberal—white, male—subject, has lost “his” foundations.

On the other hand, the concurrent emphasis in complexity studies on contingency, context-dependency, and multiple, overlapping temporal and spatial frameworks is moving the sciences in the direction of the historical social sciences and their concern for spatial-temporal wholes comprised of both the relational structures of human interaction and the phenomenological time of their development. The identification and study of the feedback mechanisms of complex systems, including historical social systems, denies the possibility of an “objectivity” defined as a form of externalism. It is, then, not just that new models of complex systems are being made available to social scientists (unfortunately all too often applied like cookie-cutter templates), but rather that the ontological, as well as epistemological, underpinnings of the claims to legitimacy of knowledge constructed on the “scientific” and “humanistic” models is undergoing a transformation.4

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4 On challenges to the structure of the disciplines after 1945, see Lee (1996).

The Structures of Knowledge and the Future of the Social Sciences

Second Proposition: The uncertainty of the future opens up the character of knowledge production and the definition and role of the knowledge producer.

The modern world-system is a historical system. It is systemic in that its structures have remained recognizable over its lifetime; it is historical in that those structures came into being, have changed constantly, and will eventually cease to exist. In the long term, the evolution of the structures of knowledge (trends) has been returned to relative equilibrium as normal fluctuations were damped (cycles), but seems now to have reached a “far-from-equilibrium” point of no return. Indeed, it was the argument advanced in The Age of Transition: Trajectory of the World-System 1945-2025 (Hopkins, Wallerstein et al. 1996) that the entire complex of processes of the modern world-system was approaching a set of asymptotic limits signaling a transformation of the system as a whole.5

Systemic transformation, however, is not immediate and abrupt but, in the language of the new sciences of complexity, takes the form of a bifurcation arising out of a period of transition characterized by chaotic fluctuations. By definition, such a period (the next fifty years perhaps) is one of great disorder. But as a consequence, that medium-term future also presents great possibilities, for unstable systems pose fewer constraints and very small fluctuations, now capable of massive amplification, could determine the direction any transformation might take. Free will can be expected to find greater latitude while the potential effects of individual agency will multiply.

In Utopistics: Or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-first Century, Immanuel Wallerstein suggests that during this crucial period of struggle “there are two large questions before us: what kind of world do we in fact want; and by what means, or paths, are we most likely to get there.” The first he addresses in “terms of utopistics, that is, the serious assessment of historical alternatives, the exercise of our judgment regarding the substantive rationality of possible alternative historical systems” and presents the second “in terms of the end of certainty, the possibility but the non-inevitability of

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5 On this “upper bound of the trajectory of historical capitalism,” see my “After History? The Last Frontier of Historical Capitalism” (Lee 2001).
The future intellectual and institutional organization of knowledge production remains “uncertain” and to be constructed. In this context one thing is certain, “social science in the twenty-first century...will be an intellectually exciting arena, a socially important one, and undoubtedly a very contentious one” (Wallerstein 1999). However, as the recognition that all knowledge has a social aspect gains ground and the possibilities of “containing” the study of human reality within existing disciplinary arrangements becomes increasingly dubious, it remains unclear “what is to be done”.

At this point, I would like to offer a thought on immediate action for those of “us” whose primary activities center on the university community. I have stated previously (Lee 1998b) that the combination of freedom and reason C. Wright Mills conceived as persuasion, today all too often taking the form of a pluralism blind to relations of power and privilege, no longer seems to adequately express the ethical imperative on the part of the individual social scientist to actively participate in the struggle Wallerstein envisions. I want to suggest that one way that role can be played out is in confrontation, and the confrontation I am talking about is among alternative models of social reality presented by flesh-and-blood advocates and the logical consequences those alternative conceptual schemes generate when pressed to their limits.

Direct advocacy favors the disclosure of the articulation of symbolic codes and material practices and thus the exposure of the historical construction of relations of authority and legitimacy. Direct advocacy fosters the recovery of the link between values and difference and thereby undermines the separation of personal morality from professional neutrality. It is not just representation that is at stake. From this perspective, beyond the institutions and mechanisms through which knowledge is produced (but mostly reproduced) and the premises grounding that production, it should not come as a surprise if the agenda of transition were to include “unthinking” the definition and role of the knowledge producer.

Just as the subject/object relation has become problematic, we need to reconsider the professor/student relation in order to script a new, collaborative subject, in recognition of the ultimate social construction of knowledge and in tune with the lives of real men and women caught up in the making of a new world. In response to the “culture wars” and the “crisis of the humanities,” Gerald Graff (1992; Cain 1994) has proposed “teaching the conflicts”. If that were to mean simply presenting opposing points of view in a marketplace of ideas limited to a single classroom, it would not get us very far. Exploding the individual, self-contained classroom as the standard unit of “instruction” by staging the debates at the center of the curriculum, on the other hand, would create intellectual communities with the tendency to frustrate a di Lampedusan solution of changing everything in order that nothing change.

Experiments with such proposals are actually underway on a few campuses. This type of initiative has the advantage of being fundable and can be designed to satisfy objectives dear to the hearts of administrators while at the same time stimulating the production of imaginative responses, in the form of explorations of serious historical alternatives to the structural limits of endless accumulation. It should be of no small consideration that innovations leading to a more substantively rational historical system are more likely to be institutionalized if they possess the advantage of initially grounding their validity in existing structures of authority.

Closing Remark

Immanuel Wallerstein has written that world-systems analysis, as an unfinished critique of nineteenth-century social science “has not been able to find a way to surmount the most enduring (and misleading) legacy of nineteenth-century social science—the division of social analysis into three arenas, three logics, three levels—the economic, the political, and the socio-cultural. This trinity stands in the middle of the road, in granite, blocking our intellectual advance” (1991: 4).

In conclusion, I want to suggest that the structures of knowledge approach with its emphasis on processes and TimeSpace rather than categories and development can bring us one step closer to the goal of con-
Richard E. Lee

structural the historical social sciences and achieving a more useful vision of long-term, large-scale social change.7

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7 The explicit, detailed justification for the claim that the structures of knowledge approach effectively captures the “cultural” dimension of social change may be found in my “The ‘Cultural Aspect’ of the Modern World-System: Social Movements and the Structures of Knowledge” (Lee, forthcoming).
I. During his intellectual and academic life, Immanuel Wallerstein always makes contributions that are the subject of intense debate and controversy. Now he has given us, as an additional legacy to complete his four years of brilliant, hard, and—why not?—controversial work on behalf of our science as the President of the International Sociological Association (ISA), and as a contribution to commencing the 14th World Congress, another powerful provocation regarding the current state of the art of sociology, or better put, social science. He has done this with reference to the contributions sociological thinking has made, the challenges that social science has encountered, and the promises that social science should fulfill. The provocation is broad and taken to its extreme. It alludes to multiple theoretical
different origins: the indigenous culture which existed long before the violent colonization following the “discovery” of the region in 1492; Western culture as such, introduced and imposed by the Europeans (chiefly Iberians) in the course of that process, in a very particular fashion in view of the special place occupied by the Spanish and Portuguese in Western culture; and African culture, brought here by the black slaves over the course of at least three centuries. These three elements, visibly present and individually recognizable, have at the same time intermingled symbiotically to give rise to a structural heterogeneity (Quijano in Sonntag et al., 1989, 44 ff; García-Canclini, 1993, passim) based on the mixing that is yet another way to represent Latin American and Caribbean culture.2

Regarding the self-perception of the societies in the region, it should be borne in mind that Western culture subjugated the other cultural elements throughout the three centuries of colonial rule, though it never completely defeated or exterminated them. Even at the outset of the Independence Movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (completed toward the end of the latter’s first quarter), Western culture continued to predominate. How could it have been otherwise if those who led the movement came from the previously dominant classes (and had not had so exceptional a teacher as Simón Rodríguez)? And since there was no true revolution (understood as a comprehensive reorganization of society) that transformed the pre-independence way of life, but only the replacement—by imitation, as Rodríguez would say—of one political system of domination by another that was equally alien, the Western cultural element continued to prevail throughout the entire period of liberal-oligarchic republics which lasted through the first quarter of the 20th Century in most countries. But once again, that predominance did not result in the disappearance of the other elements, nor that of the mixed culture that had evolved—not only because there were some thinkers and intellectuals who constantly defended them

II.

Latin America and the Caribbean are said to be part of the West, though they have been called the Extreme Occident (J. Rouquié); alternatively, its societies are, in the framework of the clash of civilizations, bearers of a culture of their own, which gives them “a distinct identity that distinguishes them from the West” (Huntington, 1996, 46). They have also been called social-geographic-cultural spaces in which utopia is concealed and goes unnoticed until it is implanted throughout the world, especially in the part which is developing (Ribeiro, 1971, 186). They are also spaces—it has been said—in which instrumental reason will finally be overcome by an alternative: historical reason (Quijano in Lander, 1991, 27 ff).

The difficulties in characterizing the region stem from its particular features. They are the building blocks of national cultures, and they aggregate to form a regional culture, all of which have been characterized as hybrid (García-Canclini, 1992), in view of the coexistence of elements from greatly

1 The classic study of this subject is and will continue to be Williams (1944/1975). 2 It was chiefly Darcy Ribeiro in a large number of scientific and literary writings who put special emphasis on this characteristic. But it is also present in the works of other intellectuals, both past and present.
but also because the collective actors who represented them resisted continuously, often silent and unspectacular, but successful.

This implies that social thought was equally impregnated by the West, that it followed the clues and orientations of the intellectual currents prevailing in the developed countries at the center of the world-system (to use a particularly apt expression of Wallerstein), in a word, that in the social representations and their theoretical-conceptual systematizations there was no room for Latin American and Caribbean people to think about themselves with their own ideas. Progress was the road toward modernity as understood in the West. This axiom was literally turned to stone: the 19th Century architecture of our major cities imitated Western urban form as the aesthetic and urbanistic principle of "our" modernity, which remained unfinished, concentrated, and exclusive, comprised of the small European-oriented elites while the great masses played the role of the grass over which the train of history moved, as Fernando Henrique Cardoso once said in a lecture.

The most complete expression of Western predominance in social thought was the influence of positivism, including the version that some have called "tropicalized", in almost all countries of the region, reflected in their historiography, economic choices, social analyses, and political programs. There was almost no alternative thought, other than that of the handful of intellectuals who were inclined towards socialist ideas that also came from Europe and accordingly contributed to Western culture’s predominance as well. The indigenous and African elements of Latin American and Caribbean culture survived in the practices of the collective actors, especially among the lower classes, and were not articulated or expressed except in oral traditions.

III.

The evolution of capitalism in the region—initially limited to certain particular countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay) and then spread to the rest—not only transformed the economy and social structure but also brought about changes in ways of thinking. Ideas took shape which sought to redeem the indigenous element of our culture, expressed in purest form by the Peruvians José Carlos Mariátegui and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, and by Mexican thinkers, while essayists and writers from other countries (especially Cuba and Brazil) began to incorporate the originally African element of Latin American culture into their conceptualizations and other writings.\(^3\)

It was in this period (from the end of the 19th Century to the 1940s) that the social sciences began to find a place in the academic establishments of several countries. They played an especially active role in Mexico and Brazil. The disciplines that developed first were anthropology and economics, apart from the kind of “sociology” which was more a social philosophy than a social science. A substantial part of this development reflected western influences. Throughout Latin America (especially in Mexico), Spanish intellectuals fleeing from the Civil War and the defeat of the Republic had a very strong impact. But there were also some primary forms of academic exchange, as between France and Brazil, which for example led Claude Levi-Strauss to teach at the University of Sao Paulo for a time and to do anthropological field work there.\(^4\) In addition, Latin American scholars pursued postgraduate studies at European universities (particularly in France and Britain) and at U.S. universities (though in smaller numbers at that time).

There was still no true institutionalization of the branches of social science at the region’s universities in this period. The economics and sociology chairs and departments—where they existed—were housed within the Law Faculties, and the anthropology chairs and departments were located in the Humanities Faculties, often closely tied to the history departments and chairs. The tendency to seek and encourage interdisciplinarity may have had its origin in this apparent institutional weakness.

The content of these incipient social sciences was impregnated by Western practice, and did not reflect the emergence of a current of thought acknowledging the hybrid nature of our culture, as occurred in regional literature, plastic arts, music, and dance. But it had a feature that—though not exclusive to it because it already existed, mutatis mutandis, in the social sciences of other regions and even in certain Western currents—did give it a

\(^3\) Here it would be necessary to list an extraordinarily extensive bibliography, which would include a large part of the Latin American and Caribbean *intelligentsia* of the last several decades. For reasons of space, we refrain from doing so in this essay.

\(^4\) This author’s most beautifully incisive book of scientific production, *Tristes Tropiques* (Levi-Strauss, 1955), which is also a beautiful example of not unequal scientific exchange, emerged from that stay in Brazil.
strongly distinctive character: among its principal objectives was to contribute to social transformation. That is why its fundamental orientation was toward change, rather than toward equilibrium (Cardoso, 1968; Sonntag, 1988). From its inception, Latin American and Caribbean social science conceived itself as socially and politically committed, not as neutral with regard to the values which inspired it—just what Immanuel Wallerstein proposes and which is now taking shape.

IV.

The true evolution of the different branches of social science got under way after the Second World War, and coincided with the search for a strategy capable of overcoming underdevelopment. However, most of the development proposals were imbued with what Wallerstein calls the culture of sociology: proposals based on the formal rationality of capitalism and the assumption that it must be valid for all nonwestern capitalist societies. That orientation provoked two failures to address the challenges posed by Wallerstein. First, the Latin American and Caribbean social science of development—like the Western science—refuses to acknowledge the possibility of another rationality; the strength of Freud and psychoanalysis lies in its attack of the concept of rationality and its rejection of normality. Our social science has not managed to understand that there are many rationalities, that the norms which guide individuals’ behavior can vary (among other things, from one society to another), and that just like individuals, societies too must follow the premise that each one must find the path to his own salvation (as Freud said). Second, there is no single rule, there is no single road appropriate for all societies, because their space-time characteristics differ (as Wallerstein would say, following Abdel-Malek). What does exist are powers which impose themselves and which ignore or deny diversity and multiplicity.

To illustrate, for many years Westernized social science and clichés have dismissed Latin American workers as lazy, simply because they do not work according to capitalist rationality. But the working women and men of Latin America and the Caribbean rise at dawn, have no vacation, and devote themselves to their work with a passion for their friends and relatives (compadres), though not for the accumulation of wealth as advocated by the salesmen of progress. The meaning of work and its relation to the accumulation of wealth is different for a large part of the population (cf. Briceno-Leon, 1996 and 1997, paradigmatically in the Venezuelan case as illustrative of the region as a whole), and they accordingly feel at peace with themselves through their sense of tranquillity and their commitment to family and friendship, in the pleasure they derive from giving even when they have nothing for themselves, in their efforts to redistribute what they have among their relatives, and in their renewed hope for reciprocity.

V.

If there is any form of effort that has predominated in Latin American sociology, it has been the search for uniqueness, and in that search the intermingled expressions of extreme admiration for and rejection of Europe have been infinite, as has to be the case of the Far Occident. The eurocentrism arguments put forward by Abdel-Malek as a challenge to the culture of sociology already had—as we have seen—its theoretical and practical predecessors in Latin America. Hence, that argument was well received but unfortunately did not prosper. The region’s social science continued to be predominantly eurocentric, whether on the “right” or on the “left”, whether reflecting U.S. functionalism or French Marxism, as long as—through its emphasis on the concept of development—it continued to be linked to “the truth of mankind’s history (i.e., each nation’s progressively greater access to the ‘benefits’ of history)” and based on “the path through which Western society—to the exclusion of all others—has conceptualized its relation to the past and the future” (Rist, 1997, 44).

And along what “geographic thread” can one define oneself in response to eurocentrism? Is Latin America really a unit which can engender homogeneous responses? What unites a resident of cosmopolitan Buenos Aires with a Guatemalan Indian peasant or a Brazilian landless farmer? Perhaps the first answer lies in the other, not in oneself; perhaps the answer comes from the rejection or acceptance of the successive impositions which simultaneously injure and constitute one’s identity, as was the Spanish language for centuries: an imposition which became an identity and even a rallying point for many, but which continues to be nothing but an imposition for many others.

But when one delves more deeply into the issue, one finds other characteristics which never come to the surface because they are considered shameful, and which constitute cultural threads that provide the basis for a
self-definition in response to Eurocentrism. The approaches to time among many Latin American and Caribbean people are different, to the point where many Europeans mock it: “yes, ..., tomorrow!” But tomorrow is different here. The future does not exist as a principle which totally organizes the present. There is a different way of thinking about the present. That is why the interpretations of underdevelopment which attribute an important causal role to many people’s inability to defer gratification capture a valuable aspect of reality but understand it incorrectly, because they do so in the light of the Eurocentric paradigm and, hence, are insensitive to a different behavior grounded in an alternative view of time.

VI.

And of what time is this place? Of what time is this land of grace? Latin America and the Caribbean are of many different times, which overlap in countries, regions, and individuals. That is another expression of the structural heterogeneity mentioned above. Here, software companies which compete in a global market coexist with subsistence agriculture using the ancient slash-and-burn method conserved by many Indian and peasant communities. The Yanomami Indians, who live much as their ancestors did centuries ago, today receive complex medical treatment and use sophisticated consumer products generated by end-of-century technological progress.

In Latin America, Fernand Braudel’s structural time has the heterogeneity proper to its structures. We have experienced a history of events which are told to us and which we retell with pride and amazement, a history of discoveries and wars of independence, a history of construction of borders and nationality myths with “known” origins and destinies. Five hundred years passed since Columbus’ arrival and no one knew exactly what to celebrate: the discovery, the encounter of two cultures, the incorporation of the Western Hemisphere into world history—all terms reflect the eurocentric bias. But the contribution of social science (not all of it because a part remained “stuck” in the western approach) is that at least it manages to cast doubt on the eurocentric concepts. “Who discovered whom?” the region’s activist groups and indigenous communities ask. And then the encounter concept slowly gains ground. This Hemisphere is a land of encounters.

A Venezuelan historian asserts that this country entered the 20th Century in the mid-1930s, with the collapse of the long dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez (1908 to 1935), which marked the end of the liberal-oligarchical republic and paved the way for the emergence of the new political parties and the overriding influence of oil (M. Picón Salas, here quoted by Caballero, 1996, passim). But, when did Latin America enter the 20th Century? Alternatively, has any country really entered this century in cultural, social, and political terms as conceived in the model generated by western technological achievements and confirmed by the West’s military might? The processes subsumed under the concept of globalization are real ones; in the most remote villages the people listen to radios which repeat the music now in vogue in Los Angeles. But does that make them participants in this century’s culture? Or is it only an example of the overlapping of times and cultures among people who have yet to find their own road?

VII.

Perhaps the breakdown of “Marxism” as a dominant truth in social science is the clearest sign of the “end of certainties” in Latin America and the Caribbean. Beginning in the mid-1960s, an innovative and critical social science rejected eurocentric influence and the domination of functionalist theory from the United States. For a short time it found a form of expression of its own in the dependency approach (Sonntag, 1988, 57 ff). But a large part of regional social science succumbed to the dogmatic certainty of a simplistic Marxism and thereby betrayed itself. The theoretical hegemony of Marxism—and especially that of French structuralist Marxism—in the 1970s provided one more way to construct a self-justifying truth. The return to realism advocated by Prigogine and of which Wallerstein reminds us has provided Latin America and the Caribbean with a critique of the dominant critical thought, though not so much one of the scientistic perspective since it has been less influential in social science.

Marxism countered the determinisms put forward by the capitalist development theories—including the ECLA model—with equally deterministic postulates on social change which bore no relationship to the real

5 It is fair to recognize that Wallerstein has acknowledged the influence of the critical and innovative strain in Latin American and Caribbean social science in his own work on several occasions, and not only during his visits to countries of the region.
processes it praised—in Russia, in China, and even in the Cuban revolution. The so-called “laws” of dialectics taught at the universities as universal truths of history were “laws” because social science called for the construction of a determinism similar to the one assumed to characterize physics. But it turned out that the model ceased being deterministic. Moreover, if there is no determinism in physics, there is certainly no point in looking for it in social science. There is only conjecture, which allows us to approach an understanding of a complex and changing world.

VIII.

When many people thought that there were few new revisions or additions that could be made to critical thought, the feminist movement appeared with a bold new perspective, and forced us to reformulate our way of thinking and speaking about social problems. The feminists posed new doubts and forced us to formulate new proposals. Women play a very prominent role in Latin America and the Caribbean, though they also suffer the most extreme poverty (especially single women with children). And they make the most strenuous and effective efforts to overcome poverty, and along with it, the disgraceful living conditions imposed on both women and men (Benería & Roldán, 1992; León, 1997). Women are now in the majority among social scientists, in both the intellectual and institutional spheres. At many Latin American universities it is now women who study men, reversing a pattern that has existed since the dawn of academia. The impact of these changes has yet to make itself felt. Women have made important theoretical contributions, though most have not done so as theoreticians, but rather as brilliant and productive professionals. The women’s perspective has not only influenced the men who hold academic power, but also the women themselves, who have discovered a strength, an added and differential value in scientific approaches and in the effort to break the male monopoly of institutional power. In the past they had held back or failed to realize their potential, because they were imbued with the male-oriented professional culture.

IX.

We in Latin America and the Caribbean are not modern; we have never been modern. Modernity has been the dream of a social or political elite, and as that elite’s project it has always remained incomplete. Naturally, we have certain aspects of modernity: ideas, goals, and aspirations of modernity. But it has never been complete, nor is it what constitutes our form of life in society. We have had a façade of modernity (Sonntag, 1998). That is why Latour’s book comes as no surprise for us, but rather for others, for those who thought they were modern. But now it turns out that we are all “amodern”. How, then, can we classify the position of Latin America? Where do the theories of backwardness stand? Backwardness in relation to what?

Many of the behavioral patterns put forward today as postmodern have existed in Latin America since long before the concept came into existence, and were considered traditional. We are certainly “hybrid” or “heterogeneous” societies. That implies limitations, but can also be a source of immense potential. If modernity has not arrived it needs not arrive. Perhaps we will find more opportunities and more advantages if we try to be more “postmodern” than modern. Many of the cultures of our region can only become modern by changing and destroying themselves. If we have never been modern, it is largely due to the varied forms of resistance and adaptations for survival these cultures have made, sometimes openly and combatively, and other times through silent opposition. To conserve some aspects of that identity and be able to address the challenges of the future, it is necessary to generate changes and accept influences, but also to hold on to what is ours, conceiving it as valuable and useful. The final result of this balance between permanence and change will be determined by history and time, “since each one must find the path to his own salvation.”

X.

Social science for Latin America has vacillated between two major tendencies: either to answer to its people, its society in the latter’s uniqueness, and its urgent needs, or to answer to its era, its time, and the demands of scientific rigor and universal knowledge. The great promise of Latin American thought, its crowning ambition, was summed up a century ago by José Martí when he wrote that the aim was to try to answer to both needs and to be a person of one’s time and one’s people (Briceño-León & Sonntag 1998).

The speech Wallerstein has given us places us once again and in his own words at the same crossroads: we must abandon the concept of formal rationality, break with eurocentrism, think in terms of a different historical
time, and countenance the end of certainty. With the tools of our time’s critical thought, he forces us to realize the uniqueness and the dreams of our peoples. The task is not (and has never been) easy, but is there any point in continuing to repeat the same old ideas and refusing to take the risk of approaching the ultimate causes, straightening the paths of science by uniting the two cultures and reunifying social science?

The promise lies in going further down the road, and perhaps in the new conjectures of interpretation we will be able to achieve the re-enchantment of this land of grace, and put flesh on the bones of those old words, dreams, and utopias. ¡O inventamos o erramos!

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American Liberalism, One Worldism & World-Systems Analysis

Orlando Lentini

Liberalism is a system of norms and values elaborated by the European world-economy in the course of its constitutive process. It is a matter of organizational principles determining the acting subject, economic action, the state and, the entire picture of social imaginary, starting from the prescriptive nucleus of ‘freedom’ rights.

The history of liberalism is the story of a methodical structuring of norms and values, which postulates a possessive and acquisitive subject in a system of ceaseless pursuit of endless accumulation. This methodical structuring had already begun in the XIII century with the formation of the Mediterranean world-economy, centered on the free city states of the Italian peninsula. Initially, the above elaboration utilized elements of ancient both Graeco-Roman and Judaic-Christian organizational experience, but the identification of a new nucleus adequate to the new system was not realized until the XVII century, with the establishment of Dutch hegemony in the world-system and the emerging English organizational power.

From the English revolutions of the XVII century, which inserted the prescriptive nucleus of ‘freedoms’ in a historiographic picture of republi-

1. See Hans Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny, Princeton 1966. If the historiography of freedom can start from Machiavelli (see my Analisi sociale machiavelliana, Milan 1992), it is only in XVII century that a true paradigm develops.

2. The works of Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza and William Petty are emblematical in this process of ideological elaboration, several times later resumed from different perspectives.
canism, that is a self-government by producers, the elaboration of a new system of norms and values proceeded steadily, to become, in the XVIII century, the core of American emancipation and French revolution. With its extreme wings, socialism and conservatism, liberalism would become, in the XIX century, the central component of the geoculture of the modern world-system. Therefore the system could now rely on a complex of norms and values, always in progress, but endowed with its own specificity, from which new structures of the whys of social knowledges derive.

During a long period roughly spanning from 1650 to 1870 coinciding with the history of the formation of English hegemony in the world-system, a paradigm of social analysis was constituted, which we can call liberal Marxist, the fundamental prescriptive nucleus of which were the ‘liberties,’ variously defined, according to a growing number of ‘rights’. It was not a speculative process but a pragmatic, methodical structuring of organizational values of the core country, which in XIX century would establish its hegemony in the world-system.

Therefore, we should speak of an English liberalism, with its articulations elaborated in other core countries of the world-economy, notably France, United States and Germany. The American radical, the French atomistic and the German holistic versions served as complements to the English mode, characterized mainly by its system of guarantees of ‘rights.’

The liberal-Marxist paradigm was the construction of an analytical imaginary based on the ‘liberties,’ no longer valid solely for acquisitive proprietors, rather for all the members of a division of labor, and not only in a single central or semiperipheral country, but for all countries of the world-system.

The welding of world interdependence and human rights was probably the result of the stimulus of antisystemic forces linked to industrial workers of core countries and found one of its paradigmatic formulations in Marx-Engels Communist Manifesto. This was a typical liberal-Marxist product of the phase of English hegemony, when political rights and ‘economic rights’ were strongly connected. English liberalism, with its liberal-Marxist variants, was hinged on the ideal type of economic operator who, in a market space, exerted their liberties thus enabling the optimal working of the system. This was associated with a ‘free trade’ and laissez-faire economic theory, which dominated English economic analysis until World War I.

Nevertheless, laissez-faire theory, around the middle of the XIX century, seemed at odds with German interests. Furthermore, even for the political system in a united Germany, the imitation of the hegemonic English organizational experience was problematic. In order to compete in the world-economy it was necessary to promote liberal institutions, but the emphasis was now on ‘social state’ instead of ‘legislation oriented to the individual.’ Both public power and the intellectuals in Germany converged on the necessity of a union for social policy, a trend later assumed by all the core countries. The German historical school not only rejected laissez-faire theory, but also ended by elaborating a ‘liberalism of the chair’, whose subtlest interpreter can be considered Max Weber.

Germany anticipated through Staatswissenschaften the need for systems of social security, which were destined to become an essential part of the ‘liberal state.’ Indeed between 1870 and 1920, the English model too underwent strong reformist tensions that imposed an updated elaboration of the organizational values, to incorporate new labor ‘rights.’ Previous laissez-faire and elitist versions survive while the context is dominated by new visions of ‘social state’ or ‘welfare state.’

English liberalism changed together with the liberalism of other core countries and found a settlement with Hobhouse, the systematizer of a version open to the ‘social’ demands submitted by Labourites. The attention paid by scholars to the increasing role of Marxism between XIX and XX century, lessened the importance of what appears now to be the main ideological change, i.e. the adaptation of the prescriptive liberal nucleus to the transformation of the capitalist system.

Other European countries appeared more oriented to producing state systems of social security, while the Americans still seemed to advocate the

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primacy of acquisitive enterprise against any other liberty, despite or perhaps thanks to the persistence of the rhetoric of the 'legislation oriented to the individual' of federalist origins.6

The 'crisis' of a certain version of XIX century English liberalism was not only the final result of changes in power relations between capital and labor in Europe, but was also an indication of a passing of hegemony, the consequence of structural changes in the American system of business enterprises, the formation of an industrial economy dominated by the corporations, i.e. the modern multiunit business enterprises which resulted from the integration of the process of mass production with that of mass distribution within a single business firm.7 The rhetoric of the 'legislation oriented to the individual' had to come to a compromise with the reality of the dominance of corporations.

