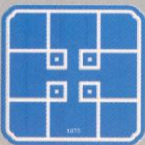

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creating theological space for
integral research and dialogue to
promote cultures of justice and peace



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Modernity, European Empires, Colonialism and Capitalism:

Towards an Understanding of the Trans-modernity Process

Enrique Dussel*

This paper will only consider the fundamental thesis, the first of which is that the four subjects included in the title are simultaneously originated, co-imply each other and are mutually determined. In fact, these four subjects which I wish to articulate, have various treatments, their own problems, specialists and bibliographies. Of course, they make reference to historical realities of which no one can deny their relevance and existence. However, what I intend in this paper is to cross-examine and to articulate the four problems in a sole argument, in order to provide more importance to: a) in the criticism of Eurocentric ideology (the invisible basis of human sciences which has a predominant presence in Europe and in the United States and, unfortunately, in a large portion of the world periphery); and b) in the discernment of the fundamental thesis of a postcolonial liberation thought (the “trans-modern” question), which commits itself so that “Another world may be possible” (the novel “Alter-Mundaneness”, which the Philosophy of Liberation helped to formulate).

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§ 1. The World-Market Abandoned by China

For the last forty years¹ I firstly noted the question: What place does Latin America occupy in world history? Why are we outside the standard interpretations of history? For this it was necessary to rebuild from the start this history “maked” by Romantic Germans and which Hegel expressed in his famous *Lessons of the Philosophy of World History*.² My first intention was to relativize the centrality of Europe, situating it as one of the civilizations of world history and that it, nonetheless, had placed them in contact, as of the latter part of the 15th century, in 1492 originating the Latin American Colonial Christianity, with a unique physiognomy of said world history.

But this vision had to be surpassed. In the first place, the criticism of Eurocentrism faced the majority of the European and North American intellectuals and, in philosophy, which is what I practiced, it was concreted by the end of the 60’s in a *Philosophy of Liberation*, which was now questioning not only the Eurocentrism of a Weberian type, which is the traditional one, but likewise the partial Eurocentrism which were hidden in the attack of this ideology. The argument can be closely synthesized as follows.

The traditional “Eurocentric” position considered that Europe had certain older potentials (Max Weber goes back to the origin of Christianity and even to the thought of the Israeli prophets), who crossing the so called “Middle Ages” irrupted with a creative force into Modernity. In a certain form, Europe could prove from antiquity its cultural “superiority” over the other cultures (even over the

1 I began to locate the thematic in an article entitled “Iberoamérica en la historia universal”, *Revista de Occidente* (Madrid), number 25 (1965), pages 85-97,

2 On the other hand, I gave a university level course during the winter 1966 semester (at the Northeastern University at Resistencia, Argentina) on the Hypothesis for the study of Latin America in World History, published for the first time in a CD which has been recently produced (*Philosophical Work of Enrique Dussel*, 1963-2003) (consult <www.afyl.org>). Something of this can be noted in my book *The Invention of the Americas*, Continuum Publishing, New York, 1995.

Hindustan, Chinese or Islamic and, thus, had originated capitalism, historical issue to which Max Weber devoted extensive works).

From the Latin American “Theory of Dependency” (explicitly formulated at least since 1966 and as an epistemic base of the aforementioned Philosophy of Liberation),³ later on generalized by the theory of World-System of Immanuel Wallerstein, it was understood that the expansion of Europe at the end of the 15th century meant the beginning of the colonization process by the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, placing in doubt that said colonization were an essential factor in the origin of capitalism (at that time a mercantile-monetary thesis affirmed by Pierre Chaunu), but certainly it was not the beginning of Modernity (at least Wallerstein puts it off until the Illustration of the 18th century).

On my part,⁴ I attempted to anticipate Modernity to the latter part of the 15th century, articulating and situating the four phenomena indicated as simultaneously originating: Modernity, the European empires, Colonialism and the Capitalist System. Modernity (cultural, historical, philosophical, literary and scientific phenomena), according to my thesis developed when Europe leaves behind the Renaissance Mediterranean and “opens” to the Atlantic; enters the “wide world” which surpasses the Latin-Germanic cloister to which the Islamic-Ottoman world had subjected it during the “Middle Age” (since the 7th century).

3 See *Philosophy of Liberation* written in 1975 (published later on in Orbis Books, New York, 1985), but originated in 1968 when I was writing an *Ethic of Latin American Liberation* (published in 1973, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires). See Linda Alcoff-Eduardo Mendieta, *Thinking from the Underside of History*. Enrique Dussel's *Philosophy of Liberation*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham-New York, 2000, see “Introduction” (pages 1-26); and the Introduction of E. Mendieta on my work *Beyond Philosophy*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham-New York, 2003 (pages 1-18). Bibliography at Michael Barber, *Ethical Hermeneutics. Rationalism in Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*, Fordham University Press, New York, 1998, pages 161-167.

4 “Beyond Eurocentrism”, in F. Jameson-M. Miyoshi, the *Cultures of Globalization*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1998, pages 3-31. Also see my article “World-System and Trans-Modernity”, at *Nepantla* (Durham), volume 3, 2 (2002), pages 221-244.

Everything seemed to indicate that from the end of the 15th century Europe, Lisbon and Seville first, afterwards Amsterdam and later on other Atlantic ports had constituted themselves as the “center” of “world”, for the first time in world history. Little by little, first Latin America, later on the Anglo-Saxon America, the Hindustan or Islamic world and to end the Bantu Africa were to become “colonies” of the modern, metropolitan, capitalist Europe. It was a process that lasted five centuries.

