TRANSMODERNITY AND INTERCULTURALITY:
An Interpretation from the Perspective of Philosophy of Liberation

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1. In search of self-identity: from Eurocentrism to developmentalist coloniality.

I belong to a generation of Latin Americans whose intellectual beginnings are situated in the 1950s, after the end of the Second World War. For us, in the Argentina of that era, there was no doubt that we were a part of "western culture." For that reason, some of our subsequent categorical judgments are a natural expression of someone who opposes himself.

The philosophy that we studied set out from the Greeks, in whom we saw our most remote lineage. The Amerindian World had no presence in our studies, and none of our professors would have been able to articulate the origin of philosophy with reference to indigenous peoples.[1] Moreover, the ideal philosopher was one who was familiar with the precise details of classical western philosophers and their contemporary developments. There existed no possibility whatsoever for a specifically Latin American philosophy. It is difficult to evoke in the present the firm hold that the European model of philosophy had on us (since at that moment in Argentina, there was still no reference to the United States). Germany and France had complete hegemony, especially in South America (although this was not the case in Mexico, Central America, or the Hispanic, French, or British Caribbean).

In cultural philosophy, there was reference to Oswald Spenger, Arnold Toynbee, Alfred Weber, A.L. Kroeber, Ortega y Gasset or F. Braudel, and later William McNeill. But this was always in order to comprehend the Greek phenomenon (with celebrated works such as *Paidea* or W. Jaeger's *Aristotle*), the debate about the Middle Ages (since the revalorization authorized by Etienne Gilson), and the understanding of Western (European) culture as the context in which to comprehend modern and contemporary philosophy. Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Hiedegger, and Scheler were the key figures. This was a substantialist view of culture, without fissures and chronological from East to West, as required by the Hegelian view of universal history.

With my trip to Europe – in my case, crossing the Atlantic by boat in 1957 – we discovered ourselves to be "Latin Americans," or at least no longer "Europeans," from the moment that we disembarked in Lisbon or Barcelona. The differences were obvious and could not be concealed. Consequently, the problem of culture – humanistically, philosophically, and existencially – was an obsession for me: "Who are we culturally?

1 Our province of Mendoza (Argentina), it's true, was among the furthest southern territories of the Incan empire, or more precisely of the Uspallata Valley between Argentina and Chile, with an "Incan Bridge" and "Incan Trails", which, in my youth as an Andean expert, I could observe with awe at more than 4,500 meters above sea level. For biographic-philisophical aspects of my generational experiences, see "Hacia una simbólica latinoamericana (hasta 1969)," in my work *Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty y la filosofia de la liberacón*, Universidad de Guadalajara (México), 1993, pp.138-140; and §§ 1-3 in the article "En busqueda del sentido (Origen y desarrollo de una Filosofia de la Liberación)," in the issue dedicated to my work in the journal *Anthropos* 180 (Barcelona, 1998), pp. 14-19.

What is our historical identity?" This was not a question of the possibility of describing this "identity" objectively; it was something prior. It was the existential anguish of knowing oneself.

In Spain as well as Israel (where I was from 1957-1961, always in search of an answer to the question of what it is to be "Latin American") my studies steered me toward challenging this mode of questioning. But the theoretical model of culture would inevitably continue to be the same for many years still. The impact of Paul Ricoeur's classes, which I attended at the Sorbonne, and his oft-cited article "Universal Civilization and National Culture,"[2] responded to the substantialist model, which was moreover essentially Eurocentric. Although "civilization" still did not have the Spenglerian connotation of a moment of cultural decadence – denoting instead the universal technical structures of human-instrumental progress as a whole (whose principal actor during recent centuries had been the West) – "culture" nonetheless constituted the valorative-mythical content of a nation (or a group of nations). This was the first model that we used during those years in order to situate Latin America.

It was from this "culturalist" perspective that I began my first studies of Latin America, hoping to discover the place of the latter in universal history (a la Toynbee), and discerning new depths inspired primarily by P. Ricoeur (as previously mentioned), but also by Max Weber, Pitrim Sorokin, K. Jaspers, W. Sobart, etc.

We organized a "Latin American Week" in December of 1964, with Latin American students that were studying in various European countries. It was a foundational experience. Josué de Castro, Germán Arciniegas, François Houtart, and many other intellectuals including P. Ricoeur[3] articulated their perspectives on the matter. The theme was "achieving awareness" (*prise de conscience*) of the existence of a Latin American culture. Rafael Brown Menéndez and Natalie Botana disagreed with the existence of such a concept.