American liberalism, a liberalism we can now define 'pragmatic' by virtue of its capability to adapt to the real organizational development, would be characterized by the acceptance of the corporation, still considered a synonym of monopoly, within the perimeter of its [designated] liberties and rights.8 American liberal-democracy acknowledged the maneuver rights of the corporation as well as the right of the political power to determine bounds in defense of liberties and rights of individuals or interest groups.9

Berle & Means' book on modern corporation and private property emblematically marks the passing from the Smithian vision to the 'corporate' one. However Berle does not limit himself to accept the empirical obviousness of the monopolistic concentration of economic power in United States, but he also denounces the separation between property and control in the giant corporation, and the tendency of the management to perpetuate its power by excluding the shareholders. So, the liberal assumption of 'legislation oriented to the individual' is once again restated, partly restoring shareholders control, but renouncing to exorcise the giant corporation.

The transition from English liberalism to American liberalism was a gradual process, in which at first English Labourites renegotiated state/individual relations,10 followed by some of the American political intelligentsia, but with decidedly innovative results as a consequence of the organizational implications of the new system of business enterprises developed in the United States. Now the schema was no longer dichotomic but tripartite, because between the individual and the state the giant corporations interposed themselves, becoming 'quasi-states.'

The problem was no longer to create intermediate bodies between individual and state but to acknowledge that the economic power of the country derived from a multiplicity of quasi-states, whose expansion was crucial for the United States' wealth as well as its foreign policy. The meaning of notions like freedom, equality and imperialism now changed. The USA on the one hand inherited organizational values from the most advanced European countries, while on the other hand introduced itself new values.

On the American side a new type of internationalism emerged, which was post-colonial and regulated by the rhetoric of self-determination of peoples or nations. The US international liberals, generally liberal-Labourite in internal policy, were the new progressive figures who would become central in to the political culture of the XX century. It was probably the transnational character of the corporation that created, between the world wars, the culture of international liberalism, oriented to a new vision, called one worldism. This orientation would characterize the cultural investments of the major Foundations, from then on among the main promoters of interior and foreign education programs and organizational culture based on liberal internationalism.

American liberalism not only rhetorically exalted 'legislation oriented to the individual,' the main matrix of exceptionalism already in Tocqueville's

6. Alexander Hamilton (Madison, Jay), The Federalist, New York, Mac Lean 1788.
model, but now aims at spreading this value orientation all over the world.11 By so doing, became also necessary the exportation of world New Deal organizational principles, having its engine in The United States and the division of labor they imposed.

One worldism was a typically American ideology,12 which however had soon to yield, with the cold war, to two worldism, a tendency in some way answering to persistent isolationist leanings of the moderate public opinion. In a picture of contrasting pressures, for or against ’one world’ and, within ’one world,’ for or against American hegemony, social knowledges had to face entirely new problems of adjustment to the standard objectivity.

All the analytical work that follows the formation of the modern world-economy, reflects the point of view of local intelligentsias, mostly based on ’nation-states,’ which also imposed themselves as the main units of analysis. Nevertheless part of the analytical work was devoted to the study of problems the local business enterprises had to face in their transnational range, with a unit of analysis, the ’universal trade,’ now called world economy. By weaving between nation-state and world market, American social knowledges achieved the phase of hegemonic rising.

United States realized the world nature of their duties already after World War I. In the social sciences this new situation had been elaborated by several liberals and social democrats with internationalist leanings. The journal The New Republic and the New School for Social Research were, between the two wars, the leading ideological institutions in promoting a new system of norms and values on world democracy, variously combining the demand of political and economic rights.13

New York would be the center of a cultural and political movement expanding and elaborating a system of liberal and internationalist norms and values. This movement involved the progressive wing of Columbia University and its best accomplishment was the Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences (1930-1934). As a result of the joint effort of the exponents of the rising American liberalism and the most advanced European social science, the Encyclopaedia reflected the analytical climate that would triumph during the New Deal between the two wars. It was the most ambitious collective expression of the aspiration to lay down the bases of the ideological foundation of a world liberal internationalism.

Liberals and social democrats like Seligman, Hobhouse, Johnson, Laski, De Ruggiero, Keynes, Lederer, Schumpeter, Kallen, Berle, Beard, Dewey, Einaudi etc., were united in unique enterprise of liberal-democratic and internationalist definition of world situation, which would be later translated in a solid antifascist alliance (the ’united nations’), with the creation of the UN organization and the foundation of a new world historiography.

Moreover, the Encyclopaedia records the social scientization of social knowledges, now seen as an essential component of the art of government. On the wave of the vision asserted later by the New Deal, the pragmatic social scientist, analytical, more and more documented and oriented to empirical research, produced the knowledges needed for the government of a society of free men. Perhaps it is not a chance that politics would be by then endowed with its own disciplinary apparatus and its ’classics,’ wavering between so-called ’machiavellian’ and democratic traditions.

Sociology and political science were now particularly engaged in the effort to set and stabilize the categorial apparatus of political and social action, thus setting in motion the reification of American liberalism’ dynamics. Even if it was a question of a society whose wealth derived mainly from the corporations, it assured its loyal members room for ’voluntary’ action.

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12. This is at least the opinion of Oscar Handlin, One World. The Origin of an American Concept, Oxford 1974. One worldism is in fact the result of a new international orientation of the US administration from Woodrow Wilson, that ended in a fundamental agreement between Democrats and Republicans during the World War II; see Wendell L. Willkie, One World, London 1943. As a cultural movement, from 1947 one worldism had its journal, Common Cause, later subtitled A Journal of One World, published by the University of Chicago until 1951.

The single ‘social actors,’ once internalized the central system of norms and values, no longer based on or derived from ‘individuals’ but objective ‘social systems,’ would act in full freedom, reproducing a liberal and democratic society.  

It was a matter of a new reality where monopoly tendencies and planning policies interlaced, sweeping away romantic individualism and imposing state intervention. The German experience, represented by W. Rathenau and illustrated by Emil Lederer, meets the reflection of A. A. Berle, Alvin Johnson, John Dewey and Harold Laski himself, making the *Encyclopaedia* the most important product of social analysis between the two wars.

In this period, objectivity seemed guaranteed by methodological strategies and by a supposed identity of interests among the various components of the ‘international community,’ legitimating an abstract universalism, de facto function of western interests, or rather of the core countries of the world-economy. The assertion of liberal values for all human beings and of the rights of peoples, ethnic groups, social classes and *stands*, minorities and later gender rights, was considered the normal development of the organizational principles of the political and ideological ‘revolutions’ of XVIII century, whose heritage was claimed by the Americans, who translated their exceptionalism as western exceptionalism.

The combination of New Deal liberalism (democracy plus corporation) and one worldist internationalism, has been the ideological engine in the management of World War II, involving in the project also the communist wing of liberalism. The end of the war has been also the end of the alliance of the world center and the communist world ‘left,’ at the origin of the very notion of *united nations.* ‘American liberalism’ stood this time on the defensive and in the process of cold war the two worldist vision ended in a prevailing anticommunist liberalism.

Before coming to this critical phase of ‘American liberalism’ there had been a long period of great hopes, nourished by the faith in the possibility of a ‘New Deal for the world.’  


17. The union of Americans for Democratic Action well illustrates the essence of this position, characteristic of many intellectuals in the Democratic Party, to become
thus reviving old isolationist dispositions in US opinion. In turn, western European countries, devoid at that time of any autonomy, found themselves engaged in containing communism, losing at the same time even the mere appearance of their sovereignties.

During the cold war years, just while the operation of politological Americanization of the world was starting, the historiographic approach of the ‘vital center’ established itself. This approach was based on the idea that the USA was a vital center of values, developing itself like a ‘liberal spiral,’ nearly a bound-to-happen constitutive process. Around this center was already acting the consensus of the major political forces, from the Left to the Right. However, this model, elaborated by the democrat historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., which seemed consistent with the actual American praxis, was not to be exported out of the now hegemonic center of the world-system.

From the fifties on the differences among the core countries of the world-economy on the one hand and between them and the semiperipheral and peripheral ones on the other, became increasingly clear. Hegemonic country’s liberalism was too limiting for other core countries and substantially impracticable in semiperipheral countries. Nevertheless, the United States won the war, imposed liberal political systems on Germany and Japan and urged or sustained similar systems in all other countries, starting the politological Americanization of the world that in fact ended with the final delegitimization of the Soviet system.

Peripheries could only make ‘experiments’ of liberalism, concealed with rhetoric. Differences moreover derived from the relative locations in the world division of labor, determining the so-called ‘strategies of development.’ Those strategies were implied in the one worldist projects of a world New


19. This is the message elaborated by politologist Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, New Haven 1968.
A new social theory was needed. In the United States itself, at the center of liberal one worldism, by then became a stronghold of modernization functionalists, New York and Columbia University, Immanuel Wallerstein and Terence K. Hopkins formed a nucleus first of resistance and later of systematic elaboration of the approach now labeled world-systems analysis.20

In this approach various components of ‘American liberalism’ cohabit: the values of ‘legislation oriented to the individual,’ the acknowledgement of the normal character of the capitalism of giant corporations, and internationalism. To this a refusal is added to admit the nation-state as a primary organizational value, to be replaced with an ‘historical’ analysis and interpretation of the world division of labor, seen as world-economy and modern world-system.

The central concern of world-system scholars was now the problem of world inequality, always the focus of all the leftist versions of the liberal-Marxist paradigm, become after the war a general problem of the major international organism, the UN. It was not clear if this new situation should have led to the elaboration once again of a ‘new liberalism’ or it was time for a new system of norms and values untied to the matrix of the European world-economy.

The struggle against inequality derived from the social relation between capital and labor, seen by the liberal-Marxist paradigm as a prerequisite for the achievement of substantive democracy, kept its appeal, but it was increasingly clear that it was an impracticable goal without eliminating inequality among collectivities located in a systemic division, between center, semiperiphery and periphery.21

It must be stressed that in the construction of the new historiographic apparatus Wallerstein seems to incorporate and to bridle the voluntarism of liberal-Marxist movements of the sixties in an objective structure of cyclical rhythms and secular trends, which we can not ignore if we want to be able to guide social change.

20. For more details, see Orlando Lentini, La scienza sociale storica di Immanuel Wallerstein, Milan 1998.

Acknowledging the world nature of the constitutive process of the modern world-economy, historical social science has now the possibility to develop its analytical categories as a function of the new holism, making clear the limits of modernization theory. From this revision emerged even a new historiography of liberal institutions, now seen as the result of the formation both of a geopolitics and a geoculture of the world-system.22

Liberalism was now conceived not only as the vital center of the values of the hegemonic country, but also as the constitutive nucleus of the geoculture already since English hegemony. With this vital center march side by side both conservatism and ‘socialism’ (or progressivism), on common grounds. System dynamics have a common nucleus of organizational values, and it is only a matter of deciding which tactics would bring them into operation.

The ultimate liquidation of two worldism seems to confirm this interpretation of the vital center of values on a world scale, which besides tends to identify with the UN ideology. If the world ‘vital center’ played its role, it is nonetheless uncertain how can it last as the nucleus of geoculture with the demise of the Soviet system, so we speak also of a coming defeat of liberalism.23

Western imaginary and the ones of other ‘worlds’ always found themselves in a dynamics of opposition. Inside the world-economy this opposition showed itself both as a confrontation among nation-states as well as among alternative ‘social classes.’ Nevertheless, the reduction to system brought by a unique division of labor, determined also a new imaginary with a common technical content and differentiated ‘values’ and ‘culture’, reposing old oppositions and creating new ones.

The ‘new historical social science’ had now to reformulate its ‘structure of the why,’ beginning from asking not which the nature and cause of the wealth of the nations is but how this historical system functions. The dynamics of the system had been widely investigated by the liberal-Marxist paradigm as ‘history and political economy of the capitalist system.’ Dynam-
ics were seen as the result of entrepreneurial voluntary effort, which created a market network increasingly expanded to become a world market, with the support of state apparatuses of different capitalist groups.

Now on the contrary it is requested to acknowledge that these dynamics are not universalistic but relative and historical, with core countries being able to command world labor and world markets, and among them a hegemonic country imposing the organizational principles. To incorporate in the historiography of world Left the normality of the hierarchical settlement of the world-system has been probably the major task of the approach elaborated by Wallerstein and Hopkins at the end of the sixties.

The ‘one world’ and its ‘cultural’ variations could not indeed ignore the deep inequality of the ‘division of labor’ of the world-system. This seems to be the key problem of the ethically oriented world historical social science, that is oriented according to liberal values, but the real problem is to better understand and manage the historical dynamics of the system.

The liberal-Marxist paradigm foresaw a transition towards a new system, determined by the explosion of the contradiction between capitalist social relations and development of productive forces. The new coming paradigm should ask himself how plausible the role ascribed to this contradiction is, since productive forces seem to find their way out even, and probably mostly, thanks to capitalist social relations. Transformation of the world in an arena for the economic acting of big corporations produced early in this century the ‘corporate liberalism,’ at first as an American phenomenon and later as a world phenomenon.

During the rising phase of the process, from the twenties, a very strong reaction to this world of giant corporations was the pluralist one by Brandeis, Laski, Frankfurter, reaction immediately incorporated by the world liberal Left and later by a section of the Marxist Left. What’s clear is the prevailing rhetorical meaning of this pluralism, as the various American administrations, besides ‘pragmatic,’ have always been definitely ‘corporate.’

Therefore the option between ‘corporate liberalism’ and pluralism of ‘small is beautiful’ was above all a concession to the pluralist imaginary, while clearly leads to the problem of which pool of large corporations had the greatest power. The issue arose of a different division of the spoils. ‘Corporate liberalism’ is the deep nucleus of the new system of norms and values that imposed itself during American hegemony. How much of this ‘corporate liberalism’ entered into the European organizational imaginary, as well as the Japanese or the ‘tigers of Asia’s’ one? How the transnationalization made normal the biological and cultural hybridization, legitimating its value in the world Charter of rights.

It is manifest that American ‘corporate liberalism’ coined a type of internationalism, practical one worldism, that did not coincide with the rhetorical one worldism destined to become the ideology of the United Nations and other international bodies. The new practical one worldism requested by an international community whose interstate system presupposes the principle of ‘one country, one vote,’ can not ignore the reality of an axial division of labor.

World-systems analysis has to face today the objective dominance of ‘corporate liberalism,’ keeping at the same time the pluralist option. This option implies organizational projections based on liberty rights of both single and variously associated subjects. Such rights can be guaranteed by establishing a modus vivendi between strong economic powers and citizens, but they are a mere petition of principle if there is not wealth to share.

The fulfillment of more ‘democracy/equality’ can be both an intermediate goal to be pursued through reforms and short steps, and an opportunity offered by a possible crisis of transition, which by placing movements in the presence of a bifurcation of choices, favors collective mobilization towards a ‘new system.’

The ideology of a ‘new system,’ a futurist one, seems to me to be a mobilizing organizational projection, fully in line with the schema of rights-liberty which forms itself early in the history of capitalist system. The difference between statu nascenti liberalism and this liberalism of the ‘new system’ is the latter’s absoluteness, as far as there isn’t democracy/liberty for a single individual if it is not for everybody, and there is not democracy/equality for one collectivity if it is not for all the collectivities.

The geoculture of the world-system, with its one worldism and its libertarian nucleus of value, not only seems to be able to survive the system that created it, but also to be the basis of the possible new. The great world religions, international bodies, single countries and human groups are in the midst of a re-elaboration of their systems of things to believe and things to do (credenza and agenda) in function of the new ‘universal’ nucleus of values arisen from the phase of American hegemony.

And it seems that it is not the first time it happens.
Histoire et intégration des communautés: le cas du Burkina-Faso*

Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch

On est aujourd’hui en passe, grâce aux efforts de générations d’historiens, au Burkina comme ailleurs en Afrique, de dresser un tableau déjà à fort complet, même s’il y a encore beaucoup à faire, de l’histoire ancienne des groupes, des communautés. On a bien avancé les connaissances sur l’histoire ancienne, sur l’histoire des traumatismes et des méttisages de toute nature de l’époque coloniale, et aujourd’hui sur l’histoire des temps de l’indépendance: histoire rurale, histoire des villes, histoire des échanges fondamentaux et des flux et reflux entre ville et campagne, histoire des migrations, histoire économique et politique, histoire des femmes aussi, etc. (cf. bibliographie indicative), même si beaucoup de ces travaux n’ont pas été publiés. Le Burkina-Faso, en définitive, est un des pays de l’Afrique francophone où la connaissance et la réflexion historiques ont le plus progressé. Nous en sommes aujourd’hui à la troisième génération d’historiens, puisque le Burkina bâbe Joseph Ki-Zerbo fut le premier historien africain francophone à avoir proposé, à l’époque, et en dépit du faible nombre de travaux pré-existants, une magistrale histoire générale de l’Afrique qui fait encore autorité.

On peut se poser la question de savoir pourquoi cet appétit de savoir s’est développé à ce point dans un État qu’a priori rien n’invitait particulièrement à se pencher sur son histoire: la surface du Burkina-Faso est relativement

* Une première ébauche de ce texte remonte au colloque consacré à l’Histoire de Bobo-Dioulasso, qui s’est tenu dans cette ville en janvier 1998.

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restreinte, les ressources naturelles du pays sont limitées, l’histoire ancienne a été morcelée, avec des communautés qui vont d’une concentration politique élaborée, comme en pays Moaga, à une fragmentation extrême fondée sur une farouche volonté d’autonomie voire d’individualisme, comme en pays Bobo, Gion ou Dagara; c’est aussi un territoire de contrastes géographiques et climatiques forts, avec le sahel au nord, la riche cuvette de Banfora à l’ouest, la savane à bétail du pays Mossi, la variété de l’association culture et élevage à l’Est… Ajoutons la cohabitation relativement exceptionnelle aussi, en parts jusqu’alors y a peu relativement équilibrées, de croyances religieuses variées, animistes, chrétiennes—catholique ou protestante—, et musulmane.

En outre, cette extrême diversité est repérable sur des distances relativement restreintes, sauf peut-être sur le plateau Mossi, car le paysage change, la forme des villages et le style des maisons, les techniques de construction, les vêtements, voire la langue différent. Une diversité aussi grande dans un espace relativement restreint est exceptionnelle en Afrique. Pourtant, le Burkina-Faso, à n’en pas douter, a, à la fois depuis longtemps et en un temps record, à peu près intégré ses communautés. Pas complètement, bien entendu—et j’y reviendrai—, mais d’une façon tout-à-fait exceptionnelle là encore. Je n’en voudrai pour preuve que la constitution relativement très récente de l’Etat du Burkina-Faso, ex-Haute-Volta: moins d’un siècle, et même quasi seulement 80 ans, moins de trois générations, c’est-à-dire presque rien à l’échelle de l’histoire, à partir du moment où, en 1919, le système colonial est passé du régime militaire au régime civil.

Or que voit-on? A peine né, l’Etat alors de Haute-Volta est effacé de la carte par les colonisateurs, en 1932-33. Et c’est essentiellement par la volonté de ses habitants, pour des raisons complexes que les historiens ne cessent encore d’approfondir—raisons politiques, de lutte anti-coloniale, raisons économiques, raisons sociales fondées en partie sur le travail migrant, etc.—que le gouvernement français, en 1947, se résoudra à recréer un pays dont le temps de suppression était pratiquement plus long que la durée d’existence préalable en tant que telle. C’est quand même extraordinaire. Je n’aborde même pas l’époque contemporaine, les temps de l’indépendance où, quelles que soient les crises politiques, les forces sociales du pays ont manifesté, dans l’ensemble, une volonté entêtée de ce que l’on pourrait qualifier de démocratisation centralisée. En particulier, malgré la similarité de la culture Bobo de chaque côté lors du conflit frontalier Burkina/Mali, si les populations frontalières ont dans l’ensemble refusé de s’engager dans un conflit qui concernait des gens souvent apparentés de part et d’autre, aucune velléité de sécession ou de regroupement ne s’en est manifestée pour autant.

Un fait est donc certain et depuis longtemps: les Voltaïques, devenus Burkinabés, malgré des contrastes forts et des diversités régionales quasi-extremes, ont une conscience aigüe de leur citoyenneté; ils appartiennent au même Etat-nation.

Or ce qui est vrai de l’Etat burkinabé s’applique, à une échelle différente, à la ville, et tout particulièrement à la ville et à la région de Bobo-Dioulasso. Chacun sait en effet qu’il s’agit d’une ville ancienne, antérieure à la colonisation, d’une ville-carrefour aussi, grand centre de commerce, donc d’une ville ouverte, accessible à tous les niveaux: le niveau local de la subsistance, le niveau régional des échanges, le niveau inter-africain du commerce à longue distance. Cette pluralité est exprimée par le nom même de la ville qui, tout en schématisant cette complexité, le dit à sa façon: Bobo-Dioulasso fait évidemment allusion à la présence ancienne conjointe d’au moins deux groupes—les Bobo, population régionale à référence historique animiste, et les Dioula commerçants, mobiles et souvent islamisés de longue date.

Comme le Burkina-Faso, la ville de Bobo-Dioulasso interpelle donc: comment rendre compte de cet amalgame et de cette évolution, bref de l’histoire de l’intégration des communautés—communautés qui aujourd’hui, bien entendu, ne se limitent pas aux seuls Bobo et Dioula—en une collectivité urbaine?

Reste à faire un sort aux termes même utilisés: qu’entend-on par communautés, qu’entend-on par intégration? Le concept de communauté, depuis une quinzaine d’années, a été revisité, déconstruit comme l’on dit aujourd’hui. C’est en 1983 que le sociologue Benedict Anderson, sur l’exemple des sociétés américaines, a procédé, de façon radicale, à la critique du concept de “communauté villageoise”, sans même parler de la communauté ethnique dont je parlerai un peu plus loin. Son livre Imagined Communities a été traduit en français il y a quelques années. Depuis lors, on a fait un sort à ce concept de communauté, naguère considéré comme une sorte de paradis perdu égalitaire et consensuel. On s’est aperçu que, dans toutes les sociétés pré-industrielles en général, et dans les sociétés africaines anciennes en particulier, les communautés villageoises ou linguistiques étaient aussi...
profondément inégalitaires. Claude Meillassoux a opposé, au sein du même
significatif, celui de “rustres non civilisés”: on retrouve le dualisme
moins ingrat, etc.

Qu’est-ce donc, aujourd’hui, qu’une communauté? C’est, disons, un
groupe humain, à quelque échelle que ce soit—la famille, le village, la
collectivité locale, la nation—, qui s’est forgé au cours du temps (et ce temps
peut être très long, sélénique, voire multisélénique), un héritage et un patrimoine
culturel commun, du fait d’une longue habitude de vivre ensemble,
qui se traduit le plus souvent par l’usage d’une langue commune. Comment
s’est constituée cette communauté? Elle n’est pas tombée du ciel; chacun sait
aujourd’hui que les mythes d’origine dont une communauté peut se prévaloir
sont précisément des mythes, c’est-à-dire la représentation imaginaire
de l’histoire du groupe qui, à un moment donné, construit sa justifi cation
en qualité de groupe à travers la référence à une origine mythique: ce qui
reste vrai également pour les concepts de Tradition/Modernité, il faudrait aujourd’hui bannir de notre langage cette notion d’ethnie, parce qu’elle a pris tant de sens qu’elle n’en a plus aucun, ou du moins lui donner une défi nition stricte sur laquelle je reviendrai tout à l’heure. Rappelons tout d’abord que ce mot est une invention occidentale. Les chercheurs occidentaux, jusqu’à une période toute récente, depuis la dislocation de la Yougoslavie, ne parlaient pas d’Ethnies en Europe. Au XIXe siècle, en Europe, où le phénomène a beaucoup existé, et même fait des ravages, on parlait de nationalités, au pluriel.

Ethnie fut réservé aux peuples autres, exotiques, et pour tout dire sauvages. L’étymologie du mot est explicite. Jusqu’à la fin des années 1980 en effet, le mot était resté chargé dans la littérature anthropo-historique néo-coloniale de sens cumulés au cours du temps: le mot provient du grec où le substantif désignait les gens de la campagne, les rustres, par opposition aux citoyens libres de la cité-Etat (ces derniers seuls civilisés); il a pris à l’époque moderne le sens de “païen” par opposition aux chrétiens détenteurs de “la” Civilisation (dictionnaire Littré, XIXe siècle). Autrement dit, il s’agissait de proprement parler de “rustres non civilisés”: on retrouve le dualisme tradition/modernité. C’est ce que les ethnologues coloniaux ont appelé
tribu, mot que les anthropologues des années 1960, au moment où émer-geait la décolonisation, ont rejeté comme trop connoté par le colonialisme. C'est à ce moment-là qu'on a repris et donné une nouvelle noblesse à ce terme d'ethnie, après cet héritage significatif assez chargé.

Est-ce à dire que le fait ethnique n'existe pas? Bien sûr que si, il existe, et surtout il a existé partout dans l'histoire. Mais pourquoi a-t-on parlé d'État-nation en Occident, en formation depuis le XVIIe siècle au moins (et plutôt depuis le XVIe siècle avec la constitution des Provinces-Unies en révolte contre l'empire Habsbourgeois), tandis que l'on parle d'ethnie en Afrique noire? Tout simplement parce que l'État-nation, c'était l'accomplissement de la modernité occidentale, noblesse du terme que les chercheurs occidentaux, ma foi, réservaient à l'Occident.

Or qu'est-ce qui s'était constitué, en Afrique ancienne, c'est-à-dire pré-coloniale, au fil des temps? Comme l'a déjà montré avec force Basil Davidson (1992), peu ou prou la même chose, même si sous des formes différentes: des communautés politiques de plus ou moins grande taille, centralisées comme les royaumes Moaga, ou bien dispersées comme les maisonnettes Dagara ou Goin reposant sur des équilibres locaux. Bref, des gens qui se reconnaissaient une culture commune, c'est-à-dire une histoire commune, traduite par une langue et des usages communs, et des institutions relativement acceptées par tous les membres de la communauté, quel que soit le mode politique choisi; j'ai bien là défi ni le concept de nation, depuis l'État-nation, même s'il a pu s'agir de micr'o-É tats—ce qui a d'ailleurs existé et existe toujours en Europe comme en Afrique, jusqu'aux systèmes politiques dits "segmentaires", "acéphales," ou "sans-État," car il ne faut pas confondre État et système politique.

Mais ce qui différait de l'Occident dans l'histoire des communautés africaines, ce sont les traumatismes brutaux qu'elles ont connus, ou plutôt l'accélération dans le temps des traumatismes aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Car tout n'a pas commencé avec la seule colonisation.

L'histoire des Africains au XIXe siècle est à cet égard éclairante. En Afrique occidentale comme sur le reste du continent, le XIXe siècle a connu des transformations démographiques, migratoires, politiques, fondamentales. La plupart des collectivités antérieures ont été bouleversées, conquises, enrôlées, englobées dans des États de conquête—petits États négriers sur la côte, grands États nés des jihad dans l'ensemble sahélien (El Hadj Omar, Ousman dan Fodio, Ahmadou du Macina, etc.), puis en fin de siècle États militaires qui se sont élevés contre la conquête coloniale, comme celui de Samori. La chance paradoxalement du Burkina Faso, ou plutôt de la région qui allait devenir au XXe siècle la Haute-Volta, fut qu'elle se trouvait relativement sur les marges des différentes constructions étatiques. Certes, l'État, ou plutôt les différents États Moaga ont pris forme, mais la construction alentour des petits États-nations antérieurs, ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler les ethnies, a été moins perturbée qu'ailleurs—ce qui rend peut-être compte de la permanence de ces diversités locales extrêmes évoquées ci-dessus.

Il n'empêche: à peine digérées ces mutations, l'intervention coloniale brutale a, à nouveau, brisé tout ce qui était en train d'émerger. C'est alors, à l'époque coloniale, que paradoxalement se sont renforcées les différenciations ethniques. C'est en ce sens que, depuis une vingtaine d'années, les chercheurs ont popularisé l'idée de l'"invention ethnique".

Il s'agit moins, évidemment, d'invention que de transformation, pour deux raisons:

- du côté colonial, le souci était de fixer les populations. On a donc dessiné des frontières linéaires, délimité des circonscriptions, des cercles, grossièrement calqués dans l'ensemble et pour plus de commodité sur les espaces ethniques antérieurs. Ensuite, on a interdit aux gens ainsi domiciliés dans les cercles de se déplacer sans autorisation, pour raisons coloniales évidentes: lever les impôts, recruter les travailleurs. Donc on a systématisé les différenciations tout en cherchant, bien entendu, à diviser pour régner; par exemple, à rechercher l'alliance politique du Mogho-Naba en une sorte de gouvernement indirect aux dépens d'autres formations, d'autres communautés moins discernables, donc moins commodes à maîtriser.