The book of André Gunder Frank,⁵ that was criticized by his own colleagues,⁶ correctly outlined, even though some facts may have to be corrected, that China should be included in all this debate. Frank sets forth the notion that the industrial revolution could have perfectly occurred in 8th century in China and that due to eventual causes this process failed, while the United Kingdom advanced due to occasional and combined conditions (and certainly not because of any cultural, technical, economic, political, or other superiorities). This has been evidenced with new arguments, in the concrete comparison of England’s degree of development and the Valley of Yanze (in China) by other researchers.⁷ This way, even though Modernity, the European Empires, colonialism and mercantile capitalism are five centuries old, the European hegemony does not have more than two centuries (from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of 19th century), because it had always shared, during the first three centuries of Modernity, the presence of more weight in the world market of the Hindustan and China. Eurocentrism could still argue that even though hegemonic during the last two hundred years, Europe, however, had accumulated a large cultural superiority during centuries, which was

5 André Gonder Frank, *ReORIENT. Global Economy in the Asian Age*, University of California Press, Berkely, 1998. Like the book of Martin Bernal, 1987, *Black Athena. The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, *Black Athena*, volume 1: “The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985”, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1987, which dethroned the “Helenocentrism” and, thus, was ill received by the university academic media, who “live” from their erudite knowledge of the “classic” Heleno-Roman age.

6 Consider the reactions of Wallerstein, Arrighi, Samir Amin, etc.

7 See the work of Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence. China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000.

expressed in the industrial and scientific revolution. But even this can be construed in another form, however, we should evaluate a new argument which will make us once again doubt Eurocentrism.

Currently a new fact has been discovered which we wish to consider, in reference to a study from Gavin Menzies,⁸ which shows that, even though it was known that China was far ahead by centuries to Europe from a political, commercial, technological and even scientific point of view,⁹ now we added having evidence on the trajectory which the fleets, consisting of enormous and numerous ships, which traveled on all the Oceans (thanks to their oceanic experience of more than eight hundred years in the Indian Ocean and because of the development of astronomy, cartography, measurements instruments of latitude and longitude of the world, etc.). The sailor Zheng He (1369-1431) and the four admirals under his command and with their respective fleets, between 1421 and 1423, drew the maps of the south Atlantic (from Western Africa to South America, including the Antarctic and the Falkland Islands, to locate the Canopus star) and to the north (from the Caribbean to Greenland, traveling between the North Pole and the Empire of the Tsars of China and back), in addition, to the southeast Pacific (coasts from Chile to Peru) and to the north (from California to Mexico), from eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean to Australia. When in 1424 the Ming Emperors (1368-1644) resolved to abandon¹⁰ the undisputed domain of all the oceans, leaving, due to a historical strategic error, a “world-market” with a empty marine and commercial power, a few decades after (and using, at times without knowing it, the Chinese maps that arrived via Venice

8 1421. El año en que China descubrió el nuevo mundo, translation to Spanish, Grijalbo, Barcelona, 2003 (from the original in English: 1421 The Year China Discovered the World). This work, as well as that of Martín Bernal and A. G. Frank, was received with misgivings by the academy. However, based on my historical studies (see my work *The Invention of the Americas*, Continuum, New Jersey, 1995), where I used the map of Henricus Martellus dated 1487, of the fourth Asian peninsula), his arguments with respect to his fundamental thesis are irrefutable (there can be less strong details, but this does not eliminate its weight). We have to use this work for the historical vision of a more humble European Modernity, certainly not Weberian!

9 The works of Needham opened the road...

10 It was Emperor Zhu Gaozhi, by decree dated September 7, 1424, who decided to “interrupt all the voyages of the treasure boats” (Menzies, *Op cit.*, page 79).

to the West), Portugal shall fill this “vacuum”, in the Indian Ocean and Spain in the Atlantic Ocean.

The European culture, less developed (in comparison to the Islamic, Hindustan and, specially, the Chinese), separated by the Ottoman–Islamic “wall” of the central regions of the Asiatic-Afro-Mediterranean continent,¹¹ at that time peripheric, shall begin a slow development which I shall describe articulating the four themes set forth in the title of this paper. We must then clarify that, against Weber, Europe never had any type of superiority over China and Hindustan or the Arabian culture, before the 18th century, to the contrary up to the XV century, it suffered a secular under development which certain favorable combinations, among which we should include its geographic situation (close to the American continent, to thus deploy a colonial system which China would have never developed), will take care of remedying.

§ Early Modernity

I have already insisted in dividing the Modernity phases in a more integral form. Now let us see how I would globally conceive it and not simply as a European phenomenon. In fact, Modernity is a dialectic happening in which Europe has frequently been described as the creative reference, being that, in frequent aspects, it suffers the influence of other cultures and is transformed from the outside. A “provincial” and substantialist vision would consider Modernity as an exclusive European phenomenon which is later on expands to all the world and constitutes the hegemonic world culture. The rest is pre-modern, backward, primitive, to be modernized. We have named this ideology the “developmental fallacy” (lineal vision of history in which Europe is the creative vanguard of universal civilization). Let us consider this issue in a different form.

¹¹ See the “Historical Introduction” of my work *Ética de la Liberación en la edad de la globalización y la exclusión* (Trotta, Madrid, 1998).

Modernity as a cultural phenomenon (as well as technical, political, philosophical, literary, etc.), originates as the creative confrontation of a culture which is being transformed in "central", but nurtured by the elements of the other cultures which it simply considers in dominating, exploiting, and obtaining richness. Columbus had a map (of Henricus Martellus, which came from China) which guaranteed his trip to China from the east. Imperceptibly he nurtured himself from another culture without being aware of the same. Magellan "knew" that there was a strait to the south of South America, at 52 degrees south latitude, thanks to this he pacified his crew, because he had maps (extracted in Portugal), but likewise coming from China. The "discoverers" in reality were simple "executors" of knowledge coming from another culture.

I shall call Modernity the interpretative "stampede" by which the sense of the daily life of Europe radically changed its course. The "opening of the Atlantic" placed Northern Europe (last horizon of the old system, which originate in Japan and China at the east, culminated at the west by Europe, Portugal or England) in the geopolitical "center" (the Atlantic) of a new world: the European Modern World, which shall know how to handle the "centrality" which colonialism shall provide to it.