In the same year, I was in the process of publishing an article in the journal Ortega y Gasset in Madrid,[4] which contested the "historicist reduction" of our Latin American reality. Against the revolutionary, who struggles for the future "beginning" of history; against the liberal who mystifies early nineteenth-century national emancipation from Spain; against the conservatives who, for their part, mythologize the splendor of the colonial era; against the *indigenistas* who negate everything that followed the great Amerindian cultures, I proposed the need to reconstruct—in its integrity and within the framework of world history—the historical identity of Latin America.

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2 Published in *Histoire et verité,* Seuil, Paris, 1964, pp.274-288, and earlier, in the journal *Espirit* (Paris) in October. The differentiation between levels of "civilization" – with reference to technical, scientific, or political instruments – from culture indicates what I would call today a "developmentalist fallacy," as it fails to note that all instrumental systems (especially the political, but also the economic) are already "cultural."

3 These works were published in *Espirit*, 7-8, (October 1965). I presented an essay about "Chrétientés latino-américaines", pp. 2-20 (which appeared later in Polish "Spolecznosci Chrzescijanskie Ameriki Lacinskiej", in *Znak Miesiecznik* (Krakow) XIX (1967) pp. 1244-1260).

4 "Iberoamérica en la Historia Universal" in *Revista de Occidente*, 25 (1965), pp.85-95. At that time I had nearly completed two books: *El humanismo helénico*, written in 1961, and *El humanismo semita*, written in 1964, and I had the materials for what would later appear as *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad*, which was finally completed in 1968. I had performed a creative reconstruction of what I called a Latin American "protohistory," that of Cristopher Colombus or Hernando Cortés.

These philosophical works corresponded to a period of historico-empirical research (from 1963 onward) that paralleled (through funding that I was awarded in Maguncia over various years) the thesis in Hispano-American history that I defended at the Sorbonne (Paris) in 1967.[5]

A course in the History of Culture at the Universidad del Nordeste (Resistencia, Chaco, Argentina)[6] gave me the opportunity to survey the panoramic of "world history" (in the manner of Hegel or Toynbee), in the context of which I sought to "situate" (the location of) Latin America through a reconstruction (a Heideggerian "de-struction"). The product of that course, *Hypothesis for the Study of Latin American within World History*,[7] attempted to elaborate a history of cultures that sets out from their respective "ethico-mythical nuclei" (the *noyau éthico-mythique* of P. Ricoeur). In order to engage in an intercultural dialogue, it was necessary to begin by conducting an analysis of the most remote "contents" of their mythical narratives, of the supposed ontologies and the ethico-political structure underlying each of the cultures in question. There is a tendency to quickly theorize such a dialogue without a concrete understanding of the possible themes of such a dialogue. For that reason, that *Course of 1966*, with an extensive methodological introduction, and with a minimal description of the "great cultures" (taking into account, criticizing, and integrating the visions of Hegel, N. Danilevsky, W. Dilthey, O. Spengler, Alfred Weber, K. Jaspers, A. Toyenbee, Teilhard de Chardin, and many others, and with reference to the most important contemporary world histories) allowed me to "situate" Latin America, as mentioned, within the process of human development since the origins of the *homo* species, through the Paleolithic and Neolithic ages, and up to the time of the West's invasion of America.[8] From Mesopotamia and Egypt to India and China and across the Pacific, one finds great Neolithic American cultures (a source of Latin American "proto-history"). The confrontation between sedentary agricultural communities and the Indo-Europeans of the Euro-Asiatic steppes (among them the Greeks and Romans), and between these latter and the Semites (mostly from the Arabian desert), provided me a key to the history of this "ethical-mythic nucleus," which had passed through the Byzantine and Muslim worlds, arriving at the Romanized Iberian Peninsula (the other source of our "Latin American proto-history").

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5 In contrast to many of those who speak of culture, and of Latin American culture in particular, I had the opportunity over four years to spend long hours in the General Archive of the Indies in Sevilla, to study foundational historical works of the scientific-positivist understanding of Latin America in the sixteenth century—the beginning of the colonial period. This filled my brain with an impressive quantity of concrete references from all parts of the Latin American continent (from Mexican California to the South of Chile, since I also immersed myself in documents from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). For me, to speak of "Latin American culture" was to refer to indigenous peoples, struggles for conquest, processes of indoctrination, the foundation of cities, missions for forced relocation and subjugation of indigenous people (*reducciones*), the local colonial administrations (*cabildos*), provincial councils, diocesan synods, the tithes of the haciendas, the payment of mines, etc, etc. See the nine volumes published between 1969 and 1971 about *El episcopado hispanoamericano. Institution misionera en defensa del indio* (Colección Sondeos, CIDOC, Cuernavaca).