- du côté des Africains, il s'est agi de résister à l'intrusion coloniale. Or quoi de plus naturel, de plus viscéral, que de se référer à son propre passé, à son histoire antérieure, bref à son ethnie et à sa représentation mythique? C'est en ce sens qu'on peut dire que, par ce double mouvement à la fois centripète et contradictoire, l'ethnicroitée s'est trouvée renforcée, d'autant que l'ethnie était inscrite sur la carte d'identité. Les Belges l’avaient instituée au Ruanda-Burundi comme au Congo, et ceci a continué après l'indépendance: c'est ce qui a favorisé les massacres.
Mais les Français avaient fait de même, sans même parler des Britanniques et des Boers en Afrique du Sud: on devait déclarer sa "tribu". On devait donc éventuellement la choisir, ce qui favorisa la fixation d’une identité jusqu’alors assez fluide.

Ajoutons à cela que, dès la colonisation et plus encore à l’époque contemporaine des indépendances, sont apparus des courants encore plus complexes et davantage manipulés et manipulatoires. A partir du moment où ont été introduites les techniques parlementaires modernes, le suffrage universel, les élections, quoi de plus tentant pour un candidat que de se faire soutenir par les gens de sa propre région, où un notable pouvait en sus jouer de ses possibilités clientélistes et paternalistes: "Votez pour moi car nous sommes de même nature, nous avons la même histoire, je suis de la même ethnie que vous…". Nous entrons dans l’ère non plus de l’ethnicité, mais du tribalisme, c’est-à-dire de la manipulation politique d’héritages culturels diffus et déformés à des fins de politique moderne.

J’ai, jusqu’à présent, décrit le processus communautaire comme un processus quasi entièrement centripète: les gens se retrouvent, s’organisent, se mélangent, fabriquent ensemble des syncrétismes, bref vivent en permanence un brassage toujours croissant de métagisse culturel. Car, du fait de l’histoire, nous sommes tous, partout dans le monde, métis. Nous trouvons tous, dans le passé de nos familles, de nos groupes, de nos États, des mélanges et des fusions, c’est-à-dire des métagisse au sens large.

Ceci dit, cette évolution n’est pas linéaire. Elle n’est pas exempte de souffrances, de réactions, de heurts, de révoltes: lorsque des groupes d’horizon différent se retrouvent ensemble, des contradictions apparaissent et s’accentuent. Elles sont susceptibles d’engendrer des réactions de rejet, donc des traumas majeurs: émeutes urbaines—comme à Brazzaville à partir de 1959—, ghettoïsation—comme dans les grandes villes américaines où les émeutes urbaines ont été dans les années 1960-70 d’une violence extrême—, massacres tribalistes, dont nous avons récemment constaté les exemples les plus tragiques et les plus violents aussi bien dans l’ex-Yugoslavie qu’au Rwanda.

Nous entrons aujourd’hui, en effet, dans une période de transition terriblement troublée, où les frictions sont évidemment accentuées par la très longue phase de récession économique que le monde connaît depuis le début des années 1970, et dont le continent africain souffre tout particulièrement.

Alors, quand tout va mal, les gens se replient sur eux-mêmes. L’autre devient un concurrent, voire un ennemi. Les phénomènes de régionalisme s’accentuent. Car il s’agit aujourd’hui, sous un habillage souvent passésiste, où les médias, les hommes politiques, les observateurs occidentaux sont friands de vieux clichés, non pas de phénomènes ethniques, ni même plus de tribalisme, mais de revendications politiques, économiques, sociales, idéologiques, religieuses, ancrées dans le temps présent et accentuées par la pression et les disparités démographiques où les gens des zones surpeuplées cherchent à se déverser sur les espaces voisins apparemment plus ouverts; alors chacun essaie de se raccrocher à ce qu’il croit être, ou veut se représenter comme une identité unique. Le phénomène identitaire, qui fait aujourd’hui couler tant d’encre, est une réaction défensive dangereuse car inepte car sans fondement historique.

En fait, on retrouve une fois de plus, sous une forme nouvelle, le couple Tradition/Modernité. L’identité serait moderne, l’ethnicité serait un héritage traditionnel. Je viens de faire la critique du terme d’ethnicité. Or celui d’identité, au singulier du moins, est aussi dangereux. Identité/Ethnicité: ce sont en fait deux termes interchangeables. Mais le concept d’identité est la version européenne, convenable et édulcorée de l’ethnicité des Barbares. Il ne s’agit pas ici de nier une évidence acquise; chacun se reconnaît aujourd’hui une appartenance identitaire comme une appartenance ethnique: au Burkina Faso, tous se savent Burkinabé, mais chacun ne s’en sent pas moins qui Bobo, qui Mossi, qui Gourounsi ou Gourmantché, ou de bien d’autres ethnies encore. Quelle que soit l’histoire de la dénomination, qu’elle ait une ancieneté certaine ou qu’elle ait été renforcée, voire fabriquée récemment, l’ethnie est devenu aujourd’hui une réalité avec laquelle il faut compter. Dans cette mesure, il n’est pas question de la nier. Mais il faut, en même temps, en mesurer les limites, la relativité et les dangers.

De même, si l’on peut parler d’“identité nationale”, ceci n’est qu’une des multiples facettes auxquelles chaque individu peut se référer: être pluri-culturel, l’individu ou le groupe social, de quelque partie du monde qu’il soit, relève d’une multiplicité d’identités complémentaires mais non homothétiques: sa nationalité, mais aussi sa ou ses provinces d’origine (son “ethnie”), sa famille, sa religion, son syndicat, sa ou ses langues, sa catégorie socio-professionnelle, son statut social, son niveau d’imposition, sa résidence… Un
système politique n’a pas besoin d’être fédéral pour respecter les identités de chacun; au contraire, le fédéralisme peut être dangereux s’il veut se calquer sur des régionalismes précis—qu’il s’agisse d’ethnies (comme ce fut le cas au Nigéria), de langues (comme en Belgique) ou de religions; car il est impossible d’enfermer dans une région donnée, au sein de frontières stables, un groupe homogène, sous peine de “purification ethnique”. Sans aller jusque là, on sait que le fédéralisme nigérian qui, en fin de compte, consista à opposer entre elles trois vastes “groupes ethniques” dominants, déboucha sur une violente guerre civile. Un système politique centralisé peut fort bien ménager aussi des régionalismes marqués (“ethniques” ou autres) à condition, bien entendu, qu’un groupe n’en profite pas pour monopoliser le pouvoir au dépens des autres: c’est-à-dire à condition que le principe sous-jacent de l’État-nation constitué soit la démocratie: autrement dit, le respect de chacun, individus et communautés, par rapport aux autres. L’État apparaît alors, précisément, comme le garant des différenciations régionales. C’est vers un système politique de ce genre que paraissent s’orienter avec une sagesse certaine, en dépit de soubresauts parfois inquiétants, des Etats comme du Bénin ou du Burkina-Faso.

Bref, autant il paraît légitime de rechercher les appartenances identitaires qui, se recoupant et se combinant sans nécessairement coïncider, permettent d’approcher une réalité sociale toujours complexe, autant il apparaît aussi erroné que dangereux d’utiliser le concept au singulier, dans notre propre société comme dans les autres. Cette manie de vouloir introduire chacun dans un compartiment étanche, qui paraît se développer dans le monde contemporain, est un mythe, une aberration scientifique. Or elle apparaît nettement dans des sociétés telles que la société américaine sous la forme du politically correct, elle représente en Afrique du Sud un héritage contre lequel la lutte est difficile, elle aboutit au Rwanda, dans l’ex-Yovgoslavie et peut-être hélas demain ailleurs, à la résurgence du spectre de la “purification ethnique”, source de massacres aussi horribles qu’inutiles.

C’est pourquoi il faut appeler sans complexe et étudier en tant que tels les métrissages culturels. Nous sommes tous, eux, nous et le reste, partie de cette médiation culturelle universelle. Entendons culturel au sens large, c’est-à-dire, outre le culturel stricto sensu, l’ensemble des domaines politique, économique, linguistique, etc., voire accessoirement biologique! A noter néanmoins que ce sens originel de métissage comme métissage biologique est en passe de devenir aujourd’hui secondaire ou plutôt anecdotique. Ce qu’il importe de comprendre, ce sont les réalités et les incidences de cette interculturalité universelle.

Mais attention! Qui dit métrissage généralisé ne dit pas homogénéisation, au contraire: nous assistons à l’exacerbation parallèle et interdépendante des processus de mondialisation et des phénomènes de spécificités locales et régionales.

Je voudrais conclure par là: nous sommes tous, et nous avons d’ailleurs toujours été des métis culturels. Mais cette grande vérité—une des rares vérités historiques d’évidence—continue à être écluse. Elle provoque même des réactions de rejet actuellement violentes, en particulier (mais pas seulement) dans le monde anglo-saxon.

Certes, on comprend qu’aujourd’hui, dans le maëlstrom de mouvements contradictoires qui rejaillissent désormais sur le monde entier, les sociétés ou les groupes sociaux les plus malmenés, dans les pays du Sud comme dans les banlieues des grandes villes du Nord, réagissent par des contractations identitaires, qui sont autant de réflexes de défense face à des contradictions difficiles, voire impossibles à résoudre dans le court terme. Mais la communauté scientifique doit se garder de complaisance à cet égard. On me pardonnera de terminer par une espèce de profession de foi: se vouloir et se reconnaître comme multiculturel dans la société d’aujourd’hui me paraît infiniment plus porteur que les revendications et les enquêtes identitaires dont nous sommes abreuvés, de façon souvent ni lucide ni, peut-être, honnête. C’est, pour en revenir au thème de l’intégration des communautés, sans doute une des chances de l’histoire pourtant si brève du Burkina-Faso d’avoir su, malgré une vie politique souvent chaotique, reconnaître et maintenir, envers et contre tous, et malgré des options régionales contrastées, un complexe identitaire riche de toutes ses diversités. Dans le monde actuel, c’est une tâche difficile, et l’expérience prouve que l’expérience prouve que la vigilance s’impose, car des accidents régressifs sont toujours possibles. Or, qu’il s’agisse d’une nation comme celle des Burkinabé, d’une région, ou d’une ville comme Bobo-Dioulasso, cette nation, cette région ou cette ville n’est riche que de sa complexité et de sa diversité. Toute assertion contraire relève du plus grand des crimes entre les crimes: le racisme.
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La investigación para la paz y la perspectiva de los sistemas-mundo

José María Tortosa

El primer propósito de este capítulo es el de explorar algunas de las formas en que el enfoque de los sistemas-mundo puede ser aplicado a un campo aparentemente distante como es el de la investigación para la paz. La razón es sencilla: se parte de que el valor de una teoría puede “medirse” viendo su fecundidad y la capacidad que muestre de arrojar nueva luz sobre problemas y temas ajenos a la misma. De ahí se concluye que una buena forma de colaborar en una colección de ensayos en honor a Immanuel Wallerstein es la de mostrar que el enfoque que él iniciara proporciona ideas relevantes cuando se aplica a campos diferentes al original y da respuestas igualmente importantes a los problemas planteados desde otras perspectivas.

La paz, de hecho, ha sido un tema prácticamente ausente en la literatura de los sistemas-mundo. El mismo Wallerstein utiliza la palabra en el título de uno de sus trabajos, pero es, ciertamente, un asunto secundario incluso en dicho trabajo (Wallerstein 1995a). La guerra, por su parte, ha tenido un tratamiento algo más frecuente aunque también escaso. Una excepción es el libro editado por Robert K. Schaeffer (1989) dentro de la serie “Studies in the Political Economy of the World-System”. Existen también algunos artículos aislados que abordan la cuestión de forma relativamente tangencial...
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guerra, se enfrentan unas a otras aportando cada una de ellas su material empírico, generalmente cuantitativo, y su tratamiento estadístico propio que llevan a concluir una u otra causa del fenómeno bélico. No es sencillo elegir entre estas explicaciones y, como prueba de ello, algunas revisiones de la literatura de los últimos 15 años al respecto acaban concluyendo que, la mayoría de estudios, “failed to solve the empirical problems of ‘when, where, why, and how’ wars spread” o, en general, que esos estudios difícilmente cumplen con los requisitos exigidos por la metodología que ellos dicen aplicar, namely, generality, precision, simplicity, predicting novel phenomena and anticipating results (Simowitz 1998). Planteada de esta forma, esta corriente parece estar llamada al fracaso y, en definitiva, “science is not the search for the simple but the search for the most plausible interpretacion of the complex” (Wallerstein 1996a: 24). Y la guerra (como la paz) es particularmente compleja como para resistir las simplificaciones a las que la someten estos trabajos nomotéticos que, necesariamente, tienen que “medir” con un mismo rasero las Guerras Mundiales y la del Chaco, el conflicto entre el Ecuador y el Perú y el que se da en la actualidad entre tamiles y cingaleses en Sri Lanka.

La alternativa (que es también la más frecuente en los estudios con orientación hacia la toma de decisiones) son los estudios idiográficos. En estos, se busca, a través del caso concreto e inmediato (Bosnia, Ruanda, Chechenia), el conjunto de detalles y conexiones significativas que, por un lado, permiten una mejor comprensión e interpretación de la complejidad y, por otro, indican cuáles pueden ser los puntos de apoyo para producir cambios en el sentido de solucionar o, mejor, transformar el conflicto de forma no-violenta y así, además, puedan servir de ejemplo u orientación para otros casos semejantes, pero nunca idénticos. Sin embargo también aquí hay dificultades a solventar. La principal es la existencia de percepciones previas que afectan tanto al análisis como a la pacificación. Algunos estudios idiográficos recientes (Clapham 1998) han mostrado hasta qué punto fueron falsas algunas premisas con que se abordaban los análisis concretos de situaciones concretas durante la Guerra Fría y, en todo caso, la inutilidad de dichas premisas en la situación posterior.

Si olvidamos las sutilezas en la discusión entre partidarios de estudios nomotéticos (que se autodefinen como más “científicos” y son criticados como “data crunching”) y partidarios de estudios idiográficos (que se...
autodefenden como más “útiles” y son criticados como “humanidades”) (Wallerstein 1995c: 854-855) y lo sustituimos por la necesidad de explicar y comprender los fenómenos sociales en general y los violentos en particular, es obvio que nos encontramos ante dos acercamientos que se complementan y no tanto como el microscopio ideográfico y el telescopio nomotético lo harían, sino como se complementa la percepción del árbol y del bosque: ambas son necesarias (Frank 1998: 33 y 39). Es, por seguir la metáfora de Mao, el sol del sistema-mundo el que produce, con su calor, el desarrollo del huevo, pero son las características de este último las que hacen que los que no las tienen (por ejemplo las piedras) no reaccionen de la misma forma ante las causas comunes. Desde esta perspectiva, el enfoque de los sistemas-mundo, al trabajar sobre el “bosque” generalmente, proporciona un contexto en el que situar los casos concretos a analizar y comprender y sobre los que se pretende intervenir, indicando, así, los límites de la acción posible.

2. La utilidad del enfoque no está sólo en la metodología, sino que sigue en el terreno de los contenidos. Para comenzar, el enfoque es un excelente antídoto para la (tal vez pasajera) moda culturalista que pretende explicar los conflictos sólo y únicamente por factores religiosos, étnicos, civilizatorios, cosmológicos, culturales en general. Sin negar el papel, fuerte incluso en muchos casos, que juegan tales factores, el enfoque es particularmente útil para reintroducir la economía y sus ciclos y el papel que juega en la economía el gasto militar, en especial durante las fases decrecientes de los ciclos Kondratieff (Wallerstein 1996b: 213). En particular, puede servir para analizar el papel jugado recientemente en la violencia directa por factores geoeconómicos como las reestructuraciones de la deuda externa y sus planes de ajuste y terapias de choque, entre otros.

Al mismo tiempo, es cierto que el enfoque, como tal, tiene poco que decir sobre el origen último de la guerra como institución (Martínez Guzmán 1998: 310), pero sí arroja luz sobre la evolución del fenómeno según las distintas perspectivas temporales que se adopten. Para ver hasta qué punto es esto cierto, tómese, por ejemplo, la estimación (muy aproximada por necesidad, e incompleta por definición en algunos casos) del número de muertes relacionadas con la guerra a lo largo del segundo milenio (Tabla 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Century</th>
<th>Wars</th>
<th>Deaths/1,000 pob.</th>
<th>Deaths/War (1,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>11.21</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIX</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>16.19</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>44.37</td>
<td>924</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fuente: (Eckhardt, 1991: 438)

La investigación para la paz y la perspectiva de los sistemas-mundo

Desde esta perspectiva, el enfoque permite un tratamiento histórico de la guerra y de la paz, vistas como parte de un proceso más general que da sentido a los episodios locales y del que hay que partir para entenderlos.

Hay, además, otras perspectivas temporales que, una vez aplicadas, llevan a datos diferentes y a conclusiones aparentemente distintas. Con un lapso menor de tiempo y no tomando el “cronos” del siglo como unidad, sino el “kairos” de épocas históricas determinadas, los datos podrían ser los de fenómenos de expansión e incorporación del sistema muchas veces (si no todas) acompañados por comportamientos violentos, el imperialismo, el nacionalismo como matriz de las restantes ideologías (Wallerstein 1992b), la relación entre guerra y construcción del Estado, las características que el sector armamentístico tiene en común con las restantes empresas (innovación, competencia, relación cambiante con el Estado etc.) son elementos que sirven para entender mejor esta tenaz escalada de violencia y muerte que incluye los efectos inducidos en las zonas incorporadas por parte de los países que efectúan la expansión (Blick 1988).

De todas formas, las palabras de Gellner en el sentido de que Enlightenment failed to see that war (in Europe) was a consequence or corollary of certain basic features of agrarian society and not of stupidity or lack of “enlightenment” (Gellner 1985: 166) pueden aceptarse por lo menos en dos sentidos. De una parte, porque introducen discontinuidades en una tabla que se pretende continua; por otra, porque llama la atención sobre las características de los grupos humanos (sociedades) en las que se presenta el fenómeno y que hacen de la guerra un fenómeno histórico. En resumen: desde esta perspectiva, el enfoque permite un tratamiento histórico de la guerra y de la paz, vistas como parte de un proceso más general que da sentido a los episodios locales y del que hay que partir para entenderlos.
José María Tortosa

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La Tabla 2, con los mismos caveats que la anterior a propósito de la estimación.

Al margen del carácter eurocéntrico del dato y sus conclusiones (argumento sobre el que también se alerta desde el enfoque de los sistemas-mundo [Wallerstein, 1997d; Frank, 1998]), la tabla sugiere otro tipo de issues a superponer sobre el avance contínuo de las “guerras capitalistas”. Se trata de la discontinuidad de las sucesivas hegemonías dentro del sistema interestatal y sus correspondientes “paces” (pax britannica, pax americana), “peace,” meaning primarily the absence of military struggle—not all military struggle, but military struggle among great powers” (Wallerstein 1995a: 25).

En pocas palabras, el enfoque permite afrontar tres tipos diferentes de problemáticas. En primer lugar, el de las guerras capitalistas o guerras modernas y su particular relación con la construcción del Estado (Davis et al. en Schaeffer, 1989: 27-46). Segundo, la cuestión de las guerras hegemónicas, fenómeno cíclico asociado con las fases de deslegitimación de las sucesivas hegemonías en el sistema mundial por lo menos desde la que implantaron las United Provinces. Tercero, las guerras relacionadas con las diferentes fases de las ondas Kondratieff que presentan características distintas en los momentos de expansión (fase A) y en los de contracción (fase B) de la economía-mundo (Chase-Dunn y O’Reilly en Schaeffer 1989: 47-64; Boswell et al. ibid.:9-26; Wallerstein 1998: ch. 2).

Sobre todo, el enfoque permite una mejor conceptualización de los problemas de la presente coyuntura post-Guerra Fría al menos de dos formas. Por una parte, porque ya estaba en el enfoque la necesidad de superar la misleading distinction between international political economy and security studies que fue el error epistemológico básico durante la Guerra Fría (Kirschner, 1998). De hecho, era frecuente entonces separar el análisis del funcionamiento del mundo “capitalista” por un lado y los estudios sobre el conflicto Este-Oeste por otro como si fueran cosas separables, error que se podía evitar desde el enfoque de los sistemas-mundo ya que su “holismo” permitía mucho más fácilmente pasar por encima de las arbitrarías (históricas) divisiones entre disciplinas. Por otra parte, el enfoque, al no ser estado-céntrico (state-centered), permite una mejor comprensión de la actual situación en el terreno de la paz. Como es sabido during the period 1989-96 there were 101 armed conflicts having at least 25 battle-related deaths during the year, but of the 101 conflicts only 6 were interstate conflicts and only 2 of these were active in 1996 (Wallensteen y Sollenberg 1997).

El enfoque, desde esta perspectiva, sin negar el papel que juegan los Estados y el sistema interestatal, permite comprender mejor las fuerzas trans-estatales y sub-estatales que explican casos concretos e incluso avanzar hipótesis sugestivas sobre el movimiento por la paz mismo, formando parte del trio de "tools with which those with power met the challenge of the dangerous classes", namely “social ideologies, social science and social movements” (Wallerstein 1996a: 18-20) o, si se prefiere para lo que aquí nos ocupa, pacifismo, peace research and peace movements.

La vieja investigación para la paz se autodefinía como “relaciones internacionales a la que se añade un horizonte normativo”, es decir, que tenía como unidad básica (si no única) de análisis al Estado y a sus relaciones con otros semejantes (Wiberg 1991). El punto de partida era común: las relaciones eran inter-nacionales, es decir, entre naciones que se suponía sinónimo de Estado. Con independencia de lo errado de tal supuesto y si, como indica Wallerstein (ibid.: 22; 1995a; 1997c: 58), nos dirigimos a una época caracterizada por less stateness, los enfoques que siguen teniendo al Estado como unidad central para el análisis (incluido el de la violencia y la paz) tienen menos que ofrecer en la actual coyuntura y esto es válido para los International Relations Studies como para la Peace Research. Pero también para los Security Studies. En la situación actual, un enfoque menos estado-céntrico puede ser mucho más útil por más que la introducción de la variable core and periphery siga siendo relevante sobre todo si se la completa con la structural theory of imperialism elaborada por Galtung (1971).

3. El enfoque, finalmente, es también particularmente provechoso para entender algunas de las polémicas clásicas en el campo de la investigación para la paz como el arms race debate (Sample 1997), la cuestión

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Fatalities per Year</th>
<th>Annual Fatalities per 100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of Baroque (1741-88)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleonic Wars (1789-1815)</td>
<td>91,000</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Victorian (1816-1913)</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Age (1816-1913)</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Wars (1914-1945)</td>
<td>1,152,000</td>
<td>165.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Age (1946-85)</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Melko, 1992: 101)
sobre la relación entre conflicto interno y conflicto externo (Heldt 1997) o las todavía más clásicas, pues tienen sus orígenes en la Paz Perpetua de Immanuel Kant, sobre el pretendido carácter pacífico de las democracias (Starr 1997) o sobre el papel del comercio como forma de evitar el conflicto armado (Gissinger y Gleditsch 1998). En todos estos casos, los intentos de obtener buenas respuestas a partir de análisis nomotéticos puros (de “data crunching”) parecen abocados al fracaso en la medida en que no consideran diferencias de posición entre las unidades estudiadas y, sobre todo, practican un notable a-historicismo y una no menos notable ceguera ante los factores externos a dichas unidades que pueden tener una mayor fuerza explicativa, todo ello al margen de que, con mucha frecuencia, la literatura es excesivamente técnica orientada, empasizando la aplicación mecánica de reglas y las escritas por autores que no se preguntan las preguntas correctas (Smith 1998).

Estas polémicas clásicas se entienden mejor si las unidades se estudian no sólo mediante sus variables internas (que, ciertamente, hay que considerar) sino también a través de su posición en el sistema interestatal y la coyuntura particular del sistema-mundo en el momento que se analiza. Por ejemplo, la tesis según la cual “democracies don’t fight each other” tiene una mejor lectura si se considera el funcionamiento del sistema-mundo cuyo resultado es la concentración de los “bienes” o las “ventajas” en zonas llamadas centro (core) y de los “males” o las “desventajas” en otras llamadas periferias: las democracias (centrales) van menos a la guerra, porque lo necesitan menos… lo cual no quita para que, periódicamente, no hayan guerras en países centrales por conseguir la hegemonía y que pueden ser mucho más mortíferas que las otras (Hobsbawm 1998) ni quita la violencia dentro de los países de centro, que no se denomina guerra, pero que resulta igualmente letal y que toma la forma de asesinatos y homicidios cuyo contenido de clase tendría que ser subrayado con más frecuencia.

El enfoque de los sistemas-mundo proporciona, además, un instrumento teórico que ayuda a entender mejor el funcionamiento del sistema en conjunto en el que intervienen no sólo Estados sino también multinacionales, ONGs, OGs, bloques comerciales, todos ellos bajo una única lógica: the endless accumulation of capital. En general, el enfoque puede proporcionar una teoría “no-idealista” sobre el cambio social, es decir, una teoría que aporte lo que, muchas veces, falta en la investigación para la paz, namely, “an underst

II. LA APORTACIÓN DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN PARA LA PAZ

Si la aportación del enfoque de los sistemas-mundo puede resumirse diciendo que proporciona contexto, es decir, meaning y conciencia de los límites de la acción, la aportación de la investigación para la paz se sitúa en el terreno de los objetivos o las finalidades. Como indica Wallerstein (1997c: 57; Aguirre 1995), “el mundo de los próximos cincuenta años promete ser mucho más violento que el mundo de la Guerra Fría del que hemos salido”. Ahí van a intervenir los factores asociados con el ciclo de hegemonía y con las ondas Kondratieff. A eso se añade la disminución de la papel del Estado que, recuerdese, era el detentador del monopolio de la violencia legítima. Finalmente, esta combinación de trayectorias viene agravada por la posible crisis terminal del sistema-mundo contemporáneo. La pregunta responsable sigue siendo la clásica: ¿Qué hacer? Lo cual, siguiendo indicaciones igualmente clásicas de la investigación para la paz, implica, entre otras cosas (Galzung 1997, 1998: 27):

(a) Establecer, inicialmente, un diagnóstico que se corresponda con la rea-
lidad empírica, realidad en la que deberán incluirse tanto los factores culturales a largo plazo o la historia de las interacciones políticas y militares, como el papel de la economía en general y del sector armamentístico en particular. Se podría hablar de un “mapa” global.

(b) Identificar los conflictos, es decir, elaborar el “mapa” local en el que aparezcan los diferentes actores implicados, sus intereses, percepciones, estrategias y las relaciones entre estos elementos. De este “mapa” es de donde puede derivarse un pronóstico. También aquí deberán estar presentes los diversos niveles de tiempo-espacio, es decir, desde la longue durée a la coyuntura y los respectivos espacios (Wallerstein 1988).

(c) Elaborar alternativas o terapias, tal vez yendo un poco más allá del mero “clarificar las opciones históricas que se presentan ante nosotros” (Wallerstein 1997c: 58) y buscando superar el positivismo y el conformismo mediante el recuerdo de que las percepciones de la realidad pueden acabar formando parte significativa de esa misma realidad y, en cualquier caso, recordando que, en condiciones de particular incertidumbre una vez perdida la fe en las “leyes de la historia”, somos sujetos y actores de esa historia y podemos plantearnos “the kind of historical system we wish to construct” (Wallerstein 1997b: 329).

1. Los practicantes de peace studies constituyen un conjunto todavía más heterogéneo que el formado por los que pueden clasificarse dentro del enfoque de los sistemas-mundo. Hay, de todas maneras, un elemento en común en aquéllos, a saber, el de compartir la paz como un valor (Galtung 1996: 13-16) por más que sus actitudes hacia la violencia directa (física) y hacia la violencia estructural (básicamente, la injusticia y la inequidad) puedan cambiar de unos a otros según la tabla tomada de Galtung y que también puede servir para avanzar hipótesis sobre por qué la guerra (o la paz) no es un tema central en el enfoque de los sistemas-mundo.

“A world-system approach to the study of war is historically bound…: it does not attempt to discover a single entelechy of war that can be reduced to transhistorical dictums such as Clausewitz’s…or Mao Tse-Tung’s…” (Schaeffer 1989: 1). Algo parecido tendría que decirse del estudio de la paz como objeto, en cuyo caso la idea de “paz imperfecta” puede ser una herramienta muy conveniente (Muñoz y Rodríguez 1997: 69-70). Pero aquí me interesa subrayar la paz como horizonte normativo.