The Italian-Renaissance world, as it is a cultural phenomena of the Mediterranean, which thanks to the Byzantine Venice and Genoa connected through the East to the market whose largest weight was in the Islamic, Hindustan and Chinese world, certainly prepares Modernity, but it is still not modern; it lives the "provincial" experience" of a Southern Europe sieged by the Otoman world. If the Lutheran Reform shall be importance it is because that Northern Europe will no longer need Rome or the Mediterranean to connect itself to the "world-market". The Baltic opened to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean (and with it to Rome) was an interior sea, the "Middle Age" had died. Modernity begins with the Atlantic.

Due to this, in order to establish periods to Modernity and the European empires, I must do this taking into consideration this essential criteria. I shall call Early Modernity the historical European happenings prior to the industrial revolution (1492-1815),¹² still under the Chinese and Hindustan hegemony, which produce the merchandise content of the Asian-Afro-Mediterranean market. Mature Modernity shall range from the date of the indicated revolution through the imperialism age and the two world wars, where we can see the firm centrality of Europe and the collapse of Asia. As late Modernity I shall make reference to the postwar age since 1945.

§ 1.1 First phase of Early Modernity

To place Spain or Portugal as the first modern nations would seem daring. However, this exactly justifies the “modernity” of the 16th century. Diachronically, Portugal shall begin the ocean exploration after the Chinese retreat, starting with the south Atlantic from the West African coast. In 1415 the Portuguese occupy Ceuta in the Afro-Muslim continent. In 1498 Vasco da Gama arrives in India. It occupies Malacca and takes control of the Calicut movement in Southeast India. They transform themselves in the guards of the ancient route of the Indian Ocean, dominated by the Chinese up to a few decades before. But little or no merchandise do they have to offer China and the Hindustan. Through 1492 it is still the “ancient model” of the peripheric Europe and of the “coveted and rich “Orient”.

With Spain (1492-1630) and due to the intended voyage to China from the tropical Atlantic (which was the intention of Christopher Columbus), the route to the “East” from the west, he “bumps” with a continent unknown to the Europeans (but certainly mapped by the Chinese in its Atlantic and Pacific Ocean coasts), the Abia Yala¹³ of

¹² I could use 1789 year of the French Revolution or 1776 of the work of Adam Smith, but here I prefer to begin on the date of the hegemony not shared of Great Briatin, in reality the fruit of the industrial revolution, which began some fifty years before.

¹³ In Latin American some name our continent with the name given by the Kuna Indians: Abia yala.

the Kunas of Panama. The incorporation of this new continent to Europe means a major rupture in the history of the Latin-Germanic Christianity. Thus Modernity is properly born, the first modern empire, colonialism and capitalism properly said. The Hispanic America (not the Anglo-Saxon America) is the periphery from where richness originates to be accumulated as capital. The silver and gold, the work of the exploited Indians in the haciendas, the tributes and the African slaves bought for tropical production is accumulated in Europe (together with the exiguous increase in value of the European worker). Through Spain, Europe begins to develop into the "center" of its first colonial "periphery". We would be in Wallerstein's World-Empire.¹⁴ This would be the first phase of Early Modernity.

Correlative with the Empires in turn, colonies began to be born which the indicated empires organized in the periphery to the south. We must not forget the diachrony in their constitution, because it will show us an in-depth phenomena which must be considered: the different duration of colonialism and post-colonialism, because they are not contemporaneous.

The capitalist system as an accumulation of over value in the free cities of Europe, India or China had a slow regional, homogenous development. To accelerate the said accumulation, it had to receive riches from external markets, from trade. The handiwork production which formally subsumed the work should be increased with new richness obtained from the exchange. Europe, in the first phase of Early Modernity, obtained from Latin America thousands of tons of silver and gold, money extracted from the mines with the work of American Indians, exterminated with the tribute system. These

¹⁴ The Chinese model of an Empire could be defined as the "World-Market" under Chinese hegemony. China did not occupy other countries or kingdoms, but favorably traded with them, imposing fees in silver to be able to enter their market. It was a "World-Market" without military occupation. It did not organize its periphery as colonies, but as regions with which it traded to its advantage. It was already a proto-capitalism-trade, having printed paper money in the 9th century and promoting handiwork production (¿with formal subsumption of the work process?) which incorporated millions of workers in the production of porcelain and silk weaving, among other products which did not have competitors in the Asiatic-Afro-Mediterranean market.

precious metals, in addition to the tropical products, created by African slavery (such as sugar, tobacco, etc.), created an original accumulation mainly in Holland (a Spanish province) and extended to all of Europe (even though, due to the caravan commerce, of the west Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean in the end the same was poured over China). We are talking of the mercantile capitalism, in its economic stage, which occurred simultaneously and in a manner that gave a lot more weight to Hindustan and China, through the Islamic world (which connected Mindanao in the Philippines with Indochina, the Mongol kingdoms from the north of India, with Iran, the near East, Egypt, the Maghreb up to Morocco and the Congo River south of the Sahara). The Latin American precious metals devaluated silver, producing a crisis in the Muslim kingdoms of the African savanna, increasing the slave trade towards the Caribbean plantations and Brazil. It is the age of the unaffordable World-Empire.

In the meantime, Modernity had begun a philosophical revolution (considerably before R. Descartes) which since Bartolomé de las Casas (1485-1566) and through Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) would innovate the problems of the European thought, taking into consideration the confrontation which occurred with other cultures.¹⁵

§1.2 Second phase of Early Modernity

The cycle of the Hispanic hegemony was to last approximately until the Provinces of Holland became independent from the Iberian power and constitute on their own a shipping empire (1630-1688). Now the project of the territorial empires appears impossible and is replaced by a purely commercial model, the first stage of the World-System, but the second phase of early Modernity.

The Dutch appear in Brazil, in both coasts of Africa, in Sri Lanka, Borneo, Indonesia. In the 17th century, that is to say, four centuries

¹⁵ Among other numerous works, see my most recent work on "Modernidad y alteridad (Las Casas, Vitoria y Suárez: 1514-1617)", in *Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía* (Salamanca), volume 30 (2003), pages 690-720).

ago, Great Britain, France and the other European powers conquered with equal violence colonies in North America (New Holland and New Amsterdam would become New England and New York), the Caribbean and some small territories of Africa and Asia.