6Which took place over the course of four months of feverish work, from August to December of 1966, since upon leaving Maguncia in Germany I would return again at the end of that year to Europe (my first airplane trip over the Atlantic) to defend my second doctoral thesis in Paris in February 1967.

7 Available in rotaprint from the Universidad del Noreste, Resistencia (Argentine), 265 pages. It was published for the first time on CD entitiled: *Obra Filosófica de Enrique Dussel (1963-2002)*, available through internet at www.clacso.org.

8 In reality, I omitted Latin-Germanic Europe, since I had only studied it through the fifth century.

In March of 1967, returning to Latin America, when the ship passed through Barcelona, the editor of *Nova Terra* hand-delivered to me my first book: *Hipótesis para una historia de la iglesia en América Latina*. In this work one could see, at the religious level, the basic contours of a philosophy of culture for our continent. This small work "would make history," because it offered the first reinterpretation of religious history within the context of a global cultural history. In the historiographic tradition, the question was formulated as follows: "What were the relations between church and state?" Now, on the other hand, it was defined in terms of: "The cultural clash and the position of the church."[9] The crisis of emancipation from Spain, enthroned until 1810, was described as "the passage from a *model of Christendom* to that of a *pluralist and secular* society." In this work we can already see a *new cultural* history of Latin America (not only of the church), which was no longer Eurocentric but still "developmentalist."

This is why, when I gave the speech "Culture, Latin American Culture, and National Culture" at a conference at the Universidad del Nordeste on May 25th of 1967,[10] it was like a *Manifesto*, a "generational take of consciousness." Rereading it, I find sketched out many issues that, in one way or another, would be modified or expanded over the next thirty years or more.

In September of that same year I began giving semester-long courses in an Institute based in Quito (Ecuador), where I was able to posit the full breadth of this new reconstructive vision of the history of Latin American culture in the presence of over 80 participants from almost every Latin American country (including the Caribbean and American Latinos). The impression that I caused in the audience was immense and profound--disquieting for some—and in the end, inspiring in all the hope for a new interpretive era.[11] In a course given in Buenos Aires in 1969,[12] I began with "Toward a Philosophy of Culture,"[13] a question which culminated with a section entitled: "The Achievement of Latin American Consciousness," which was perceived as the cry of a generation:

It is commonplace now to say that our cultural past is heterogeneous and at times incoherent, hybrid, and even in a certain way marginal in comparison to European

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9 This is included in a book edited in 1972 (under the title: *Historia de la iglesia en América Latina*, Nova Terra, Barcelona), p. 56.

10 This speech appeared for the first time, with that title, in *Cuyo* (Mendoza), 4 (1968) pp.7-40, and appears in a compilation in Portuguese, under the title *Oito ensaios sobre cultura latino-americana e liberação*, Paulinas, São Paulo, 1997; the last of these appears on pp.25-63. I had included it before, in modified form, in *Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina. Coloniaje y Liberación 1492-1972*, Editorial Nova Terra, 1972, pp.29-47.

11A sythesis of these courses in Quito appeared later under the title *Caminos de liberación latinoamericana, vol. I: Interpretación histórico-teológica de nuestro continente latinoamericano, Latinoamérica*, Buenos Aires, 1972. The revised edition appeared in Spanish as: *Desintegración de la cristianidad colonial y liberación. Perspectiva latinoamericana, Sígueme, Salamanca, 1978*; in English as: *History and the Theology of Liberation: A Latin American perspective*, Orbis Books, New York, 1976; in French as: *Histoire et théologie de la liberation. Perspective latinoaméricane*, Editions Economie et Humanisme-Editions Ouvrières, Paris, 1974; and in Portuguese as: *Caminhos de libertação latino-americana*, vol. I: Interpretação histórico-teológica, Paulinas, Sao Paulo, 1985. Another version was published in abridged form as: *América latina y conciencia cristiana*, Ipla, Quito, 1970. These were years of great critical and creative intellectual effervescence.

12 "Cultura latinoamericana e historia de la Iglesia" in L. Gera, E. Dussel and J.Arch, *Contexto de la iglesia argentina*, Universidad Pontificia, Buenos Aires, pp.32-155.