2. Wallerstein (1997a; 1998) ha afirmado que “the next 25-50 years will be terrible ones in terms of human social relations” y que, del mismo modo, “the next 25-50 years will be exceptionally exciting ones in the world of knowledge. The systemic crisis will force social reflection”. Pero, ¿qué debería guiar esa social reflection? En mi opinión, y desde una perspectiva de investigación para la paz que considero compatible con el enfoque de los sistemas-mundo, serían los siguientes elementos:

(a) En primer lugar, un moral commitment de una ciencia moralmente comprometida. “Sólo podemos conseguir un mundo mejor si estamos dispuestos a emplear nuestras energías morales para conseguirlo” (Wallerstein, 1997e: 71). Nada, pues, de las malas lecturas de Weber que lo convierten en adalid de una ciencia social neutral. En ningún momento, y todavía menos en la coyuntura presente, hay que “renounce our own moral obligations and ethical commitments” y el riesgo de transformar al “social scientist as the sole guarantor of morality” (Archer 1998: 15) puede ser fácilmente obviado manteniendo relaciones con los movimientos sociales y los partidos políticos sin caer en el síndrome del “intelectual orgánico”. El científico social es uno más y dudo que alguien haya pensado en resucitar la idea platónica del filósofo rey. Pero eso no quita para que los diagnósticos (globales y locales) no vayan guiados por una racionalidad substantiva, asunto en el que la filosofía de la paz puede aportar materiales muy interesantes (Martínez Guzmán 1995).

(b) En segundo lugar, a commitment to peace que, como indica Galtung (1996: 13-14), “has to be well, but not too well, defined”. Para lo que aquí nos ocupa, la paz debe incluir la transformación no-violenta de los conflictos mientras sea posible. Hablamos, pues, de peace by peaceful means. Este último es un requisito cargado de consecuencias, por ejemplo para algunas revoluciones que podrían ser aceptadas siempre que cumplieran con determinadas limitaciones como la de ser el último recurso, un nivel del conflicto extremo y perspectivas de futuro no más violentas que las de origen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Violence</th>
<th>Condoned</th>
<th>Rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lutheranism, “Compassion with victims”</td>
<td>“Leftism”, “Revolution”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Galtung, 1992: 70)
Lo que si hay que introducir es que la violencia que se considera no sólo es la violencia directa sino también la estructural y la cultural (Galtung 1996: 196-296). En el punto de la lucha contra las desigualdades y el sesgo contra la injusticia (Wallerstein 1997a, 1997b), fenómenos todos ellos relacionados con la violencia estructural, podrían estar de acuerdo muchos practicantes de la investigación para la paz y muchos investigadores clasificables dentro del enfoque de los sistemas-mundo. Ciertamente no todos. Y mucho más claro si hablamos de violencia cultural o incluso directa. Pero, en buena tradición gandhiana de “emphasize common and compatible goals” (Galtung 1992: 175), no parece mal camino comenzar el encuentro entre ambas perspectivas a partir de la violencia estructural o, si se prefiere, a partir de la finalidad de la paz estructural, es decir, de la justicia, la equidad y la lucha contra la desigualdad extrema como valores.

(c) En tercer lugar, la investigación para la paz, por más que corre el riesgo del wishful thinking idealista, puede aportar la urgencia de pensar en términos de alternativas y trayectorias de acción colectiva posible. De nuevo, no se trata del filósofo rey ni del intelectual orgánico, pero sí del compromiso con la transformación de una realidad que los valores indicados en 1 y 2 permiten juzgar como poco deseable y con una transformación hacia la realización de dichos fines. No es infrecuente, aunque no es general, que los que se dedican al enfoque de los sistemas-mundo proyecten una imagen como de torre de marfil: situados en su atalaya del “time of the sages” de Braudel y de la perspectiva global, explican con fruición lo mal que estamos y no sólo no avanzan alternativa alguna sino que se encargan de explicarnos que ninguna de ellas es viable. Entre la tyranny of globalism que condena a la resignación o a la mera defensa local (Petras y Brill 1985) en un extremo y la “imprecise normative orientation the content of which is continually contested” (Lawler, 1995: 237) en el otro, se impone un pragmatismo profundo que parte del reconocimiento de nuestra ignorancia de las “leyes de la historia” que, paradójicamente, significa que, por primera vez, podemos ser sujetos de la historia, como ha indicado Wallerstein repetidas veces (Tortosa 1997).

“The issues”, en efecto, “are too important that they not be faced, and they are too urgent to be closed off to analysis by failing to fight the war on two—indeed on all—fronts at the same time” (Wallerstein 1995b: 247), a saber, y para lo que aquí nos ha ocupado, el del análisis concreto de situaciones concretas por una parte aun a costa de desmovilizar y, por otra, el de los moral engagements aun a costa de perder la “inmaculada concepción” científica. Pero también aquí, cuando se trata de encontrar la síntesis entre peace research and world-systems approach, “above all, I urge prudence in any haste to shout Eureka!” (Wallerstein ibid.).

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

La vida académica y, en general, la intelectual se caracteriza normalmente, por lo menos en Occidente, por el predominio de una actitud gladiatorial o, si se prefiere otros términos, maniquea o “bogomil”: se supone que las ideas se enfrentan unas a otras en una especie de juicio de Dios” del medioevo europeo que decidirá quién tiene razón y quién no, quién representa al Bien y quién al Mal, qué teoría es la verdadera y cuál es falsa. La falsa, mala y, por tanto, fea deberá morir, cosa que ya había manifestado al entrar en la arena del circo bibliográfico al gritar “morituri te salutant” ante el Juez final. El Verum, Bonum, Pulchrum se salvará.

La metáfora puede extenderse y describir que la vida de un gladiador no sólo va a depender de sus artes marciales y de su armamento, según rezan los manuales de metodología tanto nomotéctica como idiográfica. También dependerá de su politiqueo dentro del “colegio invisible” de gladiadores que permitirá unas armas ahora y otras en otras circunstancias o que “amañará” los torneos o sesgará el sorteo de los luchadores. Sobre todo, dependerá del público, del César y de las relaciones entre éste y aquél. Hay en efecto, y abundan, gladiadores falsos que sobreviven o porque conviene al César (o al Gran Inquisidor de Dostoievski) o porque consiguen la simpatía del público (y de nada vale proclamar el “odi profanum vulgum et arceo”). No voy a seguir más lejos, ya que no he pretendido hacer luchar la investigación para la paz en general con el enfoque de los sistemas-mundo también en general.

Sin embargo, tampoco he hecho un alegato en pro del abrazo pacifista entre teorías o enfoques. La confrontación de objetivos, datos, conceptos, coherencia de éstos, correspondencia con aquéllos es importante. Pero el objetivo final no es la muerte del otro (objetivo mezquino, en mi opinión, por más que sea objetivo académico o tal vez por ello). El objetivo final es el de mejorar las condiciones de vida del público y sus relaciones con el César. No parece que convertir al intelectual en Gran Inquisidor sea una buena opción. Al contrario, se trata de que una sus fuerzas con los demás gladiadores y responda, una vez más, al ¿qué hacer? ¿qué debemos hacer? y ¿qué fines
queremos conseguir? Lo que, ciertamente, no tiene sentido hacer, y mucho menos en las actuales circunstancias, es matarse unos a otros. Ni metafóricamente en la arena intelectual ni realmente en los campos de la muerte. Las reflexiones recientes de Wallerstein en pro de “abrir las ciencias sociales” y de afrontar con responsabilidad la era particularmente violenta que se nos vece, creo que van en una dirección parecida.

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I. WHAT ELSE IS THERE IN THE WORLD?

The world is a system, meaning inter-connected, with inter-connections among the inter-connections. But what are the inter-connected, related components, units, elements, in this set? Obviously they are the triad of modernity: states, corporations, civil societies, and their projections on the world scene, that is, the intergovernmental organizations, the transnational corporations, and the nongovernmental organizations (international civil society). Thoughtful students would ask, how about us, humans? The more ecologically minded will add non-human nature. But when prodded, “what else is there in the world?” very few come up with a rather obvious answer: the local authorities. And they are numerous, in the low millions, ranging from the megalopolis down to the smallest little municipality wherever.

The focus here will be on their peace-building capability. We know only too well that the states as we know them, and particularly the state system in the West ushered by the Treaty of Westphalia in Osnabrueck-Muenster 350 years ago has been a catastrophe since the right to wage war for such a long time was seen as their birthright (but so did the city-states before that). The Treaty of Westphalia is the classical case of solving one problem, the Thirty Years’ War, presumably over how to conceive of Christianity, at the expense of introducing a new and much worse problem, the state system. Un
trein peut en cacher un autre, as the French say, one train may conceal another. So let us have a look at the possibilities if there could be more city-logic and less state-logic in the world.

II. MOTIVATIONS, CAPABILITIES AND POSSIBLE PEACE ROLES

Motivations

1. Local Authorities generally do not possess arms. Arms are state monopoly. “For he who has a hammer the world looks like a nail”; LAs would be less inclined to see problems as military problems, and less concerned with “speaking with one voice.” Many municipalities even became nuclear free zones.

2. Municipalities are generally less pathological than states, not serving as depositories of national traumas and myths, such as the idea of being “chosen” to be above everything else.

3. Towns/cities derive their sustenance from exchange with rural municipalities and with other towns/cities; it is in their interest that the exchanges are not only preserved but improved. The victims of war/maldevelopment/eco-breakdown are local, not in secret governmental bunkers. The real struggle for peace, including peace with nature (environment) and against structural violence (maldevelopment) also has to be concrete, meaning local.

Capabilities

4. World exchanges are mainly inter-city exchanges across borders, and social exchanges are mainly inter-municipal exchanges within borders. Civil society is meaningless without the municipal framework; this is where people meet and interact, within and among municipalities. The “sister cities” trend is an excellent and visible example of international civil society.

5. Even many small municipalities are today mirrors of society at large, with both genders, all generations, most classes (with their interests), often several cultures (religions, languages) and many, if not all, professions. In this they are superior to international people’s organizations (“NGOs”) that tend to be more monochromatic on any one or several of these dimensions.

6. Municipalities have administrations, “local authorities,” used to handling problems of considerable complexity. That administrative capacity could be enhanced by having a Peace Councillor in charge of municipal peace activities.

Peace Roles

7. Before any violence: Resolution, being sites of conferences, seminars, dialogues, moving diverse nations within and between borders toward more symbiotic relations. Municipal peace and conflict research institutes would be useful.

8. During violence: Reconstruction, using multi-professional teams for assistance, Gemeinde gemeinsam, Causes communes, team across borders to adopt a municipality in distress; helping displaced persons, political refugees, conscientious objectors.

9. After violence: Reconciliation, bringing conflicting groups together, trying to heal wounds, giving new hope and meaning.

10. As foci for world politics for a safer world, helping, even recognizing not only municipalities but also nations struggling for independence, and planning local, non-military defense.

To give more meaning to these points we need reflections on the world system and its components, particularly contrasting states/countries and cities. We should also ask the fruitful question: where do states and cities come from? What kind of culture/structure can be found in their historical baggage?

III. WORLD SYSTEM COMPONENTS, HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND WAR/PEACE

In the Constitución de la Republica Española (9 December 1931) there was this very remarkable Article 6: España renuncia a la guerra como instrumento de política nacional (Spain renounces on war as an instrument of national policy). Read with the eyes of the Spanish military at the time (their leader: Francisco Franco, notorious from the colonial wars in Morocco in the 1920s, Director of La Academia General Militar in Zaragoza), and the Civil War that started 18 July 1936 takes shape. Spain is a state, and the right of war was and still is the prerogative of states. One day all countries will have such articles in their constitutions, like today Article 9 in the
Japanese Constitution; but there is still a distance to go.

The world system is all interaction patterns across state borders; the social system is all patterns within.

**Components:**

*Territorial:* states, nations, cities/towns, other municipalities. Non-territorial: capital, people's organizations, people, nature. States are organizations forming bilateral and multilateral inter-state systems (diplomacy; intergovernmental organizations). Nations are groups of people with sacred points in space and claims on territory; forming the inter-nation system.

*And:* inter-city, inter-municipal, inter-corporate, inter-people's organization, inter-people and inter-nature systems.

*Rough orders of magnitude:* 200 states, 2,000 nations, 20,000 cities, 200,000 towns, 2,000,000 municipalities.

Capital (and other production factors) are transformed by corporations into goods and services; their interaction field is the market; transnational corporations interact across borders. People's organizations inside societies are known as civil society and across societies as international civil society (also known as NGOs as if governments were non-people's organizations, NPOs). Then there are people, close to 6 billion, of different kinds. And life in general. And nature in general.

The key peace research question is the extent to which these components are carriers of violence or peace; and what kind of violence, what kind of peace. Of course, the answers to such questions cannot be that clear-cut. But one way of exploring the problem is genetic: let us look at their historical origins.

And one way of doing that would be to use, for Europe, the traditional six-layer organization of European society from the early the Middle Ages, using revolution/secularization/modernization in the USA (1770s-90s) and France (1780s-90s) as a turning point. Roughly speaking what happened to a basically rural society was:

1. The Clergy was side-tracked by aristocracy/state through separation doctrines; many became intellectuals/professionals.
2. The Aristocracy went to the state, to the foreign and war-defense ministries and the army; apart from land-owners and those who went to the seminary and became clergy. Hence the Spanish poderes facticos: militares, latifundistas, cleros.
3. Burghers/Merchants stayed/went to the cities, shaping capital, corporations and economic activity in general.
4. Common people organized themselves. Gradually, in people's organizations of all kinds beyond kinship: guilds, trade unions and political parties; any organization of affinity and vicinity.
5. Marginal people, non-dominant nations, "nomads" (Moros, Jews, Gypsies), deviants of all kinds, women, the children and the aged, remained marginal, or were made even more so.
6. Nature was squeezed, and then was exploited worse than ever.

We could now formulate some hypotheses about violence. The general social flow of violence is downward: from [1]+[2]+[3] to [4]+[5]+[6]. But there is also a division of labor among them, with [2] specializing in direct violence, [3] in structural violence (including making arms for direct violence), and [1] in the cultural violence legitimizing the other two. Intellectuals and professionals learned how to do so without reference to God.

But there is also counter-violence flowing upward, against the social violence gradient. Starting at the bottom: nature's violence, from "wild" animals, poisonous plants, micro-organisms to earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes. "Marginal people" can be violent, a very important deviant group being violent criminals. Women engage in verbal violence more than the physical variety. And "common people" are not always innocent: they join armies; as nations they organize in highly violent activities."Common people" may also be violent against "marginal people" inside families (men against women, adults against children and the aged) and in society. But generally violence flows with social gravity; what common/marginal people do is to defend themselves.

Does this also hold at the world system level? The six levels have world system counterparts: international religious and professional organizations; the inter-state system with the inter-nation system; the inter-city/inter-municipal system with the inter-corporate system, the international civil society, people in general, nature all over. By and large they relate as above, violence emanates from the first three and hits the other three; with the
state-system functioning like aristocrats and the city-system with the corporations like the burghers. Grosso modo.

IV. THE INTER-STATE AND INTER-NATION SYSTEMS AS PEACE CARRIERS

The terms “international system,” defined in “international Law,” IL, and explored in “international relations,” IR, confound the inter-state and inter-nation components.

The state is an organization with ultimate power over the territory within its borders, the country. Force is considered the ultimate power, so the state has monopoly over the ultimate forms of force (the ultima ratio). The state needs Ministries of external and internal (justice) affairs, with military and police for the execution of external and internal violence; to maintain law and order. The traditional European country had Emperor-King/Court/Aristocracy/Subjects; and the modern European country Head-of-State/Cabinet/Bureaucracy/Citizens. “Government” is ambiguous, meaning cabinet in Europe and bureaucracy in the USA. “Bureaucracy” includes the military and the police.

The nation is a group of people with sacred points in time and space, usually related to the activities of kings/aristocrats (battles won or lost, independence) and their latter-day successors, meaning top politicians/lawyers (constitutions).

The country is a piece of land organized by the state, and peopled by one or more nations. A uni-national country is called a nation-state (about 20). In a multi-national country the power-distribution may be symmetric, with no nation dominant, or asymmetric, with one nation dominant and the others known as “minorities.” If a minority nation is a dominant nation in some other country, then that country is often referred to as the mother country. A country can neither act nor interact, hence there is no inter-country system. States and nations act, with one voice.

A metaphor: the state may be compared with a car and the (dominant) nation with the driver; the state-nation system being the traffic. There are traffic rules. And there are collisions, shocks, some of them very bad, with dead and wounded and material damage, some of them quite light. There is the constant fear of collisions/shocks. The quality of the traffic obviously depends on the cars, on the drivers and on the traffic rules, including their internalization and institutionalization.

Worst case image of the state-nation system: the car is a tank, capable of destroying whatever comes in its way, good at moving forward and bad at backing; the driver is worse than drunk, essentially a case of psychopathology, suffering from megalomania and paranoia; the traffic rules favor military vehicles and crazy drivers, and in addition are neither internalized nor institutionalized.

Best case image of the state-nation system: the car is like a Tivoli car with rubber bumpers all around, with limited speed and limited capacity to inflict any damage on Self or Other; the driver is mature, capable of Golden Rule action and its modification in case of different values, and of compassion should something go wrong. The traffic rules are equal to all and to a large extent internalized and institutionalized.

The worst image models the system of big states, especially the Big-Great-Grand Powers system and the superpowers as well; and the best image may model the system of smaller countries, among other reasons because they have no choice. Exceptions could be numerous on both ends of the continuum. And the mental status of states and nations should not be confused with their leaders.

Basic hypotheses for a theory of the state/nation-system:

[1] The President/Cabinet system is successor to the King/Court system, in the abstract sense of performing the same functions related to monopoly on ultimate violence, and in the concrete sense that aristocrats became leaders in the parts relating to the exercise of violence across borders: armies, foreign offices.

[2] Aspects of the structure/culture of the medieval aristocrats:

- serving/submitting to God/King; repressing/exploiting downward
- the disrespectful to be severely punished and/or eliminated
- monopoly on violence and possession of arms as status criterion
- high on mastery of weapons, low on mastery of symbolic culture
- the courage to kill and the courage to be killed taught early
- tournaments for training, duels and battles for real violence
- only aristocrats/warrior caste permitted to duel and fight wars
- warrior/macho values: courage, honor, dignity, status
- conflicts not to be solved but to be processed into such values
- easily offended/insulted; honor regained through violence
- conflicts are terminated when duels/battles produce more status
The state system continued the aristocrat structure/culture, being founded by them as a new way of financing their armies, with tournaments=maneuvers, wars=wars, but without duels (too much taxing on the elites) and less courage to be killed (too risky, hence bunkers). The result is a violence-prone system, using insults as casus belli, serving/submitting to the Head of State and the Head of the Alliance, repressing/exploiting downward, sacrificing common people, eliminating marginal people and lower states and nations (imperialism), jealously guarding the monopoly on violence against “terrorism.” Political rationality “with all necessary means” substitutes for courage/honor/dignity.

The warrior aristocrat/state system survived democracy well,
- by being the structure/culture of the state system that others, like the common people in North America had to imitate/adjust to;
- by defining the right to carry and use arms (“for defense”) as the criterion of being free, sovereign as people and individuals;
- by excepting foreign and security politics from democratic control through secrecy and controlled access (to higher status committees for reliable politicians and ministries, for men);
- by vesting the values worth killing and being killed for in the nation/patria rather than in God/King (gratia dei); defining the nation through the deeds of the warrior caste (and successors).

The aristocrat/warrior caste and the successor state-system exhibit psycho-pathological traits like narcissism and paranoia.

The state system tends to select, and engender, dominant nations with compatible traits, like chosenness, myths, traumas.

When states/governments meet they recognize these traits in each other, defining them as normal, thereby reinforcing them.

The successors to clergy are IL/IR intellectuals justifying the irrational by deducing it from Ratio; their name for God.

The state/nation system as we know it today is no peace system and will not become one: state/nation systems and peace systems are incompatible. But that statement immediately has to be modified and moderated, as there are at least seven ways of making the state/nation-systems more peaceful:

1. Curing nations of their psycho-pathologies, lifting national narratives into the daylight, exposing them, critiquing them; substituting new values, codes, programs. The problem with this approach is that we do not know how to do it.
2. Emphasizing peace-oriented values. Each nation also has values like respect for life/humanity/world/human rights that could be propagated and given higher status in value hierarchies.
3. Giving more state power to less psycho-pathological nations. But we do not know how traumas suffered by non-dominant nations will be enacted when they get state power; and the state system has very compelling logic.
4. Giving more state power to less psycho-pathological groups, such as middle and working classes, and women. But these classes gave us the wars after the American and the French revolutions, and women may also be corrupted by the logic of state power.
5. More multi-national states: being less able to speak with one voice they may speak less, or neutralize each other, like for Switzerland. But multi-national states tend to be unstable.
6. Subdividing the states into smaller states. The hypothesis would be that a world of 2,000 smaller bullies is better than one with 200 bigger bullies, leaving behind a world with 20 super-bullies (“regional actors” that easily become super-states).
7. Disarming the states. If they are bullies, then at least without weapons, even armies, like about 30 small countries today.

Returning to the car/driver metaphor, above the first five approaches are driver-oriented, the fifth in the sense of leaving the driving to several drivers who partially cancel each other. The last two approaches are car-oriented: smaller cars that make smaller collisions with less damage to drivers and cars; and cars that are not armored nation carriers, but regular passenger cars.

But then there is another more promising approach: playing down the state/nation systems and playing up the other systems.
V. THE OTHER COMPONENTS IN THE WORLD SYSTEM AS PEACE CARRIERS

Going back to the historical origins in the European Middle Ages we can now examine the other layers or castes in the system for their peace potentials, not necessarily assuming that because the state/nation system is “bad” then the others by definition have to be “good.”

So we return to the list of layers:

[1] Clergy. The separation of state and church, held to be a pillar of secularization/modernity, in principle liberates the churches from their old tasks as legitimizers of the pursuits of the aristocracy, including their boss, the Emperor/King. They have been very late in understanding this. On the other hand, what we experience now is an increasing peace consciousness in the established churches (the Pope during the Gulf war, parts of the Catholic Church, the World Church Council, some Protestant churches, the Deutsche Kirchentag, the Catholics and the Methodists in the USA in the 1980s), countless individuals. More problematic are IL/IR intellectuals taking over the role as legitimizers of violence; i.e., as carriers of cultural violence.


[3] Burghers/merchants who went to the Cities; a promising case where direct violence is concerned, but replete with structural violence as major centers of the global market-place, exploiting all kinds of peripheries. But cities have several advantages:

- having no armies, less inclined to see problems as military;
- having capital, goods and services, more inclined toward deals;
- cities have more pragmatic, accommodating attitudes to conflict;
- cities usually do not claim to be “ueber alles in der Welt”;
- cities need each other for exchange of goods and services. Of course, the city-states in Northern Italy, the Low countries and elsewhere were violent, but then as states more than cities. What is badly needed is to find active peace roles for the cities beyond their present non-war roles, and more particularly for capital in general and the transnational corporations in general.

[4] Common people can be used as soldiers, but increasingly object. Common people create international people’s organizations that are usually both inter-state and inter-nation, for peace, human rights, development, environment. They do not have arms and have not been around long enough to accumulate compelling narratives with myths and traumas. That may come later.

[5] Marginal people have been victimized, but now they emerge with dignity as possible peace actors, particularly the women (and the gypsies). But they have been around long enough, accumulating considerable traumas. The question is how that could be enacted with access to state power, like when Jews got the Jewish state.

Conclusion: churches, cities, IPOs/NGOs and new groups of people.

VI. BACK TO THE CITIES: SOME CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

As to the motivations of local authorities: the first two are negative: local authorities do not possess armies and are generally less pathological. “Ours is a city above all others” may be acceptable as public relations. But if they start enacting that type of slogan in power relations, then the first reaction will be a smile, then shoulder-shrugging, and then preference for other cities. The inter-city logic is supposed to be symmetric and pragmatic, based on normative (cultural) and contractual (economic) rather than coercive (military) power. A city starting to behave like a city-state will have to refer to itself as that, as a state. This is the basis of the inter-city system as a peace system, assuming they do not harbor secret armies under pretexts of being “safe havens”, “open cities” or become too narcissistic.

However, the relation to the hinterland of rural local authorities is different. City-village relations were usually strained, with power, cultural-economic-military and political, rooted in the cities, and basic needs met from the villages. Only democracy, and only as long as the majority was still rural, defined terms of exchange more favorable to the villages than feudalism and early capitalism.

Rural communities are less substitutable than cities, yet they are treated as city peripheries in inter-state relations. Of course, given today’s trade patterns the citizen gets from the supermarket foodstuffs from a broad spectrum of countries, not only from his own hinterland. But the sender
is anonymous, unfortunately. The village product carries no name, no face; unlike knives from Sheffield and Solingen.

Rural communities should show their potential power by making their own inter-state and inter-nation networks. Their common interest in better terms of exchange, against the structural violence they are traditionally exposed to, is obvious. A clear international presence of rural communities, not only of farmers, would articulate the world structure better.

As to the capabilities of local authorities: we all, however cosmopolitan, however addicted to Internet, ultimately live in a local community. The proportion of the total time budget, the depth of the immersion will certainly vary. But all our major body, mental and spiritual functions, all important kairos points in our life-cycle, are, or can be, acted out locally; if not the human race would have disappeared long ago. The famous civil society, a major source of peace as opposed to state and capital, has addresses in some local community, including in the country’s capital, which may exhibit some of the state arrogance described above. Thus, any local authority can accumulate incredible amounts of power by serving as hosts and coordinators of the local civil society. Put the city hall at their disposal, the maison des associations, casa de cultura, dom kultura. If you don’t have it, build it. Serve civil society.

On top of this: the Peace Councillor, for each municipality. Municipalities have councillors for youth, sports, employment and garbage etc., corresponding to departments and ministers at the national level. At that level Departments of Peace encounter the jealousies of Departments of Foreign Affairs and Defense/War. At the municipal level this should be simpler. The task would be to organize the population for peace roles, as spelled out below.

As to the peace roles of local authorities: violence is ubiquitous, arising out of old conflict formations like nationalisms, and out of such emerging conflict formations as the global marketplace. They are, during and after “violence,” not to be confused with “conflict” which is a much broader category with creative and potentially destructive (violent) aspects. The local community, coordinated by the local authority, has important roles to play in all three phases, for resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation, and already does so.
It was only used for the special gatherings to taste the fruit of the harvest.
The pot was made of dark clay and decorated with intricate light-blue lines. Each
line, the elders explained, told a story. And in those gatherings everything was
solved—the hurricane was tamed and the absence of rain was given a name and
the dead were given a meaning.

The pot was eventually broken. For decades people tried to remake it: they
used dark clay and light-blue paints, they dug deeper than a goldmine for the
right consistency; they even used twigs, sackcloth and diamonds; they even stole
old pots from museums. They failed. The hurricane lifted cows off the fields, the
drought parched the soul, the dead were meaningless.

The new pots were wonderful to look at.\(^1\)

***

The amasi bird was taken from the homesteads.

The men had to leave and work in the holes where the walls are singing.
The elders aged even more. The children were declared dead before they were
born. The women walked up and down the fields collecting insects and thorns
for the pot.

In the palaces, they cut the amasi bird up to see which parts made it wise.
They took notes about its soft feathers and soft bones; they separated each tiny
piece of its small head, they placed its scrawny feet on washing lines and put its
beak in bottles of vinegar. They nodded to each other. We can make many of
these from coal or rubber.

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\(^1\) The final version of the parables included here was drafted by me. Their elements
were developed through a number of experimental workshops with community, labour
and student groups between 1991-6.

Parable 1: Constructed through two workshops with cultural workers in COSATU/
Culture and Working Life Course and students from the Sociology Honours programme
The man with the cart walked over the hill to the homesteads. He was shouting—“cheap, cheap amasi bird and chips, five bob, try some tasty meat on bone.”

***

The story began long ago...it is old. Older than my body, my mother’s, my grandmother’s.

For years we have been passing it on, so that our daughters and granddaughters may continue to pass it on. The story never really begins nor ends, even though there is a beginning and end in every story, as there is a beginning and end to every teller...I would say, that knowledge for knowledge’s sake is sickness. Let those who are sick with sickness pass on the story.

—Trin Min Ha (1991: 1-2)

I.

The “pot” was beautiful as long as it was a part of the gathering and the parable asks us to yearn for those gatherings which used to give the dead some meaning; the amasi bird has been taken, has been studied, has been eaten.