With Holland, and faced with the inability of obtaining such an amount of “money” (silver) ore, the proper mercantile exchange had to be increased and they began to organize a capitalist World-System properly said. The Companies of the West and East Indies were trading companies and not state institutions of monopolist exchange. In addition, the task of promoting the language, the culture or the religion of the rising metropolitan State passes to a second level. This is how mercantile capitalism which occupies the World-Market which China had abandoned at the beginning of the 15th century is born. Mercantile capitalism installs new ports, new points of commercial contact, but it definitely only buys with Latin American “money” (silver) in the Hindustan and Chinese markets. It is completely dependent with respect to the content of the trade exchange. It does not have its own merchandises to impose as they are beyond all competence, with the Chinese goods. England (Great Britain), France and other European powers, follow this same road.

The philosophical thought depends on its heritage. It shall be the Dutch Amsterdam, where Descartes, a student at La Fleche of the Hispanic Jesuits and which he will remind him in its adult age that the first philosophical works that he had read were the *Disputaciones Metafísicas* of Francisco Suárez, where he wrote the *Discourse of the Method* in 1637. Likewise, Baruch Spinoza, a Sephardic Jew (his family having lived in Portugal after being expelled from Spain), who spoke and read the Spanish language, shall be the expression of the Hispanic culture with respect to the synagogue of the aforementioned Dutch port. Modernity is reinforced in the trade world of Northern Europe.

§1.3 Third Phase of Early Modernity

The Dutch power does not, however, have the backup of a continental platform or sufficient population. With the bourgeois revolution of England, Great Britain, together with France and other Nordic powers, shall replace the short Dutch hegemony. It is the third moment of the Early Modernity (since 1688). This is how the interregnum shared by the English and the French Empires, always under the shadow of China and the Hindustan who continue to bear a larger weight in the world market.

The American colonies and the Caribbean were strengthened while Latin America lived a period of relative autonomy, the baroque culture was re-enforced, colonialism was reaffirmed and slavery had a surprising development.

This is the century of the English empiric, from Hobbes passing by Locke and Hume.

§ 2. Mature Modernity

At the end of the 18th century, in a state of such pre-industrial development, regions such as England and Scotland and the valley of the Yanze¹⁶ in China (the latter being much more populated) and considering the ecological difficulties, the lack of carbon and the cost of the food in the cities, China could not release peasants to integrate the production of merchandises according to the criteria of the industrial revolution. England and other significant places of Europe, with the existence of carbon and low priced food (brought from the English colonies of North America), could release peasants to be subsumed to the production process as salaried workers. Due to eventual not structural factors, Europe could then carry out the industrial revolution and not China (or India). The “great divergence” had occurred. In addition, the English colonies (and to a lesser degree

¹⁶ See the work of K. Pomeranz already quoted, where it systematically compares these two regions, one in Europe and the other in China to achieve completely new results, with respect to the Weberian hypothesis on the origin of the industrial revolution.

the French ones and those of the other Northern Europe powers) shall enjoy the advantages of having an industrial metropolis. On the other hand, Portugal and Spain having lost the industrialization process (maybe due to the elimination of its bourgeois since the 16th century), shall leave their Latin American colonies (and others) in a state of pre-industrial under-development which to this day is difficult to overcome (because the industrial revolution in the said post-colonial regions shall begin well advanced the 20th century).

The industrial revolution allowed the English empire to achieve its final hegemony in Waterloo (1815-1945), sharing the power with the other European colonial powers. The industrial revolution launched Europe to an unexpected development, something that slowly collapses the Asiatic competition (China, Hindustan, the Ottoman Empire, etc.), and into a colonialism of a new type (because it incorporates war and navigation machinery and every useful production instrument), advances to India (1750-1858), to the Asiatic Southeast, the Middle East (before the crisis of the Ottoman Empire) and to Australia. When in 1830 the French occupy Algeria, this indicates the crisis of the Ottoman Empire, which shall slowly vacate its place in the European metropolitan powers. We are talking of the Mature Modernity.

The triumphant bourgeoisie produces the philosophical movement of the illustration. Germany, which is not a colonial power, produces a university reform of the largest proportions and imposes its model over France, England and, at a later date, even in the United States. We are talking of two centuries of scientific, technological and political hegemony. Kant and the German Idealism will enjoy enormous respect in all of Europe.

In the Berlin Congress of 1884 - 1885, Africa is divided by the European powers. The African colonialism and likewise the territorial occupation of the old Ottoman Empire will not last more than a century, when half a century of postcolonial age occurs.

During the 19th century, starting with the industrial revolution and up to the time of its acceleration by the imperialistic phenomena (in the sense considered by Lenin) around 1870, Europe will achieve a technical and military instrument supremacy, supported by the scientific, cultural and religious revolution, which will allow it to exercise a political and military domain over all the Latin American postcolonial world and the American and Asiatic colonial worlds by England, but likewise by France, Holland, Denmark, etc. The extraction of richness from the old and new colonies is accelerated, including the addition of the railroad as a means to transport products which before would have been impossible to trade.

Only in the interregnum of 1919-1945, from the start of the First World War to the end of the Second World War and somewhat later, the peripheral worlds will attempt an industrial revolution homogenized by a national bourgeoisie (of neocolonial mentality), which will produce the political phenomena which we could call "populism" (in Latin American with L. Cárdenas, G. Vargas or J. Perón; in India with the Party of Congress; in Egypt with A. Nasser; in Indochina with Sukarno, etc.). A certain independent capitalism had attempted to occur in the peripheral world. This attempt of a national capitalism in some countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America shall be rapidly frustrated with a fully unequal competition from the North against the South. In any case, thanks to the coups-de-stats sponsored by the emerging power of the United States, governments are changed due to direct intervention. In Latin America 1954 is the initial year, with the coup-de-stat prepared by the CIA against Arbenz in Guatemala, in Asia with Sukarno in Indonesia and latter on against Nasser in Egypt.