13 *Ibid*., pp.33-47.

culture. But what is most tragic is when the very existence of such a culture is ignored, since what is relevant is that, at any rate, there exists a culture in Latin America. Although some may deny it, its originality is evident, in art, in the style of life.[14]

As a professor in the National University of Cuyo (Mendoza, Argentina) I let flow this very same historical reconstruction, and did so in a strictly philosophical way. This took the form of an anthropological trilogy (in questions such as the conceptualization of the body-soul and the immortality of the soul; or the spirit-flesh, person, resurrection, etc.) always bearing in mind the question of the origins of "Latin American culture." These works were published as *El humanismo helénico*,[15] *El humanismo helénico*,[16] and El *dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad*.[17] This final work concluded the *Course of 1966* – which had only covered up to fifth-century Latin-germanic christianity – by dealing with Europe's relationship with and expansion into Latin America. I reconstructed anew the history of different Christianities (Armenian, Georgian, Byzantine, Coptic, Latin-Germanic, etc.), as well as describing in other later works the clash of the Islamic world with Spain (between 711 and 1492).[18]
The obsession was not to leave aside any century without being able to integrate it into a view of World History which would allow us to understand the "origin," "development," and "content" of Latin American culture. Both existential demands and a (still Eurocentric) philosophy led us to search for a cultural identity, but it was there that a rupture began to appear.

2. Cultural core and periphery: the problem of liberation

Since the end of the 1960s, as a fruit of the emergence of *critical* Latin American social science (particularly "Dependency Theory"[19]), as well as the Emmanuel Levinas' lecture *Totality and Infinity*, and perhaps initially and principally as a result of the popular and student movements of 1968 (worldwide, but fundamentally in Argentina and Latin America), a historical rupture was produced in the field of philosophy and consequently in philosophy of culture. What had been previously considered the metropolitan and

14 *Ibid*., p.48.
15 Eudeba, Buenos Aires, 1975.
16 Eudeba, Buenos Aires, 1969.
17 This text has as its subtitle: *Desde los orígenes hasta antes de la conquista de América*, Guadalupe, Buenos Aires, 1974.
18 For example, in the "General Introduction" to the *Historia General de la Iglesia en América Latina*, CEHILA-Sígueme, Salamanca, t.I/1, 1983, pp.103-204. And, in many other works (like in *Etica de la Liberación*, Trotta, Madrid, 1998, [26]; and more extensively in *Política de Liberación* which I am currently writing), I again take up the question of the "foundation" and "development" of Latin-Germanic Christianity (the first stage of Europe, properly stated). See my article "Europa, Modernidad y Eurocentrismo" in *Hacia una Filosofía Política Crítica*, Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao, 2001, pp.345-359.
19 See the history and the theoretical reconstruction of Dependency Theory in my book *Towards an Unknown Marx: A commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861-1863*, Routledge, London, 2001 (published in Spanish in 1988), pp. 205-230. Theotonio dos Santos has recently returned to this theme in his book *Teoría de la Dependencia*, Plaza y Janés, México, 2001, confirming my thesis entirely. From 1975 through the end of the 1990s, Latin American social sciences were becoming increasingly skeptical of Dependency Theory. I demonstrated (in 1988, *op.cit.*) that the refutation was inadequate and that, thus far, Dependency Theory has been the only sustainable theory. In a polemic with Karl-Otto Apel, Franz Hinkelammert has emphatically demonstrated the validity of this theory.

colonial worlds were now categorized (through the still developmentalist terminology of Raul Presbisch of the CEPAL) as "core" and "periphery." To this, we should add an entire categorical horizon originating in *critical* economics, which demanded the incorporation of social classes as intersubjective actors to be integrated into a definition of culture. This was not merely a terminological question but a conceptual one, which allowed for the rupturing of the substantialist conception of culture and for the discovery of fractures (internal to each culture) and between them (not only as an intercultural "dialogue" or "clash," but rather more strictly as *domination* and *exploitation* of one culture over others). It was necessary to take into account on all levels the asymmetry of the actors involved. The "culturalist" stage was over. Thus, in 1983, in a chapter entitled "Beyond Culturalism," I wrote:

From the structuralist view of culturalism, it was impossible to understand the changing situations of *hegemony*, within the well-defined historical blocs, and in respect to the ideological formations of diverse classes and factions [...]. Moreover, culturalism lacked the categories of *political society* (in the last analysis, the state) and *civil society* [...].[20]