The parables are about wisdom, knowledge, sociology. About a disjuncture from the communal, from the “undistorted” communicative practice into a dead world of science, of, in the words of Trin Min Ha, a modern “sickness.” They echo some of what Habermas (1978, 1984) meant by undistorted communication where the life instinct and the knowledge interest coincided; they capture the feel of a socio-natural balance, an organic community that eco-feminists (Mies & Shiva: 1991) might venture and portray. They are polysemic and pedagogic. They are all these big Greek words and more. The pot, the gathering, the bird and their relationship to meaning, challenge us to think of what this process, modernity, in all its imperial airs has done to us.

Trin Min Ha takes us further into a gathering in a Chinese village where, “people have decided to get together to discuss certain matters of capital importance to the well-being of their community.” She describes how no one ever “open(s) the discussion by coming right to the heart of the matter.

II.

Let us go to the palaces where the bird has been torn up and studied: the relationship between the “researcher” and the “researched,” between the producers of knowledge, the “experts,” the “scientists” and ordinary folk needs to be problematised once more, in the context of our democratic revolution.
the "researched" and a commitment to the study of society. What is common to both is the methodical distance from the world of work and the world of the lifeworld, that called for a theory of communicative action. These approaches corresponded respectively to the world of work and the world of social interaction. What is common to both is the methodical distance from the "researched" and a commitment to the study of society.

Through this little word, "of," I am indeed grouping together the entire tradition as it is scripted by Therborn(1976) in his magisterial *Science, Class and Society* and, for that matter, Gouldner (1971) in his defining, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*. The systematic study of society forms part of an extractive mode, an extractive relationship to the social. Its greatest systematisation occurred in the United States during and after the second world war following the prowess of the Columbia University 'moment': through Lazarsfeld's (1956) establishment of the Bureau of Applied Social Research and when the amassing of large-scale representative data was institutionalised. The ability to create a substantive research base, the methodological innovations in quantitative technique that followed, the perfection of systematic cross-tabulations, fuelled too by Merton's insistence on middle-range theories, developed a grand overview of society (Crothers 1987), what C. Wright Mills (1974) was to castigate as an expert-driven, policy-bound, abstracted empiricism.

Lazarsfeld's impulse was deeply democratic: against the biased, interest-driven, sociology of elites he thought he was developing a method which allowed for the representative voice of the public to surface, as voters, consumers, victims of mass culture and so on (Jay 1974). Nevertheless, his work brought a *scientism* of society to a new level of sophistication. Detractors like Goffman (1975) later, who, insisted on a micro-ethnographic, qualitative craft that explored the public and private worlds of everyday life, shared still, a common ground with the scientists: the qualitative approaches garnered better, more reliable understandings of society. There was always a distinction, through craft or science, from the social, or better, a withdrawal, a retreat, a separation, a space through which the discipline and its discourses spoke, wrote, predicted, and understood. And this distance was also physical, material, and institutional. It was embedded in the modern university.

No doubt, within the intellectual spaces created in universities, sociologists criticised sociological tenets, demanded critiques of the dominant structures, pronounced the need for reflexive methodologies and by the 1960s demanded connections with social movements outside the universities. Academic Marxism and Neo-Marxism (Anderson 1976) became major concerns of the social sciences creating in most cases imagined affinities with an imagined working class.

Such challenges were felt in South Africa despite Apartheid controls and were fuelled by Area Studies scholars (Marks and Rathbone 1982) in...
the metropoles of the world who had been inspired by Neo-Marxist ideas. Here, such academics, at first white, defined a new “we,” a new “subject of knowledge;” whether it was made up of social historians or sociologists who created a lot of energy and researched. Quite early on such scholarship was confident enough to constitute itself as a community: it argued that “we knew very little about…therefore we need to study XYZ.” (see Bozzoli 1979, 1987) In short, despite its “meta-altruism,” to coin an awkward expression, for an insurgent proletariat or peasantry, the new critical schools were within the traditions of the... “of.” People were more than pieces of chalk, more than purveyors of stories or data. They were also a revolutionary force and they needed to be studied.

III.

Let us in turn, move away and visit the spaces where people gather insects for the pot: a sociology for liberation that attempted to link theory and practice, praxis if you wish, emerged with Marx’s critique of political economy. Marx’s ideas more than any other intellectual’s, through their insistence on the need to focus on the social relations of production and his practical commitment to the transcendence of capitalism, created the space for the development of (a) intellectual formations within the networks of political activism that respected theory, and (b) a move away from the sites of elite recruitment, e.g. the academy, the university, the college to communicate with a vast number of ordinary people through political education classes, trade union gatherings and so on. Much of the theory of Marxism and its elaboration has relied on the written word, the pamphlet, the book, the manifesto, the monograph. Of course, with the institutionalisation of dialectical materialism in the so-called Eastern bloc, the propagation and circulation of Marxist writings became widespread too. But in the West and its colonies, it subsisted on a reading culture and a market for ideas. As mentioned above, it was only during the 1960s that such ideas were framed within the universities of Europe and the United States.

In each major city of the first world, political parties, intellectual avant-gardes, reading and writing networks, journals and some magazines and newspapers nurtured intellectual cultures that were distinct from university traditions. The encounter between these traditions and third world scholars, and for instance, the encounter as well between such scholars and Afro-American sub-cultures and subaltern literatures, created part of the ideational disturbance that was the source of anti-colonial nationalism. These ideas, theories, writing and discourses were always at a distance from institutions of colonial domination. Whether we speak of Cabral or Mandela, Senghor or Cesaire, Fanon or Nkrumah (Davidson 1973), and so on, each biography will point to encounters with intellectual formations outside the universities. For example: in both Senghor’s and Cesaire’s case, the Pari-sian society they encountered shaped their notions of race and Negritude; but what was crucial here were not only Cultural Anthropologists’ musings about the Native Mind, but also right-wing discourses and literatures on the “earth” and “land” and Communist Party discourses animated by Stalin’s theory of the “national question;” not only courses on French culture but also the discourses of existentialist vanguards. (Markovitz 1969)

The majority of black intellectuals in South Africa, all the way up to the 1960s were trapped in three ways—firstly, save a few remarkable exceptions (Couzens 1979), they accepted the infernal binaries of sociology and anthropology—theirs was a past that was pre-modern, pre-capitalist, their struggle for nationhood was a simultaneous commitment to modernity. Seco-ndly, they accepted the ahistorical notion of an African society, an African culture, a tribal Bantu-dom; and thirdly, their exclusion from civic life was fought on a liberal humanist ground of inclusion. It was only a small number of left-inspired black intellectuals and writers mainly from the Communist Party of South Africa or later the Non-European Unity movement who tried arguing against the grain: that the African past was about real, evolv-ing historical communities whose evolution was stunted and that modernity and socialism had to enhance African traditions.

In the late 1960s the BCM started demanding and celebrating the “pot” and its traditional “gatherings.” It demanded the return of the amasi bird (Couzens and Patel 1982), back to the homesteads; it argued for black self emancipation. By framing modernity as a degeneration and celebrating the “pre-modern” as having its own potential; by resisting through and celebrat-ing the past; thirdly, by rubbishing European modernity and the modernis-ers it developed a systematic post-colonial critique. Its ideas led to robust intellectual formations outside the universities—the university for its own part kept these “ideologies” at a distance. BCM ideas were at the heart of the Soweto insurrection (Pityana 1991), followed in tandem with working class
community initiatives which revived urban histories of resistance, a keen interest in Marxist ideas and demanded new forms of communitarianism, demanding that the gatherings be reconstructed even if they had to be made of twigs and rags.

As I argued in the *Waning of Sociology in the South Africa of the 1990s* (Sitas 1997), the emergence of an anti-apartheid, emancipatory discourse was more complex than the binary opposition between the Academy and the Rest. Its intellectual discourses traversed both—the important difference though was that such intellectual formations sustained despite university disciplines and found their meaning and problem-contexts outside the Academy. Nevertheless, the pressure to identify your positioning or “positionality” was immense. The contortions between those who spoke for the “of” and those who serviced the “for” were painfully felt.

The debates between these binary poles of feeling were less about theoretical competence. They were rather about geographies of “positioning.” Let me explain: imagine a map with a barricade, a border, a moat in the middle; on the one side of the map let us place the space where the amasi bird was taken, on the other let us place the fields. Each area can be divided into a further three according to positional claims. This is the kind of voicings we will get: (a) my distance from the “fields,” their struggles, their noise and din has been a virtue. My craft, my science is uncontaminated by immediacy, and through it I have guaranteed my work’s excellence. (b) I cannot help the distance, my class/race/gender has given me the educational capital to be here. Although I wouldn’t mind having a closer engagement with the fields, I am not of them. My work must be judged in its own terms. I am doing the best I can, given my limitations. I was there, I was forced out by the field’s intolerance, the bloody-mindedness of its organisations, by the risks (or I was chased out by the system etc). Although not a virtue, any excellence is due now to that precise distance.

On the other side of the border, there can be the following voicings: (a) my commitment to the struggle of emancipation is total, and there is no way of analysing the “social” without total involvement in its din and noise, and ugliness. (b) I can’t help my presence here, my class/race/gender, my educational disadvantages place me here; my excellence comes from being with the people. (c) I was there, but could not come to live with the distance, their arrogance, bloody-mindedness, their lip-service to emancipation made me go.

In pure mathematical terms there could be 30 debates generated out of these “positionings” and in real terms the normative implications have been aired many times in the discussions between sociologists themselves and between sociologists and others. Many in South Africa (I include myself in this generalisation) had to live with the positional splits and the shifting moral grounds that they implied. If we can imagine reference and status groups behind each one kind of voice the intricacy of any validity claim becomes obvious. I would like to argue though, that we are beginning to experience doubts and are living through processes that might allow for the overcoming of some of the dilemmas.

IV.

Since the 1970s many of the certainties about emancipation and the ability of centralised vanguards of political movements to think for people and define “truth,” “correctness” or fortitude have been questioned; and so have the claims of central planning departments or “uni-focal” university research centres. The geography of reliable claims has been dispersed throughout the social landscape.

Secondly, there has been a shrinkage of and an implosion of claims within the university system itself—it cannot claim to be the only producer of reliable knowledge, discourse and or technology. The new network society (Castells 1996), the creation of corporate-based capacities, of specialist NGOs and consultancy groups, of research capacities within social movements, of hundreds of specialised micro-projects, has caused a proliferation of claims to reliability. But also, within the confines of the “university” itself, scientificity is being questioned *sui generis*. Starting from post-structuralism, we have been faced with a lack of confidence in the project of science: as Immanuel Wallerstein argued in *Social Justice and the Sciences* (1997), cultural studies in the humanities and complexity theory in science have shaken the enlightenment and modernist traditions and their methodologies to their intellectual core.

Thirdly, especially in the areas of study where human beings are classified and “texted,” marginal voices are beginning to be heard. Although many
of these voices hint at a neo-biological essentialism—women can only speak about women, gays for gays, whites for whites, with the dangers of a *reductio ad absurdum*—nevertheless, the debates they raised about empathetic dispositions have brought with them the vexed question of ethics, norms and their distortions back into sharp focus.

In our context, there was a proliferation and sometimes an irruption of situational knowledges that challenged the certainty of social analysis. Since the 1970s various streams of activism insisted on a quasi-Maoist/Freirean strand to “learn from the people” because people were agents of knowledge production and popular wisdom. A number of participatory methodologies were tried and tested, developed and put to the service of the vast mobilisations that were occurring against apartheid and South Africa’s ruling class. But as the transition turned attention towards policy, many were attracted to international/ participatory methodologies—viz participatory rural appraisals and new ways through which research was done. The recognition of communal forms of knowledge (see anthropologists like Geertz (1973), social historians like EP Thompson (1980)) and their importance, ways of drafting new data found their day.

At some point though, the learnings, the facts, the measurements, were gathered and taken out of the field, there was a withdrawal into the institutional milieu, with its own micro politics. Although in other words, the sites of “of” and “for” have been dispersed or to use post-structuralist jargon, “de-centred,” there continues to be a dialectic of withdrawal: back to the shrine and into the streets, back to the site where knowledge is funded for, back to the voices.

It seems to me that our democratic revolution allows us to change the contours of the landscape.

V.

Let us return to the place where they cut the amasi bird up to see what works it: the institutional grounding of knowledge is usually ignored in debates about scholarship. The epistemic machinery, the labour process for the production of knowledge is embedded in institutional arrangements and milieux of innovation. The liberal idea that there was a critical community of rational scientists who in freedom and equality applied their minds to new discoveries was challenged by Kuhn (1970)—instead of these rational communities he pointed to disciplinary paradigms, with their ideological and cosmological blinkers rather than their creative open-ness. From there it was a small step to the work of Feyerabend (1982, 1988) and Haraway (1989) who claimed the unfreedom of science and its totalitarian aspects. Feminists like Haraway defined these spaces as complexes of “techno-science” producing metanarratives of truth and power.

This conception of knowledge production can also be given a sociological ground too: that these places are the recruiting grounds for society’s elites; or Bourdieu (1986, 1990) argues that they are the sites of the “class reproduction of society,” they are the institutional underpinning of fields that provide a minority with the educational or “cultural capital” to rule others. If one stirs the Loren Baritz (1974) claim that their social scientists are “servants of power,” by omission or commission and finally, if one follows Adorno (1991) and Foucault (1974) in claiming that in their design, such institutions as the “administered society” or as “disciplinary regimes” constitute power itself, then the distance between the spaces where the “amasi bird was cut” become disciplinary fortresses.

The reading of the university as a repressive, modernist institution only tells part of the story. There is another dimension to this: the epistemic formations of modernity occurred within and in the process that transformed a monastic educational order in Europe. Whilst on the one hand they preserved a conception of educational space as a “retreat” from the worldly, they had to, *contra* the church, demand individual autonomy and protection. Undoubtedly the growth and expansion of universities added to them all the features of a modern organisational bureaucracy. These cloisters of “uncontaminable experimentation,” and of ranking the life-chances of new elites were at the same time areas of contestation and after struggles, of free expression, or in principle claimed to be such areas which opened up space for such claimants. Indeed our struggles within our institutions were about broadening such freedoms and making the place accountable to democratic challenges outside their walls.

Usually the South African debates about democratisation, about broad transformation forums remained formalistic—there was a demand for representation in the councils, there was a demand for redress in terms of disadvantage, there were demands for changed forms of governance, there were pressures to get the trade unions and the communities involved in
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structures, there were proposals to create spaces for student participation. There has always been the dilemma that scholarship is not governance and sociology/social science could never be decreed by committees. What is ignored usually is the heart of our new revolutionary educational philosophy that is being put in place and a simultaneous, global weakening of the university as the only citadel and arbiter of wisdom and knowledge.

Our democratic revolution, in its educational philosophy breaks with the past: the idea of a university as an area of elitist withdrawal is challenged through the NQF-system; a system that links education and training in a continuum of articulated access-points. For some it envisions learning to occur through a series of “book-ladders” leading from shopfloor, training centres and so on, to the highest forms of education (i.e. degrees). Whereas such an image can be seen as a move from the “low” to the “high,” from the bottom to the “apex,” it could also be seen differently. It seems to me that here lies its revolutionary kernel: it provides an impulse to create multiple sites of learning and knowing, of working and qualifying. Such a new approach, apart from opening access, also (to use Heideggerian jargon) allows sociologists a “being-for-others” as well as being-for-onself. Although the “framework” is at the moment very functionalist in its restrictive outcomes-based approach, it can open up the space for new moral pedagogic communities. For the first time, the value-systems embedded in the grassroots movements of this century, from Gandhi’s ashrams to the shop-steward movements, the principles, that is, of available, accountable and selfless education can also be procured.

A normative bent about projects of ethical participation and learning has a deep history in KwaZulu Natal; it was inscribed as a tradition in the local scene and was the result of a primarily local, oral culture of networks that provided grounds for intellectual work and critique, research and questions. All these were born at first as responses to the colonial moment—the Gandhian movement here insisting on “ashrams” and communes as forms of self-sufficient economic activity—Phoenix settlement and the Tolstoy farms were responses to the system of indentured and capitalist exploitation. They sustained themselves as networks despite Apartheid.

These moral communities, which were a real financial disaster, were at the same time part of the oral, transmitted symbolic capital down the generations, all the way to the resistance of the 1980s; on the other, principles of the Satyagraha campaigns, non-violent militant resistance, moral high ground, non-collaboration, martyrdom; they fed into networks leading the African National Congress; on the other side, African responses, the Ethiopian and Zionist movements, their communal and patriarchal forms, their symbolic granary have been very active as well; influential too was Luthuli’s inclusive African-ness, his combination of Christianity and tradition and mass defiance and later, Biko’s and Turner’s legacies: the former, a collective Afrocentric project for emancipation that spawned significant cultural movements; the latter, a participatory democratic socialism that demanded the transformation of work, fed into each other and defined the preoccupations of local intelligentsias. Most of them, with their emphasis on process, reciprocity and equality, had their energies committed outside the university gates.

Every woman or man involved in the educational, intellectual and cultural sides of the liberation movement in South Africa must have felt the potential for new ways of researching and knowing, teaching and learning. There was a glimpse of the future—a sociology in dialogue, a joint exploration of meaning, values and knowledge that existed in an ideal, undistorted framework. But everyone too must have felt that alongside, usually in each person’s life there were the noises of war, violence. Indeed, the participatory, non-violent traditions co-existed with the sounds of Shakan, warlike, Umkhonto we Sizwe-inspired responses to a violent state. Praxis was distorted in three ways—that these learning communities had to become vehicles of struggle in a process that involved violent revolutionary ferment; secondly that in the final instance the sociologist either had to make herself/himself an organic intellectual who had to use such learnings instrumentally, strategically, or go back to the university, the place where they kept the amasi bird in brine and by definition use the engagement with the “out there” for keeping her/his job, getting promotion. Thirdly that identification was more important than validity, efficacy, apodictic power. The “with” was always displaced as an instrumental “for.”

VI.

At the moment the above discussion has to be about the prospects of the “possible.” The reality of institutional power, status groups, the closed mental models of faculty members, the lack of resources and goodwill are
problems. Most of my claims will be looked at as an argument for “extension,” “outreach” and therefore “marginal and inessential vices.” I hope though that a commitment to an undistorted pedagogy which is at the same time a dialogue with cultural formations in society becomes a necessary vice.

In *Beyond Afropessimism* (Sitas 1997) I argued for a sociology that was like the poetic metaphor of an “inqola masondosondo,” a mobile, patched-up oxcart made of trinkets and tarnish and stuff we have managed to assemble through our third world contexts. As I argued: “indeed, oral poets, izimbongi in the growing labour movement of the 1980s used the expression ‘inqola masondosondo’ to describe and praise the organisations they were building. They invoked ox-carts, both vulnerable and patched-up, made of many things but for a purpose, a mission, a struggle; their wheels turned, perhaps not as smoothly as we want, but they worked; and they fed people. Such an image, I feel begins to capture our task: it is universally comprehensible but arrogantly local. And finally, it is neither pre-modern, modern or post-modern, it could be all of them at once, and at once communally accessible.”

A similar image was invoked in the second introductory parable at the beginning of this essay. ”The creature who comes over the mountain where the amasi bird is cut, who sells amasi-bird meat and bone, cheap-cheap.” The latter is a detestable solution, much of the sustenance it brings cheap-cheap from the hills and towers of knowledge, made of coal or rubber, or the real thing has in its womb the distortions of power: its skills, its professionalised, commoditised forms of knowledge embody the most cynical trade between the academy and the poor and powerless. It takes back to people what they supposedly lack since the “system, apartheid and ruling classes” have expropriated their homes, their brains, and their capacities. Such roguery flogs diplomas and certificates, facts and findings at a price—a heavy price.

Let us return to Phumelele Nene’s painful (Sitas 1996), peasant past: she had left her area because of socio-economic pressures. The area, its power-structures, its demands and its poverty flushed her out. In the essay her narrations about her poverty and fears, her interests and beliefs spoke of a place of torment—a countryside which, like in the second parable above, was materially and culturally decaying. She did not stay on, to gather insects for the pot, she rather walked to the bus station and rode to the city, for good.

Our democratic revolution permits new ways of relating to, learning from and helping a surviving peasantry, to the struggling Nenes “out there.” Already 10kms south from Phumelele Nene’s place a decentralised nursing programme is working with the health-care delivery systems and with educational issues in the countryside; 23kms north there is a water scheme undertaken by the Ministry of Water Affairs and the Umgeni Waterboard; they are delivering taps and training; 30kms in the same direction in the town there are trade union linked educational programmes; somewhere in between these cardinal points, the churches have a training and development programme for youth who are HIV/AIDS sufferers. Around that world a local council is coming into shape and land restitution researchers are scouring the area. If our educational commitment to multiple-sites of learning and knowledge has its way all these initiatives together with our sociologists and the scientists can be brought together in a multi-purpose educational and resource centre which can coordinate delivery, education and research. Then, in dialogue with the real producers we can ask, why did Phumelele Nene’s crops wilt? Our inqola masondosondo will find a resting place. Perhaps then, we will have an example of how a sociology *with* can overcome a sociology *of* and *for*, keeping the best of both and finding a new way.

A concluding gesture has to revisit the parables we started from. A sociology “*with*” as opposed to one of the “*of*s” and the “*for*s,” will not only get its questions from literature reviews and academic disputation. It will also have to get its value from a logic of practice: asking questions and solving problems within distinctive interactions with communities, in new learning spaces. Such spaces can never recreate the pot and the gatherings of the harvest but they can give the absence of rain a name and worry about the cows lifted off the fields by hurricane Demona. Such spaces will have to develop new pedagogical and methodological ways and their own “parables.”

Parables after all preserve sediments of knowledge and allow for inter-generational transmissions. Parables as constructed here must be seen as part, however humble a part, of the knowledge-generating process. They demand the transformation of research experiences into narrative structures. They are part of a creative/cognitive process as *this* creativity seeks a double outcome—(a) a new encoding of knowledge for its sedimentation and transmission (b) a conjecture, that invites a process of disproof, discus-
sion, research, growth. It was Karl Popper after all who made us conscious of the non-necessity of induction and, that imaginative conjectures would also “do” as hypothesis-forming instances.

Secondly, our experience here made us aware that hypotheses and research questions were not produced through literature reviews, but through interactions that crossed the “moat” that separated our libraries and the world. Through the use of parables I am opening up the possibility for popular forms of participation. Thirdly, by opening up such popular forms, we can invite others to help constitute a cooperative way through which we hypothesise/discuss/act. But this invitation takes others in the various communities away from providing their experiences, their “bit” in the grind, but asks them to create generalities that are common to all. Therefore, although they can be used as case-studies or examples, they can be more than that: they are discursive props in generating reliable insights and peculiar sedimentations of the “real.”

Is it peculiar then to ask whether new gatherings can also find new ways to give names to new solutions?

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INQOLA MASONDOSONDO!

It is a great privilege to participate in the Festschrift honoring Immanuel Wallerstein. I am very grateful to Professor Wallerstein for having recognized in my work in physics and chemistry aspects which may be of interest for history and sociology. (Wallerstein 1998)

Orthodox physics presented us with a view of a time-reversible, deterministic universe. This is in contrast to our observation that time-oriented processes appear at all levels of our observation. The classical answer to this contradiction is that it comes from our approximations, that we introduce the flow of time—history—by our approximations. This introduces an unacceptable dualistic view. In the past few years we have achieved a reformulation of the laws of physics which includes time-symmetry breaking. (Prigogine 1997) These are rigorous and important results that apply mainly to "large systems" as they are studied in thermodynamics or in fields theory, the main point of which has been to introduce probability as the most basic element. (Prigogine 1998a) In this new formulation, the world is a system in construction to which we bring a modest contribution. This
change of perspective is mainly due to our progress in dynamical systems and spectral theory of operators. (Antoniou & Lumer 1999)

My scientific path began with philosophy and history. I also was interested in operational research. One of the first papers in which I applied non-linear dynamics and bifurcation theory was "Kinetic theory of traffic." (Prigogine & Herman 1971) My coworkers and I were also deeply interested in the evolution of towns as a spatio-temporal problem.

It is therefore not astonishing that the scientific roads of Professor Wallerstein's and mine crossed, an encounter that has been the source of great satisfaction for me. In this volume, which I suppose will be mainly read by historians and sociologists, I thought that it would be more appropriate to center the presentation around one of the present sociological problems, a rather adventurous and risky undertaking. I attended recently a conference on the "networked society" organized by Professor G. Metakides. (Prigogine 1998b) I was impressed by the enthusiasm of the participants, leading me to formulate some ideas I now present here.

First, I feel that there is some analogy between the present evolution toward the networked society and the processes of self-organization I have studied in physics and chemistry. Indeed, nobody has planned the networked society and the information explosion. It is a remarkable example of spontaneous emergence of new forms of society. Complexity is moreover the key feature of far-from-equilibrium structures. The networked society is of course a non-equilibrium structure which emerged as a result of the recent developments in Information Technology.

The question is then "What will the future bring?" Is the networked society leading to some form of unification of humanity? This conclusion is by no means certain. My friend, Professor Jean-Louis Deneubourg, made the remark that networked societies have long existed amongst social insects. Today we know of about 12,000 different ant species, their colony sizes ranging from a few individuals to 20 million. Interestingly, the behaviors of the small colonies and the large ones are quite different. In a small colony individuals know what they must do at any moment. They forage and they come back to share their prey; they behave independently.

However, once the society becomes large, coordination becomes the major problem. There appear complex collective structures that spontaneously emerge from simple autocatalytic interactions between numerous individuals and the environment, mediated by chemical communication. In small colonies the complexity is localized at the individual, while in large ones complexity is more on the level on the interactions between the individuals. It is certainly not coincidental that in the largest and most integrated colonies—that is, in the army ants and termites—the individuals are practically blind. The networked ant societies are capable of extraordinary performances. In recent years, super colonies of ants, which contain hundreds of millions of individuals, have been discovered. These large colonies develop a network of communication between individual nests on tenths of kilometers—millions of times the size of a single ant.

The evolution from the small ant society to large ant society was the result of qualitative changes involving discontinuities. Such discontinuities appear in many fields (physics, chemistry and biology, for example) and are associated with bifurcations which play an important role in our present view of nature. These bifurcations lead to multiple possible outcomes associated with probabilities, destroying the classical deterministic view of nature. As such, I find it appropriate to first say a few words about bifurcations in nature before coming back to the problem of the human networked society.

II.

Results in nonequilibrium thermodynamics have shown that bifurcations require two conditions. First, systems have to be far from equilibrium. We have to deal with open systems exchanging energy, matter and information with the surrounding world. Secondly, we need non-linearity. This leads to a multiplicity of solutions. As mentioned above, the choice of the branch of the solution in the non-linear problem depends on probabilistic elements. Bifurcations provide a mechanism for the appearance of novelties in the physical world. In general, however, there are successions of bifurcations, introducing an "historical" element. It is now generally well understood that all structures around us are the specific outcomes of such historical processes. The simplest example is the behavior of chemical reactions in far-from-equilibrium systems. These conditions may lead to oscillating reactions, to so-called Turing patterns, or to chaos in which initially close trajectories deviate exponentially over time. The main point is that, for given boundary conditions (that is, for a given environment), allowing us to
The Networked Society

In human society, the condition of non-equilibrium is obviously satisfied. Life is only possible in open systems exchanging matter, energy and information with the outside world. It is also clear that a society is a non-linear system; what one person does influences the actions of others. This nonlinearity increases with the size of the society. Our present society is already full of possible bifurcations. Of course, bifurcation is a rather general term. If I decide to take my umbrella because of uncertain weather, or leave it at home, I may consider this already as a kind of bifurcation. Thus we must make a distinction between trivial bifurcations and bifurcations which indeed lead to new historical systems.

The great French historian Braudel has written: “Events are dust.” This is only partially true. There are “well-defined events” which have shaped human history, a simple example of which is the neolithic bifurcation associated with an increased flow of energy coming from the discovery of agriculture and metallurgy and ultimately leading to a complex hierarchical society. I always found remarkable that the neolithic bifurcation emerged everywhere about the same period about ten thousand years ago, but that it emerged in different forms in the Middle East, in China or in Precolumbian America. This is similar to the branches of bifurcations which appear in chemical or physical systems.

We can of course quote other social bifurcations related to fossil energy: coal and oil which lead to the industrial society. Now we have information technology which leads to the networked society.

What will be the effect of the present bifurcation? Because of the scales involved we can expect a larger role for non-linear terms and therefore larger fluctuations and increased instability. Of course the present revolution is part of the technological bifurcation which started at the end of the 19th century and went through the whole 20th century; we therefore already have a period of about one century behind us. What effect did the technological revolution have on humanity in the past? In the 20th century there were, and still are, tragic events: wars, ethnic purification. But war and bloodshed are not something new.