§ 3. Late Modernity

At the end of the so called Second World War appears the emerging American Empire which had been brewing since its emancipation from the United Kingdom. During fifty years it shares

the bipolarity of the "Cold War" with the Soviet Union until the collapse of the regime of the real socialist countries launches the United States to a new stage of expansion: the neoliberal globalization (since 1989). The succeeding wars with Iraq, Kosovo, Afganistan and again against Iraq have mined its hegemony, having to exercise a military dominance which it will not be able to sustain for a long time.

The emancipation of the Asiatic and African colonies occurred, in general, after the Second World War (since 1945), when the transfer of world hegemony from the European countries to the United States occurs. In all cases, the postcolonial world will be strongly marked by the colonial phase, indelible signs currently difficult to overcome, specially if we taking into consideration that an economic and political dependency continues to be exercised in different forms, other than simple colonialism. The subject of liberation of a neocolonial postcolonial continues to be the order of the day in all the work periphery in 2004 and the Iraq War gives evidence of this.

Firstly the United States had to bind its hegemony over the West from the beginning of the Cold War (1945-1954). In the second place, when looking to the south the attempts of a certain populism is destroyed under the name of "development", indicating that said countries lack capital and technology. This in reality meant that the struggle for world competency between the bourgeoisie of the metropolitan countries against the week bourgeoisie of the old colonies which at that time were politically liberated in Africa and Asia from their former European metropolis announcing a new type of dependency on behalf of the United States.

This is the time when the Transnational Corporations are born, which place in the periphery (and in every other favorable space) the productive body of capital (the productive company itself), beginning a new stage of the capital now transnationalized. The postcolonial countries (some with two centuries of postcolonialism and a few years after their political emancipation suffer now the penetration which transfers their increased valued to the "center" of these transnational

companies which revolutionize the planning of production processes and the distribution in a globalized market. The postcolonial dependency is geometrically accelerated.

When the collapse of the Soviet Union occurred in 1989, transnational capitalism was unlimitedly globalized, guaranteed by the American political and military power. The age of the productive capital transnationalization now becomes generalized in the marketing sphere and also the mobility of the financial capital. The devastating effects in the postcolonial countries which can not with equality compete, produced a massive poverty in the periphery, together with the ecologic destruction that touches all humanity. The globalization process of transnational capital likewise changes many factors of the critical thought.

The romantic conservative thought (expressed in the thought of a Heidegger, for example), profoundly anti-liberal is imitated in the periphery by the nationalistic movements of the bourgeoisie. Likewise, the socialist ideology (another current of the modern European thought), which triumphed in the Russian Revolution reaches the periphery. The Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions, among many others, lead us to think that the colonialist capitalism can be overcome within a mid-term. The collapse denoted by the Soviet Union plunges the vanguard movements of the periphery in a crisis which it has found necessary to reformulate.

§ 4. Trans-Modernity and the postulation of a world increasingly about the fulfillment of the aspiration that “another world is possible”.

Unnoticed a phenomenon has occurred in the panoptic vision of the “zero point” of the European perspective. It would seem that the impact of a globalizing Modernity, colonialism and capitalism, under the control of successive European empires and currently under the American empire would have completely subsumed humanity with its

old traditional cultures, with regional universality,¹⁷ such as China, Hindustan, the Asiatic Southeast, the Arabian-Islamic world, the Bantu Africa and Latin America (to this we would probably have to include some peripheral countries of Eastern Europe). To completely subsume¹⁸ is to pretend to have eliminated from the dominated and peripheral cultures of Late or Mature Modernity every external moment of its own to the logic of western culture. This would have been domestication without a possible liberation future or autonomous development of the other cultures.

On the other hand in the postcolonial periphery, post-modernity, cultural condition of the western societies, counter-phenomena then of Modernity itself, can only occur in "modernized" societies. Those non-modernized cultures or cultural strata, half modernized, counter-modern or simply abandoned by Modernity can not be assumed, are to be discarded in their misery, they can not be post-modern and said phenomena do not touch it or produce Kitsch monsters, subcultures imitating plastic.

Thus, it would seem that the dilemma is to become westernized in the postmodern globalization or to irremediably disappear.

Faced with this false dilemma I began years ago to propose the clarification of another alternative which in fact is being developed before our eyes, but which does not manage to diagnose itself clearly. The problem is the following.

17 The "great" cultures such as those cited, are "universal" because they have been conceived and developed based on from hundreds of specific cultures. I call this "universality" "regional" because of everything circumscribed to a specific range, not properly planetary.

18 "Subsume" (from ther Latin *subsumtio* and the German *Subsumption*) is the verb used by Kant which indicates the act of "inference" of the main premises and less from the syllogism in the conclusion. Hegel used the word "Aufhebung", Marx in turn used "Subsumption". We are trying to "in-corporate" an external moment to the Totality: it eliminates exteriority, transubstances the external moment and totalizes it as an internal determination of Totality.

The impact of the European culture, when filling in the "world-market" vacated by the absence of the Chinese commercial and shipping powers at the beginning of the 15th century, partially destroyed the cultures with the violence of its weapons, which were always the start of the western presence when faced with foreign cultures. The Amerindian cultures (Mesoamerican, Aztec, Mayan, and so many others; the Chibchan, the Incan Andean, Quechua or Aymara cultures, the Tupi-Guarani and other groups of planters and the southern and northern nomads of the continent) could not resist the attack, they had no iron weapons nor could they move themselves with horses (as the African and Asiatic). The genocide was greater, but millions survived and with this their despised languages and cultural elements and, thus, with this they could mimetically hide and survive through the 21st century. To this we should add the numerous African population which was uprooted to America (the Caribbean, mainly Cuba, Brazil and the colonies south of New England), with their own cultural characteristics. This post-colonialism is two centuries old.