Latin American philosophy – like the *Philosophy of Liberation* – discovered its cultural conditioning (since it understood itself *from the perspective of* a determinate culture), but moreover it was articulated (explicitly or implicitly) from the perspective of the interests of determinate classes, groups, genders, races, etc. Location[21] had been discovered and was the first philosophical theme to be addressed. Intercultural "dialogue" had lost its simplicity and came to be understood as overdetermined by the entirety of the colonial era. In fact, in 1974 we initiated an intercontinental "South-South dialogue" between thinkers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, whose first meeting was held in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) in 1976.[22] Those encounters gave us a new and immediate panorama of the great cultures of humanity.[23]

This new vision of culture emerged at the last of these meetings, which took place at the University of El Salvador in Buenos Aires, at which point the Philosophy of Liberation was already fully in development.[24] It represented a frontal attack on the position of Domingo F. Sarmiento, an eminent Argentinean educator and author of *Facundo: Civilización o barbarie*. For him, civilization meant North American culture and barbarism was represented by the federal *caudillos* that struggled for regional autonomy

20 Dussel, 1983, vol. I, pp. 35-36.

21[Tr: English in original.]

22 In subsequent years (and indeed up to the present), we have held encounters in Delhi, Ghana, São Paulo, Colombo, Manila, Oaxtepec, etc.

23 For me, after living in Europe for almost eight years, two years among Palestinians (many of whom were Muslim) in Israel, traveling and giving conference talks or participating in seminars on five occasions in India (among all cultures, the most impressive), in the Philippines three times, in Africa at numerous events (in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Morocco, Senegal, Ethiopia, etc.), I had an immediate understanding of the "great cultures" that I have respectfully and passionately venerated.

24 This appeared under the title "Cultura imperial, cultura ilustrada y liberación de la cultura popular," published in *Oito ensaios sobre cultura latino-americana*, pp. 121-152. This speech was given in front of a crowd of hundreds and hundreds of participants, and openly attacked the military dictatorship. It appeared for the first time at a conference given at the Fourth Academical Week at the Universidad de El Salvador, Buenos Aires, on August 6, 1973; in *Stromata* (Buenos Aires), 30 (1974), pp. 93-123; and in *Dependencia cultural y creación de la cultura en América Latina*, Bonum, Buenos Aires, 1974, pp.43-73.

against the port of Buenos Aires (the transmission belt of English domination). My critique was the beginning of a de-mythologization of the national "heroes," who had conceived the neocolonial model in Argentina which had already begun to run out of steam.[25] An "imperial" culture (that of the core), which originated with the invasion of América[26] in 1492, confronted the "peripheral" cultures in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. The result was not a symmetrical dialogue, but rather one of domination, of exploitation, of annihilation. Moreover, the elites of these "peripheral cultures" were educated by the imperialists, and therefore, as Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in the preface to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, echoed what they had learned in Paris or London. Enlightened neocolonial elites were so loyal to the empires that they distanced themselves from their own "people" and used them like hostages for their dependent politics. Therefore, there were asymmetries of domination on the world map:

a.) a western, metropolitan, and Eurocentric culture (the civilization of Ricoeur) that dominated and sought to annihilate all peripheral cultures; and
b.) postcolonial cultures (Latin America from beginning of the nineteenth century and Asia and Africa following the Second World War) which were themselves split between

i.) groups associated with the current empires, "enlightened" elites whose authority required them to turn their backs on their ancestral regional culture; and
ii.) the popular majority, settled in their traditions, which they defended (often in a fundamentalist manner) against the imposition of a technocratic, economically capitalist culture.

Philosophy of Liberation, as a *critical* cultural philosophy, needed to generate a new elite whose "enlightenment" would be integrated with the interests of the *social bloc of the oppressed* (Gramsci's *popolo*). For that reason, we spoke of the "liberation of popular culture":

There is, firstly, a *patriotic revolution* of national liberation, secondly, a *social revolution* that liberates the oppressed classes, and thirdly, there is a *cultural revolution*. The last of these operates on the pedagogical level, the level of the youth, the level of culture.[27]

That peripheral culture – oppressed by the imperial culture – should be the point of departure for intercultural dialogue. We wrote in 1973:

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25 The tumultuous protests of December 2001 in Argentina were the culmination of a long process of the hollowing-out of a peripheral state through three centuries of colonial exploitation, through foreign loans and extraction of agricultural riches since the middle of the nineteenth century, and through the accelerated extraction of the neoliberal model implemented by Bush and Menem. A generation was physically eliminated in the "dirty war" (1975-1984) so that an economic model could be implemented that brought misery to what had been – from 1850 to 1950 – the wealthiest and most industrialized country in Latin America. All of this had been clearly foreseen since the early 1970s by Philosophy of Liberation, following the rightward political shift that removed the Cámpora administration, under the direction of the unconcealable fascism of J.D. Perón from June 1973.