We must recall the constructive, positive part of the technological revolution—the decrease of inequality. At the beginning of this century we had the gap between the “civilized” and the “uncivilized.” The uncivilized were treated only slightly better than animals. Over the course of the century, the inequality between social classes has also decreased as well as the inequality within the family. However we are still far from a satisfactory situation. The gap between industrial states and developing countries is increasing. People have tried to give a quantitative formulation of this gap. According to what I read, the gap was one to five at the time of Louis XIV, one over hundred
in the 1970s and would be now one over 4000. A large knowledge gap is also developing. This issue acquires a new formulation in the Networked Society. As Alvin Toffler puts it: "The illiterate of the future will not be the person who cannot read. It will be the person who does not know how to learn." Education objectives and priorities should change towards the ideal of continuous learning.

I believe that in the future the networked society will be judged according its impact on the inequality between the nations. Of course, there are well-known advantages to the networked society. However I think the judgment has to be based on more fundamental criteria. The American philosopher Whitehead has stated that the Greeks developed two aims for humanity: first, the intelligence of nature that is a rational formulation of the laws which rule matter or life, and, on the other hand, the establishment of a democracy based on the role of values. Will the networked society be a step in the direction of the realization of this goal? From this point of view it is interesting that each bifurcation in the past resulted in people who benefited from it and in people who became victims. The neolithic revolution led to extraordinary gains in the field of the arts. It led to the construction of pyramids for the pharaohs but also to common graves for the common people. However, slavery probably also started with the neolithic civilization and has continued up to this day. Similarly, the industrial civilization led to the development of the proletariat in addition to increased wealth.

To conclude, I would like to formulate some questions:

1. Who will benefit from the networked society? Will it lower the wealth gap between nations?
2. What will be the effect of the networked society on individual creativity?
3. A recent poll has shown that, for the large majority of people, the hope of the third millenium is for greater harmony between man and nature and amongst humans. How will the networked society affect this harmony? For me, these are not only abstract questions, but also guidelines for reflection and action.

Finally I want to express my admiration for the work of Immanuel Wallerstein. We need to break with traditional wisdom. The work of Immanuel Wallerstein is full of new perspectives. I can only wish that he will be able to continue his seminal work for many years to come.

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A Method for Studying Social Actors

Alain Touraine

INTRODUCTION

So little agreement exists on what constitutes sociology that it seems impossible to define its specific methods. We can however proceed through a series of eliminations. Light has been shed on many types of social behavior as economic studies have taken more interest in issues of social stratification and mobility or in consumer behavior, and as they increasingly incorporate elaborate quantitative analysis into this type of data. Correlations between social statuses and social behavior tell us about the logic of the system, yet not about that of the actors. Hence, we must imagine other methods in order to reach the actor as an autonomous being, as an agent of transformation of his environment and of his own situation, as a creator of imaginary worlds, as capable of referring to absolute values or of being involved in love relations.

Such practices and behavior require another type of analysis which we may call historical. These last decades have witnessed the development of cultural history, sometimes named historical anthropology. Similar to economic or political history, such an approach has proceeded through the construction of vast units, defined as cultures or phases, in a process of evolution. But sociology cannot be identified with such an historical approach that describes the inner logic of social or economic ensembles. Sociology can limit itself neither to the study of rational behavior nor to that of the internal logic of a society or of a particular culture.
This double dissociation leads us to a classical definition of sociology. Of course, sociology is the study of social relations, to the extent that such relations are established between two or more actors and that such relations are meaningful and take place within a social framework defined either as a social order, as a process of social change, or as both at once. All social relations are limited on two sides: one is never free to do absolutely anything; there exists no society without limits, norms and institutions. There exist no purely creative social relations. But, at the same time, behavior is not determined. The intentions and the values upon which social actions are based can never be entirely reduced to norms. If such norms were sovereign, there would be no deviance, no invention, no claims, no change. Thus we can broadly and initially define the specific domain of sociology (without undermining in any way the importance of socio-economic and socio-historical studies) as the study of the relations between social determinism and freedom, between the application of social norms and the reference to human values, between institutional order and practices that voluntarily deviate from such norms. We must therefore stress that, within the present constellation of the social sciences, sociology is concerned with the study of actors and communication, while economy and history analyze the mechanisms and organization of a great variety of different systems. Such a definition is sufficient for us to ask ourselves what is the specific method of sociological research. The answer to that question will help us to understand better the object of sociology.

THE ACTOR OUTSIDE OF THE SYSTEM

Notwithstanding those schools of thought that reduce social action to rational choices of an economic nature, or to the manifestation of cultural patterns or social institutions considered to be determinants of individual and collective action, we constantly face the question: how does the distancing from established norms lead to creative freedom, rejection of old rules or non socially regulated emotions and finally to the creation of new norms? This problem is central because all forms of social communication produce change. For communication exists only to the extent that the original message is altered through the interaction between the speakers. Yet change is made up of two complementary aspects: the destruction of established norms and the construction of new ones. Sociology can accept neither extreme interactionism, doing away with any reference to social norms in the course of the exchange, nor can it accept an extreme sociological determinism, which reduces change to the confrontation with an enemy, to a cultural transformation imposed from without. The major difficulty for sociology is to combine order and change, creativity and conformity.

This explains why sociology has more and more distanced itself from definitions of social actors which refer to their statuses, to the roles they play or are expected to play. This change of perspective is characterized by the passage from a system-oriented sociology to an actor-oriented one, by the substitution as a central approach of “actor's projects” for “social situations.” These projects combine in the most diverse manner a desire for integration and the defense of one’s own identities. The actor tries to attribute a social meaning in harmony with his own self-image. Sociology has thus come very close to social psychology, to the point of incorporating it within its realm of study. Let us take an example. We speak of immigrants (even though they may be born in the country), of the banlieues or inner cities (even though such definitions are often rejected by those concerned), or of marginalization (which deprives the actor of his autonomy). Moreover, in all countries, interesting research analyzes the behavior of those who are considered as foreigners and of those who react to their arrival, often through xenophobia. But the two dominant approaches are to consider immigrants solely as victims of inequality, injustice and prejudice, or to study the various phases of their integration and assimilation. However, studies have shown both the diversity of responses to a situation and the frequency of initiatives that lead these victims to become actors by constantly redefining their horizon, their possibility for action and the nature of the obstacles facing them. Actors, in this case as in many others, are not defined by their conformity to rules and norms, but by a relation to themselves, by their capacity to constitute themselves as actors, capable of changing their environment and of reinforcing their autonomy.

To recognize the absence of correspondence between situation and actor leads us to an even more profound change in sociological analysis. We have been accustomed to define social behavior in terms of oppositions, which, in one way or another, corresponds to a general opposition between tradition and modernity. Such an approach implies that in order to understand an actor one must be able to place him or her on one side or the other of
the axis that separates tradition from modernity. This means that actors are defined in the same terms which characterize the society to which they belong.

If, on the contrary, we separate the categories that are applied to actors from those which describe situations, we are led to define actors’ attitudes vis-à-vis a social organization or a norm by the idea of ambivalence. The notion, first used by Simmel, is once again gaining importance after having been somewhat ignored. For ambivalence implies the impossible identification of the actor with a situation defined in historical, economic or social terms. The actors, led by categories pertaining to themselves and not to a situation, are in a state of ambivalence, both accepting and rejecting any situation in which they are placed. We both demand and reject progress, modernization, order and all other categories that define a situation in normative and “objective” terms, at the same time as reconstructing the actor’s ambivalence with regard to all aspects of his situation and the type of reference to their interests, interpersonal relations, or values.

This explains why qualitative research is once again gaining ground after a period during which quantitative studies were predominant. Such studies are of course indispensable, although for economic rather than for sociological analysis, since they separate various types of behavior rather than undertake the necessary recomposition of the actor’s “project.”

**The Meaning of Action**

There is in all forms of social action, and therefore in all processes of social communication, an element of non-conformity, an innovative claim or the assertion of a non-social principle and a claim for the limitation of society’s norms or institutions. This formulation is extreme, maybe excessive, and might even appear to draw us away from the field of sociology and enclose us within the realm of ideology and of the actors’ subjectivity. There is, however, no other basic characteristic of what we call social action. Therefore, sociological research must first of all uncover this reference to a non-social principle, whatever it may be. Is this non-social principle individual interest or principles deemed to be superior to social rules? Are they both able to displace or transform social norms?

The answer must be negative. Action can seldom be explained in pure terms of individual interest, especially when it is collective. Those who seem to defend “interests” may go sacrificing their own lives, when confronted with the resistance of their adversaries. On the other side, the degree of conviction is linked to the context in which it is expressed, making this more or less radical, or, on the contrary, open to debate, so that both interpretations of the non-social principle of social action are unsatisfactory. What we observe is different: the more an actor feels his or her self-esteem threatened, the more norms and institutions appear to him or her unfair or illegitimate. He or she becomes convinced that social norms have not in fact been created for the common good, but rather that they are the expression of a power which endangers freedom, responsibility and dignity of people. In its most extreme form, this conflict can lead to a holy war, or to a conflict based on the opposition of friends and enemies, as defined by Carl Schmitt.

This brief analysis brings us directly to the elaboration of one of sociology’s specific methods. It is the aim of the sociologist to uncover claims, conflicts or debates, which are often overshadowed by the authority of social norms and by repression which is imposed for the sake of institutions or of those who hold positions of power. If we admit that the reference to a non-social principle can be neither entirely unconscious (this would make all analysis arbitrary), nor completely conscious (this would reduce sociological enquiry to the study of opinions), the sociologist’s aim must be to unveil or to reinforce behavior and practices that are latent or reduced to biased expressions.

We are often tempted to define the role of the sociologist as passive: it is he who must create the conditions under which might best be expressed the “deep” feelings of the actors. Yet this tends to give free range to the influence of institutional norms. Studies that are conducted in a “cold” situation tend to produce results showing the importance of conformist behavior, not withstanding that a wave of protest or strikes may disrupt this apparent state of tranquility in the space of a few days. Must one intervene in the heat of the action then? The opposite criticism might then be formulated, since when engaged in conflict or when affirming his beliefs, the actor has a militant representation of the opposition between friends and foes. After the death of Robespierre the Revolution soon followed a different course and different attitudes were expressed.

Faced with these contradictory objections, the sociologist must create an adequate context, not only by choosing the time and space for the observa-
tion, but by directly intervening. This means that he will study the behavior he has himself induced, not by taking the place of real actors, but rather by offering an interpretation of their own conduct. The researcher must bring actors to “discover” the highest possible meaning of their own action. If he proceeded in the opposite manner he would only create resistance to his intervention. By seeking, on the contrary, to uncover a positive meaning of an action, he might risk seducing the group. However, such a risk is limited, for authentic reactions soon reappear and reject the effects of seduction as overly optimistic hypotheses on the part of the researcher lead to rejection by disappointed or demoralized actors.

Such an approach is frequent among historians. While they always show how a historical figure or a social practice is representative of its time period, they are even more concerned, as is Jacques Le Goff studying Saint Louis, with uncovering the most personal, and at the same time the most innovative, aspects of a personal behavior. Since the sociologist studies the present, and can therefore create situations and documents rather than be entirely dependent upon pre-existing documents, it is his responsibility to be more “conscious” than those he is studying. However, he must, in the end, confront the actors themselves with his analysis and must finally determine whether it re-enforces or weakens the actor’s capacity for action and analysis.

Such is the definition of sociological intervention, whether socio-psychologically oriented on the inner life of a group, or truly sociological in that it introduces actors who in some way question institutionalized norms by claiming rights which must command social behavior. This is true even when interpersonal relations, such as family life, are concerned. Over the past twenty years, many such studies—known as sociological interventions—have been carried out. They have taken the following form: Over a long period of time two researchers study a group of individuals having participated in the same collective action, yet who do not form an actual unit, such as a strike committee or the directors of an existing association. In order to prevent the group from resorting to a self-indulgent self-consciousness one does not question it on its attitudes or opinions, but rather the group is directly confronted with partners or enemies chosen by the members themselves and whose presence serves to place the actors in a similar situation to that which has already been experienced. At the same time, the presence of researchers constitutes a direct reminder that actors are in a situation of analysis. While one of the researchers helps the group to make its positions more explicit, the other formulates a hypothesis concerning the highest possible meaning of the action in question. When this researcher communicates his hypothesis to the group, a favorable reaction is generally obtained, since the group feels flattered by a judgment that gives such importance to its action. One then lets such an easy acceptance settle, and observes the level of implication at which the group is able to become stabilized. This requires a great deal of time and the confrontation of several groups as well as prolonged analysis of whether or not the hypothesis helps the group to interpret its own action efficiently.

This intervention goes much farther than simple interviews, even prolonged ones, since it recreates a social situation. An entire group, and not simply an individual, participates in the intervention. Rather than simply being confronted with questions, the group is forced to interact with actual partners who hold positive or negative positions in relation to itself. Only after having reconstructed its actual experience under the sociologists’ gaze does the group, with the help of one of them, engage in an interpretation of itself that will lead the other sociologist to formulate a hypothesis. When this hypothesis is solemnly presented to the group, significant reactions are forthcoming whose meaning appears only after a certain period of time during which the group will have had the opportunity to react to a new situation. One may then observe whether the intervention has increased or diminished the group’s capacity to understand its situation.

This brief description of a method that, despite its length and complexity, has already been applied a number of times, leads us to formulate a general proposition: the best test of the accuracy of a sociological interpretation is its ability to increase actors’ awareness and their capacity for action, since the very definition of an actor is his ability to construct and to justify behavior that cannot be reduced to the simple application of rules and norms. The historian has a better capacity than the sociologist to make use of the dimension of time, to verify a hypothesis formulated at a certain time by applying it to other time periods. But the sociologist, even though his perspective may not have the same temporal breadth, has the advantage of being able to modify his hypotheses according to the actors’ responses.

This method, which is characteristic of an actor-oriented sociology, is
far removed from more conventional methods. Yet, this is not so true if we include in economic analysis a large part of what is referred to as sociology. In fact an increasing portion of writings which are considered sociological are concerned with social actors, and many among them deal with collective action and even with social movements carried out in the name of dominant or dominated actors. This explains why, for some time now, one of the main sociological debates has posed the question of whether dominated categories possess a critical awareness of their own subordination or whether they are alienated, manipulated, deprived of the knowledge of their own situation and of their possibility for action? It has often been said that, for instance, Jews who faced extermination, the unemployed, colonized people or prisoners had or have a limited awareness of their own situation, given the extent of their victimization. This has led many sociologists to consider that a power structure can be strong enough so as to destroy any potential for resistance among its victims. An opposite view, which I am presently advocating, says that no group, whether in a dominant or subordinate position, is entirely lacking in the awareness of hierarchical social relations and of the forms of domination in which it takes part. Sociologists, like historians, often help us to hear the voices of those whom many believe to have definitely lost the possibility for expression. In particular, we discovered that the ‘silence’ of Jews in ghettos and camps did not exist. Thus, that which at first sight appears to be an event, part of a series or of a larger ensemble, is discovered to be either the will of an elite for destruction or for domination, or the result of conflicting social claims, or of what might be called a political process of decision making.

As sociological analysis advances, what was previously called a social situation is shattered and the impersonal becomes intentional, the ‘objective’ reality becomes simply one of the many possible outcomes. Are we not following such a movement when, behind the urban organization, we see the effects of urban policies, social unrest, speculation and political compromise? It is, for the same reason, possible to discover, as did Michel Crozier, that behind the organizing rules of an company are hidden strategies, conflicts and innovation. The study of social movements constitutes the heart of a sociology of the actor. Yet such an approach is not limited to the direct study of opinions, because these are influenced by institutionalized expressions of social life and mass communication processes.

A Method for Studying Social Actors

REACHING THE SUBJECT

We must proceed even farther than this double movement of decomposition and re-composition of social norms and reach the really central principle of such an analysis: the idea that any form of action, to the extent that it is not limited to the conventional application of norms and rules, implies the recourse to a non-social principle. We must first set aside the notion of rational choice. Not because such choices are unimportant both on the collective and the individual level, but because this domain pertains most notably to economic analysis. Liberals and Marxists converge toward the economically oriented analysis of social behavior, which cannot be but marginal to the sociologist.

Very far from this “rationalism,” many forms of social conduct refer to a principle of equality that cannot be reduced to the ideas of general good and people’s sovereignty. In the 1789 French Declaration of Human Rights two principles are juxtaposed: “all men are born and remain free and equal in rights” (article 1), and the principle according to which “sovereignty resides essentially within the Nation” (article 3). This article, inspired by the Rousseauian perspective, leads to the idea that good and evil are determined according to the interest of society, an idea expounded by Proudhon and then Durkheim. The first article, on the other hand, refers to Locke’s idea of natural law, and thus poses limits to social power. The example of Human Rights, on which are founded both the French and the American republican systems may be generalized. Religious claims and sentiments cannot be reduced to a reference to the common good, in spite of the interpretations of so many sociologists. If religion expresses a certain sacralization of the social domain, it also refers to a divine power to limit or fight any social and political power. In other contexts, such as the workers’ movement, the liberation movements of colonized peoples, or even women’s liberation, the main principle is that of equality more than the idea of justice, for justice embodies the equitable relation between what each and everyone contributes and what they receive.

Sociology, however, cannot directly call upon transcendental principle. It cannot assume the existence of God or of a perfect society. The only way to avoid such a theological perspective is by interpreting all forms of resistance against society as the search for a self-created human being who is also a creator of his social environment to the extent that he is involved in conflicts,
negotiations and the struggle for freedom in the name of these rights. Far from discovering within society itself the defining principle of good and evil, we are referring here to what I have called the Subject, or in other words, to individual and collective claims to the right to become free actors.

The need to develop an actor and a subject-oriented society results from the fact that the idea of a norm producing social system has become weak and is shaken as capitalism and industrialization have progressively deprived legal and political institutions of their control over social life. While sociology of systems and sociology of actors cannot be entirely mutually exclusive, the latter has a superior capacity for discovery in present day society.

Yet how can the researcher grasp, beyond his social roles, the human being's call for “dignity” without giving way to ideological claims, all the more noble and sincere since they are distinct from actual behavior? The answer is that the Subject has no positive content, for such a content would inevitably be overpowered by social determinants. As I have consistently argued, the Subject is a recourse, a refusal, a liberation, a direct or indirect call to the Subject’s creative freedom against social statuses and social roles.

Such a revelation of the Subject is all the more necessary at a time when one increasingly perceives a tendency for political and economic domination, manipulation and cultural alienation. Are we not living in a world of power, resistance to power and conflicting social movements rather than in a universe of rules, institutions and socialization processes in which so many sociologists imprison themselves? What the researcher can reveal is not the efficiency of social control but the resistance against the established order, through testimonies of marginalized categories, through the resistance of dissidents, of victims, of theocracies, of participants in labor movements or campaigns of decolonization. Isn’t it true that such critical and liberating action quickly becomes mixed up with ideological discourses; but the strength of resistance, of protest as its own end survive all efforts of destruction and manipulation?

All forms of such a refusal, of such a call to Human Rights constitute the core of social movements, of political programs and of movements which are limited at the public opinion level. Supposedly self-regulating social life is increasingly invaded on the one hand by the rise of the Subject and on the other by the logic of war and power. The aim of sociological intervention is to bring forth demands for reforms in the midst of socially determined behavior, of negations and denials on which is based behavior that refers primarily to principles but weakens as it transforms itself into strategies and political management. Such a case lately appeared in France. With almost no former organization, high-school students arose and for several days one could hear the strength of their appeal, expressed as the desire to be put at the center of the school system, to be actors of its transformation, to gain greater autonomy and to have better communication with their teachers. But rapidly the need to elaborate a strategy and to communicate with the media led them to formulate increasingly quantitative demands. They demanded more teachers, a lighter course load, and the improvement of the material conditions of their high schools. From this point on the social movement rapidly fell apart.

On a larger scale, and in a former period, working-class consciousness expressed the defense of their “craft” against managerial organization of their work. This working-class consciousness was generally hidden either behind legal demands or behind the dream of a proletarian and revolutionary society. Such a transformation of principles into attempts to reconstruct social norms is present everywhere. The highest form of struggle is not that which is most ideologically charged. On the contrary, it directly questions social organization, but for basic, non-social reasons (like the defense of justice or dignity) which always remain beyond the domain of negotiation. All social movements start by referring to the unacceptable, the intolerable, before moving on to the phase of possible negotiations and in the middle of these, one can always spot the presence of the non negotiable, that which is opposed to social norms. Even the most moderate actors appeal to a non-negotiable principle, to the recognition of a moral principle opposed to the norms which impose and legitimate social organization.

What we have said about sociological intervention clearly indicates that the relation of the sociologist to his object of research is different from that which can be found in most other fields of research, which do not need to consider the consciousness of those under scrutiny, either because such a consciousness does not exist, or because one is dealing with “natural sciences of man,” such as structuralist linguistics or anthropology. Sociology does not seek to do away with subjectivity. It gains the necessary distance from
subjectivity by delving deeply enough within it to reach what constitutes
the individual, or the group, as an actor. We are not stretching the limits
of our vocabulary when we propose to go beyond subjectivity to discover
subjectivation, that is the self-representation of an individual or a group as
an actor, trying to impose their own ends to their environment. So that the
sociologist’s relation to his object-subject is more difficult to define than the
relationship of other human sciences to their object of study.

What proof does the sociologist who follows our definition have of the
validity of his interpretation, and how does he protect himself against his
own subjectivity, his opinions or beliefs? One first and elementary answer
is that the study of a social actor or movement requires the participation
of several research teams who analyze similar groups or documents. As we
have already mentioned, such research is based on the principle that the
main hypothesis may be rejected or validated by responses to situations that
arise after the central moment of the research. As far as sociological inter-
vention is concerned, I have known of several cases in which the hypothesis
presented to the actors turned out to be false or required readjustment. Our
own publications, and those of other researchers, testify to this fact.

But this answer is not sufficient. How can the researcher be certain that
he did not create a system of interpretations that fooled both researchers
and actors? This can happen in particular if the dissolution or transforma-
tion of the actors cancelled the possibility of the hypotheses. Notwithstanding
the fact that any research team must critically evaluate itself, the only
possible answer is that the social actor is never defined on his own, by his
assertions, his representations or even his practices, but is defined primarily
through his relationships to other actors, whether different or similar, yet to
whom this actor is connected by a specific relationship, in the field of action
which is studied. For example, to study union members, we confront them
with employers or with non-unionized workers or members of a different
union. This constitutes the second phase of sociological intervention: the
reconstruction of the set of social relations, of conflicts, compromises or pat-
terns in which the actor builds himself as an actor. Once again, the aim is to
discover the actor as actor, in other words as a participant in “the production
of society.” This is done most directly through the study of the mechanisms
that shape political decisions and public or private policies.

The reconstruction of the processes and meaning of decision-making is
one of the best means for validating hypotheses concerning the meaning of
the action in question. After having attempted to reach the Subject through
and beyond his intentional actions, we must proceed to the study of organ-
ized activity and even of institutions and texts. Much like the historian,
the sociologist seeks, even in what appears to be the most “institutional-
ized” value orientations, signs of actions and social relations of those who
are agents of the “institutionalization” of values and cultural orientations.
Sociological analysis loses some of its strength if it separates the two follow-
ing moments: the upward oriented movement from the system to the actor,
we might even say to the Subject, and the descent toward an explanation of
organized or even institutionalized forms of social life. There is a constant
movement between detachment from established social norms and the
reformulation of different norms. This makes social change possible.

Under what conditions can a sociologist accompany or even precede
this double movement of getting out of social organization, and—through a
transformation of orientations and expectations—the descent toward mod-
ified forms of social organization? The first condition has nothing to do
with the sociologist himself. He must observe serious disruptions, confl icts,
failed negotiations, etc. From this moment on, the following question is
posed: where will this lead to? Which level of social existence does it reject?
Is it the organizational one, in other words the definition of the relative posi-
tion of each actor and his rights and obligations? Or is it the institutional
level, defined as the decision-making system which transforms the way in
which an organization functions? Or, does the refusal or conflict reach the
level of the cultural orientations of a society and of its main power rela-
tions? The sociologist, taking into account available documents, and most
of all what he has heard during numerous group reunions, especially those
in which group members exchange views with their friends or foes, must
intervene and define what appears to him to be the highest possible level
of action.

In fact, sociological intervention aims at uncovering the existence of a
social movement, in other words, of opposition to the general orientations
and to the system of power relations. But it is also possible to demonstrate
that an action, while carried out under the guise of a social movement, is in
fact a more limited demand or a political claim whose aim is only to modify
the decision-making system. Once the researcher is convinced of the validity
of a hypothesis, he seeks to convince the group. But quickly after this success, he must observe whether the group is capable of reinterpreting its action and of analyzing its potential in the proposed terms or not. This formula does not only apply to a particular research technique. Whether one is studying policy formation, work relations, family ties, the treatment of minorities, or institutions of an educational, religious or legal nature, the main test of the validity of one’s hypothesis is its ability to increase the capacity for action of those being studied, the prerequisite being a better understanding of the meaning of their own activity. The main danger is that the researcher is so active that he seeks to convince and therefore to seduce; that is why he must be under the surveillance of a second researcher whose role is to reinforce the group’s resistance and help it to voice its doubts and criticisms.

FIELDS OF RESEARCH

The researcher who engages in this type of research is motivated first of all by the rejection of positivist concepts of social organization, and by the belief that such organization is constantly created and undone through relations between actors who are never defined entirely according to the place they occupy within an organization. Is this really too much to ask of members of an ever changing society, full of technological innovation, social conflicts, and cultural transformations? The real difficulty is how to distinguish between various processes and levels of change, from those who appeal to personal interests (and who therefore seek to accomplish rational choices), to those who oppose the ways in which the main material and cultural resources of society are used and withheld by such and such a group, class or social elite. Initially, there is a wide difference between those who seek to prove the existence of rational choices, those who want to understand strategies for change, those who wish to uncover truly political conflicts and those who look for social movements per se. Each of these positions, of these hypotheses, corresponds to a very specific sociological outlook. But all these approaches are part of an actor-oriented sociology, that I believe to be on its way to replacing the traditional system-oriented sociology.

Each analytical orientation refers to a particular method. They differ essentially according to the representation they present of social life. The study of rational choice supposes an individual actor, even though he must seek to fulfill his personal interest through collective environment. The study of strategies supposes an organizational domain characterized by constraints. At a higher level of social integration, the study of political realities involves actors who are already connected to one another by a relatively clear definition of their conflicts of interest. Finally, the study of movements requires that they be defined by social conflicts, while at the same time sharing with their enemies an explicit reference to the same cultural and social stakes. The higher up we move in the analysis, the more the relations between actors become defined in general terms. We could even reason the other way around, by proclaiming as the highest levels of analysis those who place the actor in a struggle for the appropriation of the cultural orientations and resources of a society.

This immense extension of the field, and of the general method of a sociology of actors, does however have its limits. There exists a large domain of sociological research which has conquered much territory, especially within French sociology, and that refuses the concept of social actors and rejects even more the idea of the Subject. For these sociologists, the domination of power is complete. It imposes its own logic on all actors and turns them into agents of domination or into bearers of false consciousness. For these sociologists, social change can only arise from the demise of the social system, weakened by its own contradictions, or through the rise of new forms of production. The more industrial society has grown beyond mass production to include mass consumption and communication, the weaker institutional safeguards and roles expectations have become.

Let us mention the role of teachers as defined by these sociologists. Often convinced of their own responsibility for transmitting norms which serve a certain form of domination, they nonetheless resist the pressure of those in power while at the same contributing to their domination. Socialization is none other than the interiorization of norms which conform to the interest of those in power. The most influential works of Michel Foucault showed how the weakening of absolute power and authority acting from without gave way to the interiorization of norms and categories so consistent with the interests of those in power that they need less and less to punish, since they already manipulate minds and attitudes through mass culture, and even through social sciences. This is a brilliant argument that often speaks the truth, but which we have no reason to adopt completely, for it has never been proven that internalized social control is all powerful, that
actors can be reduced to mere mechanisms of norm-oriented production and consumption.

Change exists and is inseparable from the agents of change, led forth by values, hope, anger, analyses or strategies. Yet neither is there any reason to wholeheartedly accept a sociology of actors as free and creative beings. It is impossible to specify the extent of the territory occupied by such an actor-oriented sociology, yet we can assert that it is growing. In any case, purely critical sociologists name only very minor groups when they designate the agents who are supposed to bring about the collapse of the system, weakened by its own contradictions, even if these sociologists are occasionally carried away by a wave of popular, yet not purely radical, discontent.