The great Asian cultures offered much more resistance (China, the Hindustan, the Asiatic southeast), the Islamic world (from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean) and to a lesser degree the African cultures. In any case, among them racial mestization was not possible, either due to the large birth rate of the autochthonous population, or due to the type of colonization proper of capitalism after the industrial revolution, which exploited the colonies without racially "mixing" with the autochthonous population. This meant a much more structured population and cultural survival in the Asiatic-African colonialism and its easy distinctive presence in the postcolonial stage, of about a half century.

Repeating the question: Will all this peripheral and postcolonial cultures, which have survived up to the 21st century disappear, will they be fully subsumed (which is the same) or is there an alternative? Beyond the postmodern condition (proper of modern "center" cultures), I believe that before our eyes a phenomena is developing,

which I want to call trans-modern. What “trans” means is that it is not only later than the western central Modernity (which the prefix “post” likewise indicates), but that it is born outside, beyond, from a “creative source” (*schoepferische Quelle*, Marx says, with respect to the “life work” in reference to “capital” as a whole), “from the nothing” of the western cultures and even from its “postmodern condition” (last internal critical moment of said Modernity).

The despised cultural moment, not annihilated because it was devalued, allowed to survive because it was useless, not dangerous and, to end, because it was beyond every market, because they used as reference impoverished human masses and communities, not solvent (without money) and thus “non-buyers”¹⁹, are beginning to become aware of their dignity, of their value, of their exteriority. The mere existence of their own tradition, not appreciated by their own or foreigners before the impressive efficiency of the technology of the modern western culture, of the political and military power of the empires in turn, of the capitalism that dominates and exterminates its enemies in the postcolonial world (but in their mentalities, in their elites, culturally colonial), peripheral (which is being impoverished with the systemic transfer of increased value by various mechanisms of exchange and the debts immorally contracted with the illegal international financial capital),²⁰ begins to be considered as a point of reference.

19 The “market” does not only assume the need of goods, but demands “needy with money” (solvent), who can buy goods. The poor without money are not a market, they are suppressible miserable, non-significant for “marketing”.

20 The transnational financial capital, as denied with the United States the international “State of Law”, which should regulate the financial transactions among countries, eliminating the “tax paradises”, the indiscriminated mobility of investments and before the inability of punishing the “white collar” crimes (such as the theft to savers by foreign banks in Argentina) before the International Criminal Courts, is at this time an “illegal” structure; it does not have laws to regulate and hinders for said laws to be rendered. It is in what was called in the 17th and 18th centuries “status of nature”, barbarian, under the pure law of the strongest.

The largest Asiatic cultures (such as the Chinese and Hindustan) or the Western Mediterranean (such as the Arabian-Islamic)²¹ have about disappeared from the stage of the history “as told by European Modernity” (the “Eurocentrism”). But that Making, which disappears cultures (as those “disappeared”, eliminated by the military dictatorships of Latin America guided by the Pentagon and the Department of State) ended by being accepted by the westernized elites of the colonial, peripheral world. They ended by convincing themselves and taught their “own disappearance”, because their elites began to have power and control over the “uncultured” masses (of the western culture), because they were the mediators of the metropolitan power over their own colonized peoples. The dominant classes were westernized, they betray their history and created a mirage that there was a universal culture, that of European Modernity, because it is present in all the world, first colonial and, at a later date, postcolonial.

The task of those who become aware of the value of their own ancestral culture, of the dignity of their own traditions, is faced with certain dangers. On the one hand, there is an unrealistic despising of the values and power of the dominant Modern culture, while on the other, the exalting to such extent their own culture. And yet, these same previous traditions are chocked by the European Modernity, which is mystified and upheld as exemplary, substantively identical to itself and as a startup point for all “salvation” because of the violence and arrogance of western culture. To the contrary, the alternative must be “realistic”, “historically” located, intelligent with respect to the diagnosis of the situation, creative in the solution to the intended dilemma, because the point is not assimilation or extinction!

²¹ The Arabian language, not the race, was deeply rebuilt at the end of the 7th century, both by renaissance of the Greek philosophy, as well as by the very antique traditions of the Middle East and became a technical, mathematical, philosophical language, which from translators from Toledo in Spain will generate the renaissance of the Latin-German of the 8th century around Paris. The Latin-Germanic culture, European, is indispensable without the Arabian-Islamic world, heir of the Greeks and Byzantines (the most cultivated Eastern Roman Greek Empire, compared with the Western Latin).

Before an unstoppable globalization which claims to homogenize all humanity under the criteria and values of one sole English speaking culture, that of Mature Modernity or before the integrative fundamentalism²² of the return to the substantiation of a cultural identity already previously achieved (and, thus, in the present and future), who sees the danger of such a destructive homogenization, but opposes a diverging type of anti-dialectic fixation which it can not defend alone, faced with the technical power and the globalizing capital (specially in its purely military level), we propose another paradigm (and the political-cultural postulate) for the “trans-modernity”, which sets forth an impossible alternative to Modernity and Post-Modernity (as it is outside its possibilities) and possible and creative, starting with the “exteriority” of said Modernity, but in a permanent dialogue with it. We do not mean the rejection of the best²³ which Humanity produced in Modernity (fruit of the creative work of Europeans and of all the cultures of the World) or the best which the tradition of the cultures attacked by Modernity would have produced before the confrontation, but which continued reacting during the last centuries, an inevitable exchange with said Modernity. The aspects excluded of the classic cultures, currently affirmative of

22 Currently this “integrative fundamentalism” is both Christian (as part of the policies of the government of the United States as followed in the second war against Iraq), as well as Jewish (position sustained by the Zionism of Ariel Sharon, who is anti-Semite, if as Semite we understand the great critical tradition of the prophets of Israel, the Talmud, the Sephardic and Azkenasis rabbis, etc) and likewise Islamic. The latter is judged as “terrorist”; while the other two, as they have the power to define who terrorists are, pass as not being terrorists and even pretend to be progressive, moralizing, democratizing forces, without uncovering their barbaric strength well beyond all civilized legality. The torture of a terrorist in Guantanamo or killing one with a trial in Gaza, destroying the houses of their families without a judge rendering a sentence after the submittal of evidence is State terrorism and it has become so normal that we are no longer aware how barbarian it is.