26[Tr: I retain the accent to emphasize that Dussel is referring to Latin America as a whole, and not the United States.]

27 *Oito ensaios*, p.137.

The culture of cultural poverty, far from being a minor culture, represents the most uncontaminated and irradiative core of the resistance of the oppressed against the oppressor [...] In order to create something new, one must have a new word that bursts in from the *exteriority*. This *exteriority* is the people itself which, despite being oppressed by the system, is totally foreign to it.[28]

The "project of cultural liberation"[29] arises from popular culture, although thought through the Philosophy of Liberation in the Latin American context. We had overcome culturalist developmentalism that believed that a traditional culture would be able to transition into a secular, pluralist culture. However, it was still necessary to radicalize our misguided analysis of "the popular sector" (*lo popular*) (the best), since it is in the womb of the latter contains the nucleus that would harbor populism and fundalmentalism (the worst). Another step would be necessary.

3. Popular culture: not merely populism

In an article published in 1984,[30] I again needed to clarify the difference between a.) the "people" (*pueblo*) and "the popular sector" *(lo popular*); and b.) "populism," which has taken various forms: from "Thatcherite populism" in the United Kingdom—as suggested by Ernesto Laclau and studied in Birmingham by Richard Hall—through the contemporary incarnation of "fundamentalism" in the Muslim world, a "fundamentalism" which is equally present, for example, in the North American Christian sectarianism of George W. Bush.
In that article we divided the material in four sections. In the first section,[31] we reconstructed our positions since the 1960s showing the need to overcome the limitations of reductivism (of ahistorical revolutionaries, or of the liberal histories of hispanic-conservatives or *indigenistas*), and we reconstructed Latin American cultural history within the framework of world history (from Asia, our Amerindian component; the Asian-Afro-European proto-history through hispanic Christianity; colonial Christianity though postcolonial and neocolonial "dependent Latin American culture"). The whole project ended with a project for "a popular, post-capitalist culture"[32]:

When we were in the mountains – wrote Tomás Borge about the *campesinos* – and we heard them speak with their pure, clean hearts, with a simple and poetic language, we understood how much talent had been lost [by the neocolonial elites] *throughout the centuries.*[33]

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28 *Ibid*., p.147.
29 In *Ibid.*, pp.146ss.
30 "Cultura latinoamericana y Filosofia de la Liberación (Cultura popular revolucionaria: más allá del popularism and dogmatismo)," in *Oito ensaios*, pp.171-231. It first appeared in *Cristianismo y Sociedad* (México), 80 (1984), pp.9-45; and in *Latinoamérica: Anuario de Estudios Latinoamericanos* (UNAM, México), 17 (1985), pp.77-127.
31 See *Oito Ensaios*, pp. 171ss.
32 *Ibid*., p. 189ss.
33 "La cultura del pueblo," in *Habla la dirección de la vanguardia*, Managua, Departamento de Propaganda del FSLN, 1981, p.116.

This required a new point of departure for the description of culture *as such*—the subject of the second section.[34]

Through a careful and archaeological rereading of Marx (from his early works in 1835 to those of 1882[35]) we showed that all culture is a *mode* or a system of "types of *work*." It is no coincidence that "agri-*culture*" means, in a strict sense, "*work* of the earth," since the etymological root of "culture" comes from the Latin "cultus" in the sense of sacred consecration.[36] Both *material* poetics[37] (the physical fruits of labor) and *mythical* poetics (symbolic creation) are forms of cultural *pro*-duction (putting the subjective – or better yet the intersubjective and communal – *outside*, objectively). In this way we recuperated the economic (without falling into economism).

In a third section,[38] we analyzed the various, newly-fractured moments of a post-culturalist or post-Spengerian understanding of cultural experience. "Bourgeois culture" (a, below) was studied in its abstract relation to "proletarian culture" (b), and the "culture of the core countries" was analyzed in relation to the "culture of the peripheral countries" (in the order of the global "world-system"). Moreover, "multinational culture or cultural imperialism" (c) was described in relation to the "mass or alienated culture," (d) which was globalized, and (e) "national or populist culture" was integrated with the "culture of the enlightened elite," (f) and it then counterposed to "popular culture,"[39] or "resistance through cultural creation" (g).