Although it is always risky to explain the state of the social sciences in reference to historical circumstances, one may suspect that over the last fifty years the important influence of economic facts and analyses has naturally given rise to a reaction of purely critical sociology. The fragility of former social movements and main actors does not favor the development of an actor- and social-movement oriented sociology and its weakness enhances the influence of sociologists who try to demonstrate the absolute domination of power-holders. One can imagine that the decline of liberal illusions and the growing need to develop more voluntaristic economic policies will lead, as they have already done, to a renewal of actor-oriented sociology against which it is no longer possible to refer to the supposed vacuity of the social and political scene. But a period of high tension and of great danger can also bring movements to depend on outdated modes of analysis and to do away with the renewal of vocabulary and strategy. As Marx observed, this tendency to fall back upon the past has often been observed in French social history, but it soon exhausts the possibility for action and analysis.

HISTORICAL VERIFICATION

It is tempting to assert from the start that there are visible traces of an action, and then to consider the “internal logic of a situation” as an obstacle limiting the action’s effects. Such an approach can be useful in the case of very specific events whose cause and effects are closely linked, such as when a conflict in a work situation leads to a collective agreement. In such a case one can judge the nature of the conflict through the effects produced. But in more global contexts, one needs a more elaborate analysis of the situation in order to assert the effects of an action, and thus its nature. The more limited the definition of the situation, the easier it is to determine what might alter it. The most favorable solution is that in which the definition of the situation makes use of categories that can also be applied to the action one is seeking to explain. An economic emergency provokes relatively predictable social reactions. If these reactions are much more extreme than expected, then the correct explanation does not lie only within the economic situation itself. This feeling of estrangement from classical explanations is our best guide to research. When there exists no obvious cause for an action, then we are forced to consider, first of all, the nature of the action under consideration. The vision of history as a continuous process of change is so weak, so undemanding, that we are immediately forced to analyze the intrinsic nature of the action, before we seek to discover its effects, too easily characterized in such a superficially and arbitrarily defined situation.

Thus we easily go from the apparently accurate idea that the cause and effects of an action are revealed by historical events, to the opposite idea that the flow of events can be understood only by isolating various kinds of action. The sociologist must analyze a system of agents and the conflict or non-conflict relations between actors who, within a shared field of cultural resources, all seek to influence their social use. The more elaborate such an analysis becomes, the easier it will be to find its equivalent in the analysis of events. If a certain type of action leaves no trace at any of the levels of social life (organizational, institutional, historical, and class-based) we must prudently conclude that we are dealing with representations and ideology rather than with action. This happens frequently. I defended the idea that the main interpretation given in the heat of the moment during the massive French strike in the winter of 1995 was a false one. The absence of continuity, the failure to prolong the action, are important, if still partial, arguments to reinforce my interpretation. Such an interpretation was based on the definition of the action, of its goals, its rallying calls and its own discourse. It is obvious that the more we construct political, economic and social schemes of analysis, the richer will become historical analysis, since, rather than describing change, such analysis must observe the complex relations between diverse types of social action.

ON THE USE OF COMPARISON

Nothing appears farther removed from the orientations we have exposed than comparitivism. Such an approach seems to combine the defects of both
evolutionism and of culturalism. Either it defines very large units, such as
religions or empires, in order to show what distinguishes them, or, on the
contrary, it places such entities on an evolutionary path which generally
leads to the observer’s own culture or society as an ‘end of society.’ How
numerous are the French, British, German or American books that con-
clude to the superiority of their own civilization, never entirely equaled
by others! Nonetheless comparisons are indispensable and ever-present
because they make it possible to separate the analysis of actors and situa-
tions from the understanding of processes of change, two approaches that
are too often confused. To speak of industrial society is to define the actors’
social relations and the ultimate meaning of their interactions. To speak, on
the contrary, of capitalist, socialist, or dependent societies, is to analyze and
compare processes of social transformation, such as industrialization. This
latter type of study can proceed only through comparison, since it implies
the existence of several paths to modernization or to political change. On
the contrary, a societal type is defined less through its contrast with other
types of society, than in terms of its internal dynamic, and thus of the forma-
tion and behavior of its actors.

These two types of study are complementary, since industrial society
cannot be entirely disconnected from processes of modernization, even
though the West likes to believe that it represents modernity itself and not
simply one form of modernization. The comparative method is the only
security against the failure to differentiate between the way a society func-
tions and its processes of change. This explains the importance of a sociol-
ogy of development. It has been rejected because it was too often dominated
by an ideology of modernization which considered that all roads lead to
London, New York or Moscow, and that ‘under-developed’ countries would
overcome their condition only if they were to follow in the path toward
progress set by developed countries. It is by rejecting such a sociocentric
vision of modernization that development studies may be useful for under-
standing how the unity of each societal type is combined with the diversity
of historical processes that give rise to each type. The most we can say is
that historians are more easily attracted by the comparative method, while
sociologists center their studies on the construction of systems of actors.

Sociology was able to formulate a definition of itself when it was func-
tionalist, in other word, when good and evil were defined in reference to
social utility. After Talcott Parsons, the last great representative of this
functionalist approach, sociology has accepted too often weak definitions
of itself as the study of contemporary societies, as the reconstruction of
social evolution, and sometimes simply as the analysis of national societies.
A limited definition of the sociological approach, as I have presented it here,
makes it more difficult to analyze its relationship to other disciplines, since
they overlap the social domain from all sides. It is more useful to describe
sociology through its method, rather than through its object. Some may
consider such an attempt as too ambitious and will accept the disappearance
of sociology as an analytical field. Such an idea was largely accepted at the
time when post-structuralism was triumphant, and there seemed to remain
only, on the one hand structural approaches such as linguistics and anthro-
pology, and on the other the historical approach which emphasizes the
uniqueness of each situation. This epoch and its representations now seem
very far away. Consequently, it is not an exaggeration to predict that the
specificity of sociology as the study of social actors and their relations will
be recognized. Sociology will succeed in making a place for itself only if it is
willing to engage in a debate over its methods. Not in order to give way to
self-criticism and self-destruction, but in order to define itself through the
search for autonomous actors, between economic determinism, the logics of
power and religious, political or class-oriented theories.
Pouvoir, autorité et convention d’obéissance

Le pouvoir est-il un concept mal défini, polymorphe (voire amorphe [Weber 1978:53]) et, finalement, “un concept décevant” (March 1966: 70; 1988:6; Williamson 1985:237; 1996:39, 238-9)? Il n’est, en effet, que rarement pris en compte centralement par la théorie économique n’étant pas considéré comme un concept général susceptible de présenter des formes diverses. Il y a, certes, l’exception du pouvoir de marché ou du pouvoir de négociation. Mais peut-on, en économie, se contenter de cette forme de pouvoir, négliger d’autres aspects du pouvoir économique et renvoyer toute forme de coercition aux spécialistes des sciences politiques dans la mesure où l’État aurait obtenu le monopole de la violence légitime?

On comprend que ce soit le cas des économistes néo-classiques. Ils ramènent tous les phénomènes économiques à l’échange, considèrent les institutions nécessaires au bon fonctionnement du marché comme données, prennent le marché de concurrence pure et parfaite comme référence. Ils peuvent donc ne retenir que le pouvoir de marché, en faire un “frottement.” D’autre part, n’y a-t-il pas aussi une certaine méfiance de Marx et Engels vis à vis du concept de pouvoir?1 Il y a, certes, des exceptions chez les auteurs hétérodoxes. Tel est en particulier le cas d’institutionnalistes comme Veblen, Commons, Perroux, Galbraith. Cependant, depuis le début des années 1970, les radicaux américains (Marglin 1974-1975; Bowles 1974; Bowles et Gintis 1988; 1993a et b 1994) sont l’exception principale.

1 Voir Engels (1950) pour les critiques des thèses d’Eugen Dühring.
En outre, comment ne pas rappeler ici que des historiens économistes et des économistes historiens de l’École des Annales ont, quant à eux, retenu une conception riche du pouvoir. Tel avait déjà été le cas de Marc Bloch dont d’ailleurs Marglin s’est largement inspiré (Marglin 1974-1975), tel est le cas de Fernand Braudel et d’Immanuel Wallerstein. Pour Fernand Braudel, si dans les “jeux de l’échange” (1979:201, 221, 239; 1985), disons sur les marchés “ordinaires,” la concurrence est le référent, les jeux du capital nous livrent une toute autre logique. Le capital représente la couche supérieure de la sphère économique (souvent la haute finance) qui, “d’en haut,” domine et oriente la production (sans nécessairement la mettre directement en œuvre), dirige les grands courants commerciaux, structure et dynamise l’économie à l’échelle d’une économie-monde. En d’autres termes, le capital est pouvoir.

Quant à Immanuel Wallerstein qui centre son analyse sur l’idée que le capitalisme n’a pu se développer que comme économie-monde (1974 chap.2; 1980; 1989), assimiler le capitalisme au rapport salarial serait erroné puisqu’au contraire le capitalisme se nourrit de l’exploitation des “différentiels” entre un centre où ce rapport social finit par devenir dominant (mais non exclusif) et des périphéries où ce n’est pas le cas. Selon l’expression de Marx, “l’accumulation primitive se continue à l’échelle mondiale,” mais pas seulement à l’échelle mondiale. En d’autres termes, les formes diverses du pouvoir, pouvoir politique, pouvoir économique, formes diverses de coercition, caractérisent les rapports sociaux, internationaux, interentreprises et conditionnent la formation du profit.

L’essentiel est que dans l’optique de Braudel et Wallerstein, la domination du capital s’exerce à travers des relations marchandes dont la norme est aux antipodes de la libre concurrence. D’un point de vue statique, la norme n’est plus la formation d’un prix de libre concurrence, mais la “lutte des prix” (Wallerstein 1985:29), l’échange inégal, le pouvoir de négociation. D’un point de vue dynamique, les entreprises développent des stratégies orientées par la recherche d’un pouvoir économique en s’appuyant sur le pouvoir qu’elles détiennent déjà. Elles tendent au monopole par tous les moyens: les ententes ou la collusion, l’intégration horizontale, l’innovation, des formes diverses de concurrence déloyale souvent, voire la coercition pure et simple, enfin les privilèges octroyés par l’État. Le règne du capital suppose pratiquement toujours des relations avec la puissance publique et des relations internationales inégales.
stratégiques en ajoutant que l’on est généralement en présence de réseaux de pouvoirs et de résistances (Foucault 1994). Le pouvoir paraît souvent lié à une fonction (le pouvoir du maître sur le serviteur, du professeur sur l’élève, du patron sur l’employé). Avec une optique microsociale à la R. Dahl, non seulement le pouvoir n’est plus assimilé à un attribut que l’on possède ou non, mais il devient impossible de penser cette forme de pouvoir que l’on nomme relation d’autorité. On perd ce qui faisait la richesse de l’analyse de Max Weber. Celui-ci distinguait le pouvoir (Macht, Power) défini comme la capacité pour un individu de faire prévaloir sa volonté (un concept “sociologiquement amorphe”), et l’autorité (Herrschaft), celle du “maître” (Herr) qu’il définissait comme la capacité de faire exécuter un commandement (Weber 1978:53). Il précisait que l’autorité est (généralement) liée à l’existence d’une organisation et qu’elle n’est stabilisée que si elle est légitime (Weber 1978:212 et sq.).

Dans ce travail, nous ne reprendrons pas la notion d’autorité légitime, mais à la différence de R. Dahl qui abolit la distinction entre le pouvoir et l’autorité, nous définirons l’autorité comme un pouvoir institutionnel, intégré dans une règle durable (les institutions étant définies comme les contraintes d’origines humaines qui structurent l’interaction politique, économique et sociale [North 1993:97]),2 en cohérence avec le recours à “l’individualisme institutionnel” à la Agassi (1973). Avec une analyse du type de celle de Robert Dahl, le “pouvoir” est un concept type de l’individualisme méthodologique inutilisable pour cerner l’autorité. Il s’agit ici, non de revenir à l’ancienne conception, mais de retrouver autrement ce dont elle rendait compte.

D’une façon très générale, quels sont les différents moyens dont dispose A pour obtenir une action de B:

(1) On peut lui proposer quelque chose en échange. On aboutit à un pouvoir d’achat plutôt qu’au pouvoir stricto sensu.3 Il y aura pouvoir de marché s’il y a asymétrie dans les conditions économiques qui président à la transaction, cette asymétrie permettant d’obtenir des termes de l’échange plus favorables (Crozier et Friedberg 1977:69), la transaction apparaissant toujours bénéfique aux échangistes (à la limite l’un des deux échangistes est seulement non perdant).

(2) On peut employer la coercition. En première approximation, il s’agit d’imposer à quelqu’un une conduite satisfaisante pour le détenteur du pouvoir et pour laquelle il n’opterait pas de son plein gré (par son choix non contraint, il préférerait faire x, mais il fera y).

(3) On peut utiliser le pouvoir communicationnel qui consiste à amener l’autre à modifier sa position en agissant sur les informations, d’où la diversité de ces formes. Ainsi, le fait de connaître les cartes, les préférences et les fins de l’autre, sans qu’il s’en doute, tout en cachant son jeu, ses préférences, ses buts donne un pouvoir de négociation. D’autre part, la conviction peut permettre de persuader l’autre qu’il a intérêt à agir ainsi, l’amène à découvrir son intérêt mieux compris (“éducation, pouvoir de l’expert”). Il existe enfin une persuasion rusée, la manipulation ou la séduction.

Ces trois modalités font jouer différemment la liberté des individus. Avec le pouvoir de marché, l’échangiste “dominé” reste libre, mais la liberté de B n’est-elle pas affectée lorsque sur l’échange lui-même pèsent des circonstances qui altèrent le rapport d’échange? On pourrait dire “classiquement” que, s’il reste libre formellement, il ne l’est pas réellement. Quant au pouvoir communicationnel, il laisse intacte l’idée que B se fait de sa liberté. S’il a été manipulé ou trompé, il reste persuadé d’agir en pleine liberté de choix.

La coercition aboutit à une subordination formelle puisque B a conscience de faire l’acte et parce qu’il y a été contraint du fait du recours à la violence physique (directement ou indirectement) ou “morale.” Cependant, le concept de liberté est ambigu. Si l’acheteur (A) d’une maison est un membre de la Gestapo, le vendeur (B) peut être amené à la donner pour rien. Mais si B est amené à obéir à une telle injonction, ne peut-on dire qu’il reste libre puisqu’il peut toujours refuser en acquittant le prix de son refus? Il s’agit donc seulement de savoir ce que l’on met dans la “matrice des gains et pertes” de chacun. Mais avec une telle extension du “libre choix,” le concept de liberté perd tout caractère opératoire et, en particulier, la distinction entre le travailleur libre et le travailleur forcé disparaît.

Comment se fait-il que A puisse obtenir de B une action qu’il n’aurait pas effectuée autrement, comment la soumission de B est-elle obtenue? Par

2 D. C. North distingue les contraintes informelles (sanctions, tabous, coutumes, codes de conduites) et les contraintes formelles (constitutions, lois, droits de propriété).
3 Cependant la célèbre expression de Locke: “money is power” peut prendre des significations diverses: pouvoir d’achat de l’argent, pouvoir de marché de celui qui dispose d’un capital face à celui qui n’en a pas ou pouvoir spécifique du capital qui salarie.
la menace de faire subir à B une sanction, à condition que cette menace soit crédible? Sans doute, mais pas seulement et il est des menaces de types fort différents.

1. La menace d’une sanction crédible


On fait agir les hommes également en leur donnant ou en leur promettant quelque chose en échange (Foucault 1994). Dans ces cas, le lien entre pouvoir et menace crédible n’existe pas ou, du moins, est bien différent (on peut éventuellement menacer de ne pas faire ce à quoi on s’est engagé). La relation entre pouvoir et menace crédible n’existe pas davantage lorsque le pouvoir transite par la communication (la troisième modalité).

En revanche, les deux autres modalités du pouvoir, l’échange avec pouvoir de marché et la coercition, supposent une menace d’une sanction crédible, une menace différente dans ces deux cas. En effet, dans un cas il y a une transaction véritable impliquant un gain réciproque, donc avec une contrepartie directe même si elle n’est pas équivalente (le pouvoir de marché), et dans l’autre cas il n’y a pas d’échange (le policier qui ordonne à l’automobiliste de circuler sous la menace de ne pas (re)contracter).

Dans le cas du pouvoir de marché, la menace d’une sanction crédible est de ne pas (re)contracter, elle est inhérente à la transaction et si B subit le pouvoir de A, c’est que les conditions de l’échange sont telles que, s’il désire effectuer la transaction, il doit passer “sous les fourches caudines” de A. Avec le pouvoir de marché, la menace est donc très particulière puisqu’elle porte sur l’espérance de gain que l’autre partie anticipe de la transaction. Donc si B est libre, normalement égoïste et suffisamment rationnel, il ne peut pas perdre absolument. Et la menace n’est opérante que si B n’a pas d’autres alternatives voisines (exit coûteux [Hirschman 1970]).5

Dans le cas de la coercition, il n’y a pas de contrepartie directe et la violence s’exerce dans la mesure où A contraint B à une action coûteuse, sous la menace d’une punition encore plus coûteuse, donc B est confronté à un arbitrage entre deux pertes. Cette menace peut venir étyer un commandement. Elle peut aussi venir appuyer de l’extérieur la recherche d’un rapport d’échange favorable lors d’une transaction quelconque. Risquer de ne pas réaliser le gain espéré d’une transaction sous la menace de ne pas (re)contracter n’est pas de même nature que risquer une perte plus grande sous l’effet d’une menace. Le salarié qui doit accepter un faible salaire parce qu’il y a du chômage n’est pas un travailleur forcé. Ce dernier est contraint de se soumettre par la menace crédible de l’emploi de la violence qui lui infligeraient une perte d’une autre nature que celle résultant d’un refus de contracter (et qui doit nécessairement être plus forte que le coût représenté par le travail à effectuer).

La violence peut être publique ou privée, physique ou “morale.” Que la puissance publique se trouve investie du “monopole de la violence physique légitime” (Weber 1978; 65) n’exclut pas qu’elle puisse recourir à la violence “morale” : l’État a tout un arsenal de menaces, mais son ultime recours est toujours la “contrainte par corps.” La violence privée est différente en ceci qu’elle peut se heurter à l’État s’il l’interdit, la rend illégale. C’est en particu-


5 Si la menace est constituée par un refus de contracter, elle l’est d’autant mieux que l’on se trouve au cœur d’un processus de renouvellement (tacite ou explicite) de contrats: l’espérance d’un gain devenu habituel tend à se confondre avec un sentiment de perte.

6 Observons que pour Max Weber, l’État s’est approprié (par le recours à la force) le monopole de la violence physique. Il y a eu séparation du citoyen et des moyens de destruction comme il y a eu séparation du travailleur et des moyens de production si bien que l’un et l’autre se trouvent contraints d’obéir dans la mesure où les moyens de destruction et de production (donc de survie) sont concentrés soit entre les mains de l’État, soit entre celles du capitaliste: le premier peut ainsi forcer les soldats à rester dans les tranchées en 1917, comme le second peut forcer les travailleurs à obéir dans les mines ou les usines (Weber, 1978, 1394): “This all-important economic fact: the “separation” of the worker from the material means of production, destruction, administration, academic research, and finance in general is the common basis of the modern state [...] and of the private capitalist economy.”
lier le cas de la violence physique. Cet aspect mis à part, la différence entre violence privée physique ou "morale" n’est pas grande.

2. Les fondements du pouvoir de marché

Dans le cas simple d’un échange bilatéral, le pouvoir de marché s’exerce à l’intérieur des limites formées par les "prix" de réserve. Si A force B à aller au-delà de son prix de réserve, le contraint à subir une perte sous la menace d’une sanction encore plus lourde, on n’est plus dans le cadre d’un pouvoir de marché, mais dans l’ordre de la coercition qui suppose la menace crédible de l’emploi de la violence physique ou morale.

Restons-en, pour l’instant au pouvoir de marché. Que la seule menace de ne pas (re)contracter puisse constituer un tel pouvoir suppose toujours une forme ou une autre d’asymétrie dans les conditions de la transaction même. Le pouvoir de marché tient aux conditions économiques de la transaction (même si une transaction "globale" agrégant diverses transactions peut être prise en compte dans certains cas) et s’inscrit dans un réseau institutionnel. Il est le positif de ce négatif qu’est la dépendance économique (Scott 1987:111). Il est présent potentiellement dès que l’on sort de l’hypothèse de libre concurrence. L’asymétrie peut tenir au nombre des acteurs du côté de l’offre ou de la demande, le pouvoir reposant alors sur la difficulté pour le fournisseur ou le client d’aller voir ailleurs (l’exit au sens d’A. Hirschman). Les dotations initiales jouent un rôle décisif dans l’établissement du rapport de force. Mais même en situation de libre concurrence, dans les hypothèses où l’équilibre walrasien ne peut être atteint (Bowles et Gintis 1993b), l’inégalité entre l’offre et la demande au prix où se fait la transaction donne une position de force au "côté court," de faiblesse à ceux qui subissent un rationnement.

Oliver Williamson a mis l’accent sur le rôle des actifs spécifiques, humains ou matériels, dans la mesure où leur propriétaire se trouve devant le risque de devoir éventuellement supporter un coût d’adaptation de son actif (une forme de “sunk cost”). On peut certes observer qu’un menuisier sous-traitant d’une entreprise de meubles qui a dû acquérir des machines spécifiques sait fort bien qu’il se trouvera dépendant et donc qu’il tentera, à l’avance, de se garantir (clause de sauvegarde, contrat long…). Cependant, il peut s’y trouver contraint, avec de très faibles garanties, dans la mesure où il n’a pas d’autres choix voisins au moment où il s’engage: la dépendance nou-

velle (par l’actif spécifique) repose sur une asymétrie ancienne (un marché dominé par les demandeurs). Cette situation de dépendance ne signifie donc pas une quelconque “myopie” du dépendant qui serait dès lors victime de son absence de clairvoyance et se découvritrait avec surprise, ex post, une victime dépendante,7 mais seulement que la dépendance a une histoire, que son passé est une dépendance antérieure éventuellement d’une autre nature.

Il faut également faire intervenir dans le pouvoir de négociation la dimension “communicationnelle,” en particulier la possibilité d’obtenir une information sur le prix de réserve de l’autre, donc sur ses coûts de production, et sa capacité à cacher le sien, de façon à gagner dans le partage des gains à l’échange. Les asymétries informationnelles viennent interférer avec les divers éléments que nous avons cités de façon souvent décisive.

3. Pouvoir et dynamique historique

Il est nécessaire de distinguer le pouvoir qui consiste à exploiter une situation donnée du pouvoir qui consiste à modifier ces situations, un pouvoir “dynamique” qui permet de changer les conditions même de l’exercice du pouvoir. On considère généralement que le pouvoir de marché a ainsi un double aspect: un aspect statique consistant à modifier à son avantage le rapport d’échange (Crozier et Friedberg 1977: 69) en profitant des conditions favorables de l’échange, de la structure du marché, de la conjoncture, et un aspect dynamique qui consiste à modifier les conditions de l’échange, la structure du marché ou même les institutions.

Mais si ce pouvoir est dynamique, est-ce un pouvoir de marché? Dans une certaine mesure, certainement, puisqu’il tire sa force des asymétries dans les conditions de l’échange. Mais ceux qui le subissent n’agissent pas de leur plein gré, ont conscience d’être perdants, sont soumis à une coercition: issu de la structure du marché, ce pouvoir dynamique vise une restructuration du marché au prix de ce qui est ressenti comme une perte pour les acteurs qui le subissent.

Dans la mesure où la structure du marché donne un pouvoir à une

7. Williamson jugeant (à juste titre) que le dépendant ne souffre pas d’une myopie systématique, en conclut (arbitrairement) que le pouvoir-dépendance est un concept peu intéressant (Williamson 1996: 45-46, 238-9).
entreprise et que celle-ci peut l'utiliser pour modifier à son avantage la structure du marché, cela permet de mettre en lumière une “course-poursuite.”

Cette “course-poursuite” peut conduire l’un des participants à un échange à gagner de moins en moins au cours du temps, jusqu’à n’être que non perdant. Partons d’une situation bilatérale avec partage modérément inégal du pouvoir de négociation. Supposons que cette asymétrie du pouvoir de négociation permette à celui qui en bénéficie: (1) de s’attribuer une fraction plus importante du gain à l’échange, mais aussi (2) de renforcer son pouvoir de négociation, on met en lumière un processus dynamique de Path Dependency qui aboutira à laisser la totalité du gain à l’échange à celui des participants qui détient le léger avantage initial.

La capacité d’action d’individus, de groupes ou de classes sur les institutions, informelles et formelles, ne doit pas être négligée. Certes, dans l’optique de l’évolutionnisme institutionnel à la Hayek, les institutions les plus efficaces tendent à se mettre spontanément en place dans un processus de sélection darwiniste. Le pouvoir de faire émerger ou de transformer des institutions de façon favorable à tel ensemble d’individus ou d’organisations serait inexistant à long terme.

Il semble cependant possible d’admettre qu’il n’y a pas émergence aléatoire d’innovations institutionnelles assimilables aux mutations accidentelles du darwinisme, puis simplement tournoi entre ces institutions “mutantes” et “que la meilleure pour l’ensemble de la société gagne.” Les institutions (comme d’ailleurs les techniques) sont générées par des hommes animés par des projets, cherchant à obtenir quelque avantage pour eux ou leur groupe. Elles sont donc, à l’origine, “marquées socialement,” destinées à avantager tel groupe social. Ces innovations n’aboutissent pas toujours, loin de là, au résultat désiré par leurs initiateurs, mais le moins que l’on puisse dire est que parfois elles atteignent une partie de leur objectif. Il y a donc un aspect socialement auto renforçant des innovations institutionnelles: ceux qui ont la capacité de les initier et de les conformer à leur avantage sont renforcés par leur mise en œuvre. L’histoire importe, non seulement dans la mesure où il y a des coûts du changement institutionnel (assimilables à des coûts de transaction), des “frottements” comme l’explique D. C. North, mais parce qu’elle met en œuvre des trajectoires largement irréversibles et auto renforçantes.

Si l’histoire filtre les alternatives, “choisir” les trajectoires qui se développeront, si d’infimes différences initiales peuvent jouer un rôle décisif, comment ne pas attribuer un rôle important à des micro-décisions et à de micro-pouvoirs? On peut supposer que les acteurs sociaux, individuels ou collectifs, sont myopes, incapables de prévoir les conséquences ultimes, mais ils anticipent souvent correctement les conséquences à court terme. Et si l’on est en présence de trajectoires auto renforçantes, ce pouvoir n’est finalement pas aussi myope que l’on pourrait le croire!

II. POUVOIR ET AUTORITÉ DANS LES ORGANISATIONS: POUVOIR DE MARCHÉ ET DÉTENTION DU CAPITAL

A côté du marché existe un immense domaine de développement du pouvoir, mais d’un pouvoir qui semble a priori différent du pouvoir de marché, celui que l’on traduit par les termes symétriques d’autorité ou d’obéissance, le domaine de l’organisation. D’une façon ou d’une autre, la majorité des économistes va ramener l’autorité patronale à un échange (un pouvoir d’achat), à un pouvoir de marché ou à un mécanisme rationnel, accepté comme tel par les subordonnés dans la mesure où ils reconnaissent sa “valeur” ou son utilité pour eux. Si la dimension de pouvoir de marché nous paraîtra essentielle, nous verrons qu’elle laisse cependant un résidu inassimilable: la convention d’obéissance.


Sans doute, n’est-ce pas la seule forme de pouvoir qui joue dans les organisations, mais celle-ci est essentielle. Ensuite, si une telle définition convient aux organisations autoritaires, elle convient moins bien aux organisations de type groups of peers même si celles-ci se dotent de directions et de hiérarchies.

6 Des règles spontanées sont aussi nécessaires dans la mesure où il est impossible à la direction de préciser tous les détails.
responsables, temporaires. Enfin, on peut mettre à part la domination et la hiérarchie dans les organisations publiques appuyées, en dernière instance, sur la menace de la violence légitime de l’État. Ainsi par exemple une armée mobilisée. De même les organisations “idéologiques” posent des problèmes spécifiques dans la mesure où elles sont en partie fondées sur un pouvoir communicationnel, idéologique ou religieux (l’Église par exemple). Nous nous intéresserons donc essentiellement à l’entreprise capitaliste, au contrat de travail, donc au “travailleur libre.”