23 Marx spoke of the “civilizing power of capital”. With respect to the European and medieval system, capitalism was a great step forward for said continent in favor of its population. But even though there are many positive values, we can not stop seeing negative effects each time more present, especially when the institutions of a said system stop answering the demands of permanency and growth of human life. The discernment between the best of a culture and its worst can not be made by the same culture, but by those who must adopt its elements for their own development. All this question is based on the liberty of the community subject which must have the Power to use its own criteria (not the one of the western culture) of discernment.

the Difference, never stopped a process of continuous change. The said cultures did not keep intact a substance identity already constituted, but began developing the potentials of their own cultures, confronted by and with Modernity, in an identity as a continuous process of creative conception.

Thus, I call a “Trans-Modern” program an attempt to start from the generating core of new cultural development, of the living tradition of the Different cultures of Modern Identity, in dialogue with Modernity. The future project would not only be a homogenous universal culture, but a differentiated many nature creation of the aforementioned dialogue, between the tradition excluded from the great cultures (and even less the universal or secondary ones) of the post-colonial peripheral with western Modernity (one of the currently existing cultures, the dominant ones and those that due to their tendency attempt to destroy all other cultures, even with their global market, in which the goods of the transnational capital are equally bearers of spiritual cultural materials).

In this form, the Arabian-Islamic culture, for example, critically deconstructs its heritage, studies it and evaluates using a hermeneutic which is the fruit of a methodological attitude of Modernity (in this case since Schleiermacher), in an attempt to better understand its past, to evaluate its contributions in the construction of the hegemonic Modernity (which the European one believes it produced alone) and to discover the contemporaneous possibilities which are, at the same time, updated (with the elements freely chosen from the exteriority of their own culture with respect to Modernity), faithful to the most radical tradition (with respect to the self-consciousness of a history critically reconstructed) and conceiver of alternatives which resist the attack, on the one hand, of the homogenizing transnational globalization and, on the other, the paralyzing fundamentalism. This is the intellectual program of Mohammed Abel Al-Yabri, philosopher

from Morocco,²⁴ where it evidences that the philosophical school of Al-Andalús (the caliphate of Cordoba, which include Spain and Morocco), arrives to the “western” school (being the eastern” the Fatimid of El Cairo and the caliphate of Baghdad, with their world level intellectual centers, such as Samarkand or Bujara, where Avicenna produces his work, for example), at a theoretical level and with Ibn-Rush (Averroës) he manages to fully distinguish the rational truth of the hermeneutic level of interpretation starting with faith in the Koran. The doctrine of the “two truths” or the Latin Averroism is clearly expressed in the philosophy of the Parisian professor Thomas de Aquinas, fully developed in the modern-European Illustration. Al-Yabri clearly evidences how the roots of the Illustration were expressed in an explicit form by Averroës.

It would then be interesting to have a south-south dialogue, because as Latin Americans we would have to ask the Moroccan philosopher to what extent the crisis of the Mediterranean (and, thus, the one of Maghreb) was an indirect effect of the Latin American conquest (with its abundant silver, which generated a crisis in all the kingdoms of the south Saharan savannah and, at the same, of the Ottoman Mediterranean) has to do with the stagnation and decadency of the Arabian thought effective from the 16th century. The loss of “centrality” of the Mediterranean (certainly regional “centrality”, not worldwide) and the opening of the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, would weaken the “connection” of the caravans of the Arabian culture (already fractured by the Turkish invasions), with Hindustan and China and generated for the excluded Arabian culture to fall in the lethargy of its stagnation. Currently and his work is an example, the world of the Arabian language is being reborn, it begins to develop from its tradition its best past and present contributions and may be rapidly integrated to the construction of the “pluri-versum (not the homogenizing “uni-verse”), where respect to Difference is not a confrontation with the strict criticism and scientific precision of the cultural, artistic, political, economic, technical, etc. interpretation.

²⁴ See for example, from Al-Yabri, *Crítica de la razón árabe*, Icaria, Barcelona, 2001; and *El legado filosófico árabe*. Alfarabi, Avicenna, Avempace, Averroës, Abenaldún, Lecturas contemporáneas, Trotta, Madrid, 2001.

We can say the same thing about China. Though it is true that Mao Tse-tung was deeply inspired by the neo-Confucian philosophy,²⁵ specifically the doctrines of Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529),²⁶ there was a certain carelessness of the millenary cultural and philosophical tradition of China on the part of the Maoist revolution. Currently, China, as the Arabian world, the Hindustan or the Latin American worlds – I myself am a part of a generation that reconstructs its own thought in dialogue with Modernity, without losing the sense of Difference or the planetarium of responsibility of the intellectual militancy- undertake a task of deeply reviewing their cultural past, which was only dormant during the last two centuries and which powerfully resurges at all its levels. I personally state, in diachronic structural places of a work about to be published on *Historia mundial de la Filosofía política*, the presence of Chinese philosophers, since before the “warrior States” and the famous Sunzi and its developments and commentators, such as the classics (from I Chang to Confucius, Mo’i, Mencius, etc.), but likewise the simultaneous development of the modern European philosophy, with authors such as the aforementioned Wang Yang-ming with its Shu Xi doctrine (“great learning”); li Zhi (1527-1602), from a family of international dealers who fall in disgrace due to the terrible decisions of the Mings of closing the doors to the “exterior” and, thus, producing a merciless skeptic criticism to the empire;²⁷ Huang Tsung-hsi (1610-1695), contemporary of Hobbs, writes a political treaty (the Ming-i tai-fang lu [Plan to await Dawn],²⁸ where the horizon of the problem holds such disproportion with the European authors of the age, that it is

25 See Fredric Wakeman, *History and Will. Philosophical Perspectives of Mao Tse-tung's Thought*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973.