Evidently, this cultural typology, and its categorial criteria, would presuppose a long and critical "epistemological struggle" proper to the new social sciences of Latin America and Philosophy of Liberation. We had already achieved these distinctions long before, but now they took a more definitive shape.

DIAGRAM 1:

(a) Bourgeois	Core	Multinational

34 *Oito ensaios*, p.191ss.

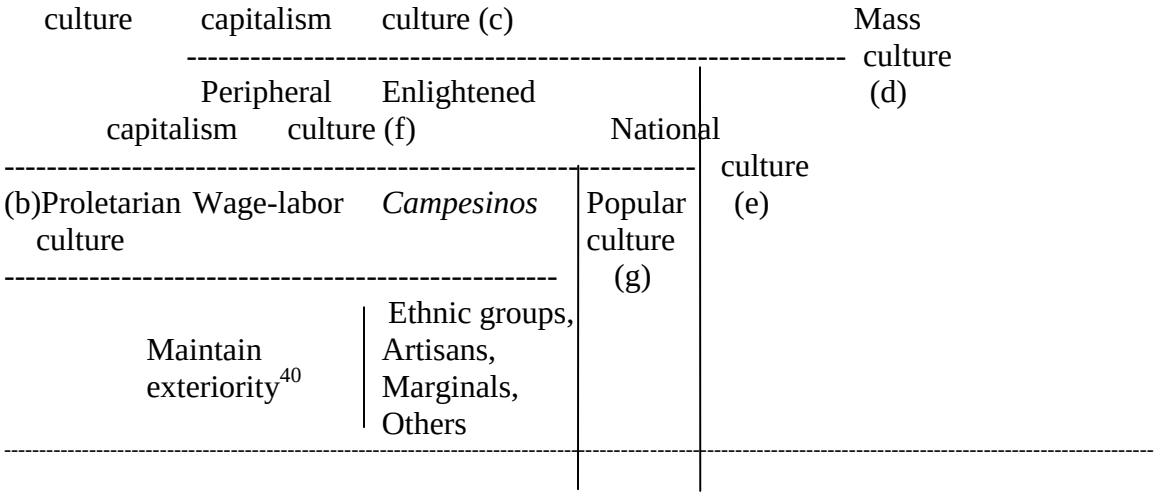
35 This was later explored in my trilogy: *La Producción téorica de Marx, Siglo XXI*, México, 1985; *Hacia un Marx desconocido*, XXI, México, 1988 (translated in Italian and English), and *El último Marx*, XXI, México, 1990.

36 Although in reality these are the same things, because upon harming the *terra mater* with the plow, the Indo-european needed a sacred act of anticipated "reparation": a "cult of *terra mater*" serving as a condition for the possibility of extracting from it – through work and its "sorrows" (both those of the earth and of humanity) – the fruit, the harvest, human nourishment. This is the dialectic of life-death, happiness-sorrow, nourishment-hunger, culture-chaos. And consequently, of death-resurrection, sorrow-fertility, necessity-satisfaction, chaos-creation.

37[Tr: Dussel refers to the Greek term *poietiké*.]

38 *Oito ensaios*, p.198ss.

39 See "Cultura(s) popular(es)," a special issue on this subject in *Comunicación y cultura* (Santiago), 10 (1983); Ecléa Bosi, *Cultura de massa e cultura popular*, Vozes, Petrópolis, 1977; Osvaldo Ardiles, "Ethos, cultura, y liberación," in the collected work *Cultura popular y filosofia de la liberación*, García Cambeiro, Buenos Aires, 1975, pp.9-32; Amilcar Cabral, *Cultura y liberación*, Cuicuilco, México, 1981; José L. Najenson, *Cultura popular y cultura subalterna*, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Toluca, 1979; Arturo Warman, "Cultura popular y cultura nacional" in *Características de la cultura nacional*, IIS-UNAM, México, 1969; Raúl Vidales, "Filosofia y política de las étnias en la última década" in *Ponencias do II Congreso de Filosofia Latinoamericana*, USTA, Bogotá, 1982, pp.385-401; etc.