9 Comment l’autorité patronale s’y impose-t-elle?

1. La “valeur” de la hiérarchie

L’autorité patronale serait non seulement acceptée, mais demandée par les salariés dans la mesure où ils reconnaîtraient sa “valeur” (comme dit Arrow [1974]), collectivement et pour chacun d’eux en particulier. En termes weberiens, l’autorité patronale serait légitime dans la mesure où elle revêt un caractère rationnel, cette rationalité de la hiérarchie pouvant être envisagée: (1) par rapport au marché ou (2) par rapport à des formes d’organisation non hiérarchiques.

(1) Coase (1937) et Williamson (1975, 1985) estiment que le mode hiérarchique de coordination ex ante des activités est efficace par rapport au marché lorsque les coûts de transactions sont plus élevés que les coûts d’organisation. Cette efficacité relative serait patente non seulement pour l’employeur, mais aussi pour tous les employés, d’où leur demande de hiérarchie. Admettons que l’organisation soit préférée au marché par tous les travailleurs, pourquoi opteraient-ils pour une organisation autoritaire, hiérarchique? Pourquoi ne se coordonneraient-ils pas dans une organisation du type group of peers? Il faut donc prouver l’inefficacité de ce type de solution pour les travailleurs eux-mêmes.

(2) Le recours à la hiérarchie est une modalité plus efficace de coordination des activités des membres de l’organisation que la formation d’un “consensus spontané” lorsque, la coopération dans la production étant plus productive que la production isolée et les informations coûteuses à transmettre, les intérêts et les informations de chacun sont non identiques (Arrow 1974:chap. 2).

A ces raisons classiques, on ajoute aujourd’hui: (a) que, si la production est collective et qu’on ne peut attribuer à chacun ce qui lui revient, d’où des pratiques probables d’opportunisme, un maître, contrôleur et répartiteur, peut être nécessaire, reconnu comme tel et donc désiré (Alchian et Demsetz, 1972); (b) que l’incomplétude des contrats impose que l’une des parties décide lorsque cela s’avère nécessaire; une autorité qui sera acceptée, parce que reconnue comme rationnelle, par l’autre partie (Grossman et Hart 1986).

Notons que ces raisons n’imposent pas que l’autorité ne puisse être aussi ou plus efficace lorsqu’elle est “responsable,” non pas seulement devant les actionnaires, mais aussi devant l’ensemble des membres de l’entreprise. Arrow reconnaissait cette possibilité. Plus généralement, entre le “consensus spontané” et l’autorité “absolutiste,” il y a tout un spectre de situations possibles. Les organisations entre pairs se donnent généralement des règles de commandement, d’une direction et de hiérarchie(s). Mais elles le font démocratiquement. D’où des différences: les hiérarchies sont décidées par ceux qui s’y plient, l’autorité est temporaire et responsable devant les travailleurs associés, le capital n’y détient pas le pouvoir (il peut être présent sous forme de parts sans droit de vote), les règles de répartition du produit net sont différentes de celles de l’entreprise capitaliste. Cela peut conduire à s’interroger sur l’efficacité de ces solutions, mais il faut le faire au cas par cas dans la mesure où cette autorité démocratique n’a nulle raison d’être,

* Sans même parler de l’esclavage et du travail forcé dont Braudel et Wallerstein ont montré l’importance dans le développement de l’économie monde occidentale, sans évoquer le travail forcé dans les pays totalitaires du XXe siècle, il faut observer que les époques où le salarié est un travailleur libre ont été relativement peu fréquentes dans l’histoire. Ce système est aujourd’hui loin d’être généralisé à l’échelle mondiale où domine le “salariat bridé” (Moulier-Boutang, 1998).

10 Observons que dans une relation principal-agent, s’il y a asymétrie d’information, ce problème d’agence pourra être résolu soit par des contrats incitatifs, soit par le monitoring, disons le recours au contrôle et à la hiérarchie (Jensen et Meckling, 1986). Mais si la hiérarchie est utile au principal, ce n’est pas le cas pour l’agent. Il faudra donc la lui imposer d’une façon au d’une autre.
par essence et toujours, moins efficace que l’autorité absolutiste. Où alors ne faudrait-il pas abandonner, au niveau de la société civile et politique, nos règles démocratiques pour revenir au bon vieux droit divin?

2. Une transaction comme les autres

On pourrait estimer qu’il n’y a aucune différence entre l’autorité patronale et un simple pouvoir d’achat. Telle est la position d’Alchian et Demsetz qui posent que l’autorité du “maître” sur le “serviteur” n’est pas différente de celle du client sur son épicier (il n’y a pas de différence entre le contrat d’entreprise et le contrat de travail) et dire “Marie, mon chocolat” n’est pas différent de dire à son épicier “donnez-moi une livre de cacao” (Alchian et Demsetz 1972:111). Cela revient à penser la relation salariale comme une série de contrats implicites infra-cours et implicitement renouvelés. Évidemment, il est possible d’introduire une asymétrie quelconque (il n’y a qu’une seule épicerie dans le canton ou je suis le seul client de l’épicerie par exemple) et le pouvoir de marché vient se surajouter au pouvoir d’achat.

Une telle proposition n’a guère de sens. Certes, il est clair qu’il y a quelque chose de commun entre l’ordre donné à un employé par son employeur et l’”ordre” donné par un client à tel commerçant: dans les deux cas, il y a exercice d’un pouvoir. Cependant, ce que nous cherchons à expliquer n’est pas ce qu’il y a de commun entre ces deux situations, mais au contraire en quoi elles diffèrent. Dès lors que nous cherchons ce qui fonde la spécificité de l’autorité de l’employeur, ramener l’autorité à un pouvoir d’achat pur et simple ne nous avance pas.

3. L’achat d’obéissance

A la suite de R. H. Coase (1937) et de H. Simon (1951),11 tout un courant observe que s’il y a pouvoir d’achat, ce qu’achète l’employeur et que vend le salarié n’est pas un service, mais son obéissance dans un “domaine d’acceptation” variable.11 Notons que ce n’est pas si éloigné de Marx qui pose que ce qui est acheté ou vendu est bien une marchandise, la force de travail, mais pas comme les autres. Reste à savoir pourquoi les uns sont amenés à vendre leur obéissance et pas les autres? Il est possible de raisonner dans le cadre de contrats incompleteds qui rendent compte de la nécessité qu’une des parties détiennent l’autorité pour ce qui concerne les décisions à venir dans des situations qui ne peuvent être explicitement couvertes par le contrat et introduisent une asymétrie pour rendre compte du fait que c’est telle partie qui obtiendra de l’autre qu’elle accepte d’obéir dans son propre intérêt (Coase 1937; Simon 1951; Grossman et Hart 1986). C’est un pouvoir de marché ou de négociation (si l’asymétrie est informationnelle ou communicationnelle).

4. Derrière l’autorité, le pouvoir de marché

Finalement, on retrouve donc, derrière l’autorité, le pouvoir de marché ou de négociation. On peut résumer les choses en disant que le salarié accepte sa subordination à la suite d’un calcul intéressé: il n’a pas d’alternative équivalente, quitter son emploi est donc coûteux. À priori, les solutions alternatives sont diverses. Il peut: (1) chômer et, éventuellement, recevoir une allocation chômage; (2) produire seul la marchandise et la livrer sur le marché; (3) participer aux activités d’un groupe de producteurs associés (group of peers, coopérative, entreprise autogérée); (4) recourir non plus à un contrat de travail, mais à un contrat classique de vente de ses services; (5) trouver un emploi dans une autre entreprise.

On peut supposer que: (1) l’allocation chômage est nettement plus faible que son salaire; (2) que la marchandise ne peut être produite efficacement qu’en coopération, qu’il n’a pas le capital nécessaire pour se lancer dans les affaires, qu’il ne connaît pas le marché; (3) que l’entreprise autogérée est longue et coûteuse à mettre en place, qu’elle suppose aussi des capitaux qu’il

ne possède pas et qu’il est difficile à ce type d’entreprise d’obtenir, qu’elle est relativement inefficace (opportunisme à la Alchian – Demsetz, coût de la prise de décision par exemple), que l’éventuelle satisfaction tirée de ce type de travail associé est soit estimé négligeable par rapport au revenu, soit finalement ambigu dans la mesure où il y a une satisfaction à se trouver situé dans une hiérarchie;13 que le recours au contrat de louage de services n’est pas rentable pour lui et difficile à trouver faute de cocontractants intéressés dans la mesure il existe des coûts de transaction trop élevés, que le salaire est plus stable, moins risqué qu’un prix d’un service tous les jours renégociable; (5) que le marché du travail laisse apparaître un taux de chômage suffisamment fort et que le coût de recherche d’un emploi similaire s’en trouve rendu élevé (on peut ajouter le coût matériel et psychologique du changement d’entreprise, de secteur, de lieu), que son salaire actuel est un salaire d’efficience, donc plus élevé que dans les autres entreprises qui pourraient l’embaucher.

Si l’employeur dispose, lui, de solutions alternatives voisines (on trouve sur le marché des travailleurs de qualification identique disponibles, désireux de prendre immédiatement l’emploi au même salaire, le coût du changement de salarié est négligeable, l’action collective des salariés est difficile), alors il est possible de rendre compte de l’acceptation de la subordination par le salarié par le pouvoir de marché qu’il subit. En d’autres termes, les termes de l’échange seront distordus du fait de l’inégalité des échangistes devant le risque de ne pas (re)contracter. Telle est aussi la position de Bowles et Gintis (1993b) qui analysent les divers aspects de ce pouvoir et qui, en ce qui concerne la relation d’emploi, montrent comment les salariés sont amenés à accepter la subordination dans la mesure où ils n’ont pas d’alternative voisine.

5. Autorité et propriété du capital

Dans cet ensemble très général d’asymétries, la propriété du capital, et plus généralement l’asymétrie dans la possession d’actifs, joue le rôle majeur, venant infirmer l’idée que l’employé peut aussi bien “licencier” son employeur que l’inverse.

La propriété du capital stricto sensu joue un rôle décisif dans l’explication de la subordination. Elle donne un pouvoir à ceux qui détiennent des moyens de production, un fonds financier qui, en particulier, permet d’acheter du travail, par rapport à ceux qui n’ont pas d’”avances.” Pour Marx et pour Weber, le fait économique essentiel qui fonde le capitalisme est la “séparation” du travailleur et des moyens de production (Weber 1978:137). D’un côté, la détention du capital permet de salarier des travailleurs, de leur faire les avances nécessaires, d’acquérir les machines, l’outillage et les stocks de matières premières, produits énergétiques, etc., sur lesquels le travail va s’exercer. De l’autre, l’absence de ces “avances,” fait que le travailleur n’a pas une véritable alternative, ne pouvant se lancer sur le marché faute de capital (telle est la thèse d’Adam Smith).

L’asymétrie est généralement renforcée dans la mesure où, définissant le capital de façon large, on y inclut les compétences, les informations, la réputation (souvent intégrée dans la marque), les réseaux, en particulier les moyens d’accéder au crédit, etc., et parce que les employeurs qui disposent d’un capital important sont peu nombreux (ils peuvent donc, en outre, entrer en collusion aisément, comme l’expliquait encore A. Smith) et sont face à un grand nombre de salariés souvent répartis (difficiles à coaguler notait Smith, ce que le syndicalisme a souvent changé, mais pas partout, ni toujours). La menace du licenciement (ou de l’absence d’embauche) explique l’obéissance dans le “domaine d’acceptabilité” dès lors que la contre-menace du salarié (priver son employeur de travail subordonné, donc de sa capacité d’offrir des biens et de faire des profits) n’a pas le même poids et n’est sérieuse (géneralement) que collective (la grève par exemple).

Ajoutons que l’on observe fréquemment que le travailleur se fait salarié subordonné parce qu’il estime préférable une situation qui lui assure un salaire fixe (Knight 1921) (la subordination étant une contrepartie à une fixité du salaire qui n’est pas “incitatrice” à l’effort) dans la mesure où il a une forte aversion au risque. On peut alors expliquer cette aversion au risque du travailleur, non par la nature humaine (il n a une aversion pour le risque et c’est pour cela qu’il reste un salarié), mais par la faiblesse de son capital (en y comprenant le capital humain), par l’impossibilité de diversifier ses actifs, par la faiblesse du revenu qu’il peut espérer en tirer. Par l’intermédiaire de son effet sur l’aversion au risque, la détention d’actifs intervient donc encore dans l’explication de la subordination du salarié.

13 Nous y reviendrons en parlant de la “servitude volontaire.”
Dans la mesure où la capacité à obtenir aisément les informations vitales peut être considéré comme un capital, la position de celui qui “tient” le marché produit une asymétrie qui peut rendre compte d’une tendance à la subordination des “producteurs.”

La firme est une organisation spécifique dans la mesure où elle vend des marchandises et on comprend que celui qui connaît le marché, ses demandes spécifiques, qui est bien placé pour anticiper les variations conjoncturelles de la demande, peut mettre en situation de dépendance les “producteurs.” Cela suppose que le bien ou le service produit par la firme ne soit pas à la fois spécifique et très recherché, que les demandeurs ne soient pas rationnés, qu’il ne soit pas possible aux producteurs d’organiser la raréfaction, etc. L’individu qui s’est spécialisé dans la vente va souvent tendre à imposer ses directives à ceux qui sont spécialisés dans la production dans la mesure où ces directives apparaissent comme le reflet des “demandes” du marché.

Les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles offrent encore de nombreux exemples d’associations de producteurs (Dockès et Rosier 1988:130, 232). Prenons par exemple celle de ces métallurgistes du Jura vaudois à la fin de l’Ancien Régime (attestés de 1630 au début du XIXe siècle); ils travaillaient dans des bâtiments et une forge collective, chacun participant aux frais généraux, achetant la matière première dont il avait besoin et recevant le produit de ce qu’il avait forgé. Mais supposons qu’ils envoient l’un d’eux ou un tiers au marché pour vendre leur production; celui-ci va bientôt acquérir une connaissance des besoins, des spécifications techniques demandées, des prix, des aléas etc., qui fait que, peu à peu, c’est lui qui dira que faire, comment faire, combien produire. Faisons un pas dans la direction de la théorie de F. Knight (1921). La connaissance du marché et des conjonctures permet au vendeur d’apprécier les risques et dès lors de les assumer, à la différence du “producteur” qui ne détient pas ce type d’information. On comprend que celui qui connaît le marché puisse dès lors proposer de payer le produit à prix fixe, ce qui revient à payer un salaire à la pièce aux “producteurs” en assumant lui-même le risque des variations du marché. Historiquement, les exemples où les “producteurs” ont été peu à peu dominés, puis subordonnés aux marchands, sont nombreux. Ainsi à Lyon, dans la soierie, tardivement (au début du XVIIIe siècle encore et pratiquement jusqu’à la Révolution), les “corporations” de tisseurs valaient bien celles des marchands. Le marché s’éloignant, se complexifiant, ses profits augmentant, le “Putting out System” s’est imposé: les tisseurs sont devenus des travailleurs à façon (la matière première leur est fournie), paupérisés, soumis aux négociants devenus des “marchands-fabricants,” les “producteurs” finissant par se distinguer assez peu de salariés payés à la pièce.

Inversement, du côté des subordonnés, le fait que nombre des salariés ne disposent que d’actifs humains spécifiques à la fois relativement peu coûteux à remplacer pour l’entreprise et relativement coûteux à adapter pour le salarié est une cause de dépendance. Le coût d’un changement, par démision ou licenciement, est accru pour l’employé qui, par conséquent, doit se soumettre ne pouvant se démettre, tandis qu’il reste faible pour l’employeur tant que l’exit ou le licenciement reste individuel. Comme la spécificité de l’actif humain du salarié est souvent produite par l’enseignement technique, l’apprentissage et l’emploi lui-même, sa dépendance est le résultat de sa propre histoire, elle est le produit de son activité. Lorsque l’actif humain est spécifique non par rapport à telle entreprise, mais par rapport à l’ensemble d’un secteur, la dépendance devient extrême lorsque ce secteur entre en crise et que le salarié, après avoir travaillé vingt ans sur telle machine, à telle tâche, sait qu’il ne trouvera plus d’emploi de même qualification. Naturellement, ce coût du changement est encore accru lorsqu’à l’actif humain spécifique vient s’ajouter le coût parfois élevé d’un déplacement (propriété d’une maison, habitudes de vie, etc.).

iii. L’autorité au-delà du pouvoir de marché: la convention d’obéissance

L’autorité du patron sur ses salariés se ramène-t-elle seulement à un pouvoir reposant sur la menace de ne pas (re)contracter, un pouvoir de marché qui joue essentiellement sur la peur du salarié d’avoir à supporter le coût d’un licenciement?

1. Fondements de la convention d’obéissance

Les économistes supposent pratiquement toujours un dominé rationnel qui opte pour la subordination et décide à chaque instant de s’y maintenir à la suite d’un calcul mené sur la base de son intérêt égoïste, même s’il s’agit d’un choix “contraint” par les conditions du marché. Les analyses de la relation salariale menées en terme d’achat de soumission et de pouvoir de marché risquent de rester confinées dans l’hypothèse du calcul rationnel de l’individu qui choisit de se subordonner et, à chaque instant, d’obéir en
soupsant la menace et son intérêt.

Or le subordonné ne calcule pas au jour le jour, il suit ce que nous nommerons une convention d’obéissance. Ceci est vrai aussi bien en ce qui concerne la soumission à l’autorité publique qu’à l’autorité privée, essentiellement celle de l’employeur. La distinction entre l’autorité (Authority, Herrschaft) et le pouvoir au sens de “force” ou de puissance (Power, Macht) peut être réactivée en définissant l’autorité comme un “pouvoir institué” : la soumission ne résulte plus d’un calcul ponctuel répété face à la menace, elle devient subordination au sens d’obéissance par convention (cela revient à se situer à l’opposé d’Alchian et Demsetz qui font comme si le contrat de travail se résolvait en contrats infra-courts assimilables, dès lors, aux “ordres” donnés à son épicié).

Ici le terme de “convention” n’est pas pris au sens juridique de contrat, mais au sens de règle comportementale que l’on suit en sachant que les autres le savent et de leur côté la suivent, et la “convention d’obéissance” doit évidemment être distinguée du contrat d’engagement (ici de travail) (Salais, 1989, 213). Lorsque l’employé s’engage en signant un contrat de travail, il s’engage à quoi ? A exécuter un travail d’un genre donné, donc dans une “zone d’acceptation” (Simon, 1947; 1951; 1982), en suivant les directives de l’employeur, mais il est supposé rester libre de se dégager à tout instant s’il estime que tel est son intérêt. Pour le dire autrement, le subordonné est supposé calculer, soupsérer la menace, au moment de la signature du contrat de travail, puis à tout instant : le contrat de travail est supposé renouvelé tacitement à chaque instant parce que les deux parties y ont mutuellement intérêt comme s’il y avait renouvellement d’une “pognée de main invisible” (Okun, 1981; Cahuc et Zylberberg, 1996). C’est ainsi que le concept d’autorité est fractionné indéfiniment pour se dissoudre en un simple pouvoir d’achat et en un pouvoir de marché.

Or il est erroné de se donner un individu rationnel soupsenant, à chaque instant, pour chaque directive, les avantages et les coûts en probabilité. D’abord, le contrat de travail se double d’une obéissance “de routine” qui assure la durée de la relation.

L’employé ne calcule pas à chaque instant s’il a ou non intérêt à renouveler tacitement son contrat de travail ; il obéit par routine, il suit la règle en con- fiance, sauf à la refuser et non seulement il agit ainsi, mais tous les autres, aussi bien l’employeur que les autres employés savent que chacun agit ainsi. Le fait que la menace crédible reste habituellement à l’arrière plan et que l’employé se maintienne dans cette routine d’obéissance peut, en particulier (mais pas seulement), être expliqué par la rationalité limitée qui amène à se contenter d’observer cette règle “satisfaisante” (on est dans la lignée des conceptions de H. Simon [1947; 1957; 1977; 1982]). On est en présence d’une adhérence au statu quo lié aux coûts de changement (la présence de ces coûts ne signifiant pas un calcul), coûts qui, fondamentalement, sont à la racine de nombre de situations où une règle est suivie tant qu’elle n’est pas remise en question.

Dés lors, ainsi que le notait Arrow (1974), chaque employé pensant que tous les autres vont obéir (d’abord par routine d’obéissance), va être amené lui-même à obéir dans la mesure où l’efficacité d’un refus d’obéissance n’est efficace que lorsqu’il est collectif (si chaque employé est aisément remplaçable par l’employeur, ce n’est pas le cas pour l’ensemble des employés). Il obéit non seulement par routine, mais aussi parce qu’il pense que les autres obéissent non seulement par routine, mais parce qu’ils pensent que les autres obéissent. Il y a bien, au-delà de la simple “routine d’obéissance,” une véritable “convention d’obéissance.” Mais le “point focal” au sens de Schelling (1980), le “signal coordinateur” (Arrow 1974) sur lequel la convention d’obéissance est fondée est la routine d’obéissance.

Cela ne signifie pas que le salarié suive aveuglement la convention quel que soit l’ordre. Cependant, on le vérifie par diverses observations de laboratoire (les expériences de Stanley Milgram par exemple), nombreux sont les hommes qui ont tendance à ne pas poser de limites lorsque, d’une façon ou d’une autre, ils se sentent engagés dans une convention d’obéissance. Ceci ne tient qu’en situation normale. Il peut y avoir crise individuelle ou collective de la convention d’obéissance et l’employé va alors soupeser cette menace qu’est la “punition” interne ou le licenciement.

Individuellement, la convention d’obéissance entre en crise générale- ment lorsque l’employeur impose une tâche que l’employé estime en dehors de la zone d’acceptation, des conditions de travail jugées anormales ou s’il modifie arbitrairement la relation salaire-qualification-tâche. Malgré la place considérable occupée par les grilles de qualification dans les conventions collectives, ces aspects ne peuvent être précisément définis (nécessaire incomplétude du contrat de travail) et l’évolution du rapport de pouvoir entre employeur et employé est dès lors déterminante, d’où le conflit et la crise de la convention d’obéissance qui se noue lorsqu’il y a une modification...
estimée brutale, soit lorsqu’après une série de changements à la marge, une ultime modification, même modeste, provoque un effet de saturation.

Si la crise de la convention d’obéissance peut être individuelle, elle peut être aussi collective. Chacun doutant de l’obéissance des autres, la possibilité d’une action collective devient possible et peu risquée dans la mesure où l’employeur ne peut licencier, sans assumer un coût élevé, l’ensemble de son personnel.

Cette conception est cohérente avec la définition de l’organisation comme un ensemble de règles dont certaines sont voulues. Les organisations, et en particulier l’entreprise capitaliste, apparaissent comme des nœuds d’institutions, et la règle qui soutient l’ensemble est la convention d’obéissance. La convention d’obéissance produit une attente comportementale de la part de l’employeur: il donne un ordre, il s’attend à être obéi et il l’est tant que l’employé suit la convention d’obéissance. Le contrat de travail serait largement vain sans elle. En effet, les coûts du contrôle sont souvent élevés, et ils croissent fortement lorsque le contrôle tend à devenir précis, tatillon, allant jusqu’aux moindres détails. La convention d’obéissance permet de les réduire considérablement, c’est elle qui donne toute son efficacité à la relation salariale (rapidité d’exécution, disponibilité) et finalement distingue l’autorité d’une simple pouvoir de marché.

2. “Maîtrise” et stabilisation de la convention d’obéissance

Si la subordination de l’employé repose, “en dernière instance,” sur la menace d’une sanction crédible liée au coût de sa mise à pied, ce pouvoir reste à l’arrière plan, il ne s’exerce pas pour obliger le salarié à obéir au jour le jour. Il n’intervient que pour stabiliser la convention d’obéissance, il n’opère que s’il y a crise, que si le patron a demandé à l’employé (ou à l’ensemble des employés) quelque chose qu’il(s) estime(nt) exorbitant.

N’y a-t-il pour stabiliser la convention d’obéissance que la menace du licenciement? Si le pouvoir de marché est essentiel, il est seulement le socle sur lequel d’autres modalités de pouvoir interviennent pour rendre compte de cette stabilisation. L’autorité suppose aussi d’autres dimensions de pouvoir et précisément la réintégration dans l’analyse du pouvoir sur les choses et du pouvoir communicationnel (conviction, manipulation des préférences), des formes diverses de coercition, parfois des micro-dispositifs formant tout un réseau de fils ténus qui lient Gulliver. On retrouve ici les “disciplines” de Michel Foucault où se nouent “capacité-communication-pouvoir.”

On peut s’appuyer également sur l’analyse d’A. Hirschman (1970). Certes, si la menace du licenciement brandie par l’employeur est crédible, c’est que l’exit est trop coûteux - ou que le salarié le croit. Mais la convention d’obéissance peut être stabilisée également grâce à la voice et à la loyalty (loyalty). Il peut être très efficace à cette fin pour l’employeur de laisser, dans les pores de la convention d’obéissance, des espaces soigneusement cantonnés où existe, pour le salarié, une possibilité de s’exprimer, de critiquer, de proposer. Il faut d’autre part donner toute son importance à la loyalty qui peut même être considérée comme une forme prise par la convention d’obéissance. Celle-ci pouvant d’ailleurs être spontanée ou le résultat d’une manipulation permettant de construire cet “esprit maison” particulièrement efficace comme supplément d’âme au salaire d’efficience.

La convention d’obéissance se stabilise également dans la mesure où cette règle est considérée comme rationnelle sur le plan de l’activité finalisée (au sens d’Habermas), en d’autres termes qu’elle est estimée (seule) efficace productivement (on retrouve Max Weber). L’autorité patronale n’est plus une règle sociale, mais elle est investie de la rationalité “en vue d’une fin” qui est celle d’une technique: on applique la règle d’obéissance comme une règle technique qui énonce, par exemple, que pour pêcher tel poisson il faut tel type d’hameçon.

Ensuite, il y a le “dressage.” La discipline s’obtient par une éducation mêlant menaces (de “punitions” internes et, seulement au second degré, de licenciement) orientées vers l’obtention de l’obéissance immédiate et sans réfléchir, le maître sanctionnant systématiquement tous les manquements à la règle. Ainsi, peu à peu, se conforte la convention d’obéissance.

Enfin, la hiérarchie prise au sens strict, parce qu’elle est un ordre qui suppose des niveaux, chacun (sauf le premier et le dernier) se trouvant inséré entre un niveau supérieur et un niveau inférieur, est une cause de stabilisation de la convention d’obéissance. La Boëtie dans le Discours de la servitude volontaire (1976) pose un problème, au niveau politique certes, mais qui peut être généralisé au monde de l’organisation: comment se fait-il qu’une multitude d’hommes se soumette à un tyran? Sans doute parce que chacun, individuellement, est pris dans une hiérarchie.

Il y a un aspect technique à la hiérarchie. Tout système de commande ment la suppose dès que l’on dépasse le très petit nombre; le chef ne pouvant
tout connaître et tout décider, il doit déléguer à des collaborateurs qui à leur tour délègueront leur autorité. Mais, le recours à la hiérarchie a une autre dimension, plus subtile. Chaque individu pris dans la hiérarchie se soumet-il seulement par la crainte d’une sanction de son supérieur, celui-ci ne se soumettant à son supérieur que pour la même raison? Pas seulement: un individu se soumet à son supérieur hiérarchique aussi parce que cette soumission lui donne un pouvoir sur le niveau inférieur. Le désir d’un pouvoir sur autrui devient source de soumission à autrui. Pour revenir aux expériences de Stanley Milgram sur les fausses électrocutions, pourquoi le cobaye qui fait subir des décharges électriques de puissance croissante (parfois jusqu’à la “mort”) à un supposé “mauvais élève” obéit-il aux injonctions du soi-disant médecin? Une des dimensions de cette acceptation des ordres est que le cobaye tire sa puissance sur “l’élève” de sa soumission au “médecin.”

Sans doute ne faut-il pas remplacer la menace d’une sanction crédible par la “servitude volontaire,” ce désir de détention d’un pouvoir sur des individus en position inférieure. L’individu ne choisit pas de s’insérer dans une hiérarchie, d’obéir, pour, à son tour, commander. Mais la jouissance de l’autorité est probablement une raison majeure de la stabilisation de la convention d’obéissance.

La menace de cette sanction crédible qu’est le refus de (re)contracter, le pouvoir de marché, peut rendre compte de la signature par le travailleur d’un contrat de travail prévoyant la subordination. Cependant pour rendre compte de l’autorité du patron, il faut faire intervenir une convention d’obéissance stable. Et la stabilisation de la convention d’obéissance, au-delà de la menace de licenciement, suppose l’agencement de formes diverses d’exercice du pouvoir: les “disciplines” selon Foucault.

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Pouvoir, autorité et convention d’obéissance


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