26 See other Works of Wang Yang-ming, *Instructions for Practical Living and other Writings*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1963. Armida

27 “Confucius never said that we had to study Confucius” (in Feshu I: 17 (quoted by Wm. T. de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition from earliest times to 1600*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999, volume 1, page 870).

28 See the edition of this work of Huang Tsung-hsi, *Ming-i-tai-fang lu* (Waiting for the Dawn: a Plan for the Prince), edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.

ridiculous to make a comparison with the latter;²⁹ Lü Liu-liang (1629-1683, T'ang chen (1620-1704), Ch'üan Tsu-wang (1705-1755), etc.

The "Trans-Modern" is not the last critical and debilitating moment –thinking in the *pensiero debole* of Gianni Vattimo- of Modernity, but it is a dawn process, a first moment of a happening beyond Modernity. It arises from the nothing of the hegemonic culture, from non-being of Modernity, from the beyond the limit of its ontology; it arises from the exteriority of the Other, of the other culture, the one which never was western. Thus, the development of this possibility of the Other is an impossibility of Modernity. It is "trans-(modern)" because it comes after wards in time, becomes it comes from outside in the systematic spaciality and because it goes

²⁹ Huang reflects on a political structure of 150 million persons (Hobbes, for example, on an England of some 3 million). Huang, being inspired in authors more than two thousand years old, frequently quotes Confucius, Mencius, Hu Han, etc., makes reference to the experiences of 477 B. C., according to the Twelve Circles; reviews the political history from the beginning of the empire through the end of the third century B. C. The universalism of "all-those-below the-sky" allows him to set forth a theory and the experience of the "law", of the school reforms of the more than one hundred thousand mandarins, of the location of the armies in the frontiers (specially the north one) with one million soldiers (compare this figure with those of Machiavelli or Hobbes, who considered with respect to the armies of their respective States!), with solutions to the question of monetary inflation (because China since the 4th century A. C. had printed paper money, economic-technical achievement which Europe would imitate one thousand years later), regime of agricultural, urban and trade taxes; irrigation system of the great channels hundreds of kilometers long, the repair and development of the enormous wall of thousands of kilometers long before the barbarian people of the north; finally, a political treaty too advanced for the Europe of the 17th century. It is evident that this also has negative aspects, but the Chinese contemporary criticism must be made, to understand the pitiful state in which the Empire fell, torn by the European powers, Russia and Japan, which had entered the industrial revolution. Maoism will produce a political, economic and technological revolution in what we might call a "trans-modern" project. The Chinese adopt elements of the western modern culture (and Marxism is one of them), from a tradition of its own, which suddenly begin to show a Different physiognomy, beyond Modernity, adopting said Modernity and from its own cultural tradition. In any case, this alternative is not perfect, this can not be. It is here, we have to interpret it with new categories, which are the ones I attempt to develop.

towards a pluri-versum future culture by a road which runs a road on the outside of the process which developed Modernity.³⁰

All this opens a theoretic framework to many pressing tasks. On the part of the negotiators, creators of the Different cultures excluded from Modernity, to create new products which comply with the conditions set forth (a] to be faithful to the best of their own tradition, from where we extract criteria of a procedural identity and never a substantive one; b] to know how to adopt in a critical and autonomous form to the best of Modernity; c] to creatively answer to novelties of contemporary challenges). On the part of the critical dialogue necessary to share experiences, a whole project of discursive exchange will be necessary to reach a consensus from the symmetric participation of those affected, an intercultural South-South, South-North. However, those who undertake this dialogue must speak on behalf, not only of their own cultures in an “awakening” status, from the creative study of their own traditions and from the production of trans-modern novelty, it must be done from the victims of their own cultures. This is one last issue which I must clarify.

The peripheral postcolonial cultures, as such, have a partial exploited, extracted, stolen and dominated moment; and another despised, excluded and devalued aspect. With the decolonization trying to deny what of colonial the postcolonial cultures have. But we must not forget, that every culture inevitably has its own victims; it is not necessary, but it is a negative effect of the errors always possible from fallible, non-perfect decisions. When the Mings decided to

30 I repeat, the “developmental fallacy” consists in pretending to oblige to that eternal process of the excluded cultures, to simply be an imitation of the same process historically followed by Modernity. All the peripheral and postcolonial cultures will follow another development road towards a future cultural plus-universum cultural than modern Europe. These are the subjects which we philosophically exposed with extreme precision, ontology, ethics and politics, since the end of the 60’s decade, of the last century. In English see my works already quoted, specially the synthesis expressed with the name of Philosophy of Liberation, which starting from the political practice and inspired partly on the philosophical assumptions of the Semitic vision of existence (Babylonian, Phoenician, Jewish, Christian, Arabian), was clearly stated in the phenomenology of E. Levinas –whose politics have many limitations.

“close” themselves to the exterior to “give order to the interior of China”, at the same time they had sealed their future fate and were to suffer the setback of the almost disappearance of China in the 19th century. The immediate effects are not perceptible, but they are inevitable at the long range.

The dialogue between cultures must not be hegemonized, either by the mandarins or by the Brahmins, or by the sheiks, or by the capitalist magnets who exploit their respective countries, or by the intellectual elites of the respective peripheral postcolonial cultures. The victims of their own cultures (the Chinese peasants, the “pariahs” of India, the impoverished members of the Arab and Islamic tribes, the African slaves, the Latin American Indians, together with the salaried workers, those “condemned to the land” according to F. Fanon) the reference which leads, which lights up this type of dialogue. The dialogue of the elites hides the future project of a plus-universum or symphony of Differences in consensus; only the victims, in their own suffering, as stated in the Philosophy of Liberation, the work of E. Levinas or of W. Benjamin; only the poverty and lack of culture of the dominant cultures (the world which is globalized and the regions which have traditionally dominated for centuries their own masses), can mark the “road”, the Tao. The popular culture of the difference, of the Exteriority of Modernity, peripheral and postcolonial, will allow us to become aware of the conditions of the Trans-Modern Culturalism in the full sense of the word.