In 1977, in the third volume of *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, we had written:

Imperial culture[41] (with universal claims) is not the same thing as *national culture* (which itself is not identical to the popular sector), nor is it the same as the *enlightened culture* of the neocolonial elite (which is not always bourgeois, but is always oligarchic), nor is it the same as *mass culture* (which is alienating and unidimensional, in the core as well as in the periphery), nor is it the same as *popular culture*.[42]

And we added:

Imperial, *enlightened*, and *mass* culture (within which we can include proletarian culture as a negativity) are the imperative internal moments in the dominant totality. However, *national culture* is still wrong despite its importance [....] *Popular culture* is the key moment for [cultural] liberation.[43]

In the 1980s, with the active presence of the FSLN in Nicaragua and many other events in Latin America, creative culture was conceived of as "popular revolutionary culture"[44]:

Latin american popular culture – we wrote in the 1984 article mentioned – can only be elucidated, decanted, and authenticated in the process of liberation (economically from capitalism, politically from oppression), establishing a new democratic type, thereby

40 Keep in mind that cultural groups (indigenous, lumpen, marginal, etc.) are located "outside" of the capitalist *order* but inside or in the *womb of the people* (*pueblo*).

41 In 1984 we had designated this "multinational culture" in connection with "multinational" corporations, but in reality it would be more appropriate, in 2003, to call it the "dominant culture that is globalizing from the core of Post-Cold-War capitalism."

42 This text can be found in the volume *La pedagógica latinoamericana*, Nueva América, Bogotá, 1980, p.72.

43 *Ibid.*.

44 See Ernesto Cardenal, "Cultura revolutionaria, popular, nacional, anti-imperialista" in Nicaráuac (Managua), 1 (1980), pp.163ss.

representing *cultural liberation*, taking a creative step along the path of the historico-cultural tradition of the oppressed, the current revolutionary protagonists.[45]

In that era one spoke of the "historical subject" of revolutionary culture: the "people" (*pueblo*) as the "social bloc of the oppressed," when it recovered the "subjective consciousness" of its historico-revolutionary function.[46]

This notion of popular culture was not populist. "Populist" indicated the inclusion within "national culture" of the bourgeois and oligarchic culture of the elite, as well as the culture of the proletariat, of the *campesino*, of all the inhabitants of the soil, organized under a State (designated "Bonapartism" in France). The popular, on the other hand, was an entire social sector of the nation, insofar as they were exploited or oppressed, but who moreover retained a certain "exteriority," as we will see later. This sector is oppressed in the state system, but maintains its alterity, difference, and freedom in those cultural moments scorned by the oppressor, like folklore,[47] music, food, dress, and festivals, the memory of their heroes, their emancipatory moments, their social and political organizations, etc.

As one can see, the monolithic substantialist conception of *a single* Latin American culture had been left behind, and the internal cultural fissures grew thanks to that very same cultural revolution.

4. Modernity, the globalization of western culture, liberal multiculturalism, and the military empire of the "preventative war"

Although the question had been glimpsed intuitively since the end of the 1950s, there was a gradual theoretical shift from a.) the obsession with "situating" Latin America within world history – which demanded a total reconstruction of that vision of history – to b.) calling into question the *standard*[48] vision of that universal history (common to the Hegelian generation) that had "excluded" us, since the "eurocentrism" of the latter

45 *Oito ensaios*, pp.220-221. Mao Tse-tung wrote: "It is imperative to separate the fine old culture of the people which had a more or less democratic and revolutionary character from all the decadence of the old feudal ruling class […] China's [...] present new culture, too, has developed out of her old culture; therefore, we must respect our own history and must not lop it off. However, respect for history means giving it its proper place as a science, respecting its dialectical development […]" ("On New Democracy," in *Select Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1967, vol. II, pp.339-384). [available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm] In this short work, Mao distinguishes between "ancient" (*antigua*) and "old" (*vieja*) culture; between "dominant," "current," "imperialist," "semi-feudal," and "reactionary" culture, a culture of " new democracy," a "culture of the popular masses," a "national" or "revolutionary" culture, etc.

46 See Sergio Ramírez, "La revolución: el hecho cultural más grande de nuestra historia", in *Ventana* (Managua), 30 (1982), p.8; and Bayardo Arce, "El dificil terreno de la lucha: el ideológico", en *Nicaráuac*, 1 (1980), p.155.

47 Antonio Gramsci writes: (paragraph 86 or 89, of vol. I) "El folclor no debe ser concebido como algo ridículo, como algo extraño que causa risa, como algo pintoresco; debe ser concebido como algo relevante y debe considerarse seriamente. Así el aprenizaje será más eficaz y más formative con respecto a la cultura de las grandes masas populares (cultura delle grandi masse popolari)" (Quaderni del Carcere, I; Einaudi Milán, 1975, p.90).

48[Tr: English in original.]

constructed not only a distorted interpretation[49] of non-European cultures, but also--and this conclusion was unpredictable in the 50s and had not been expected *a priori*—an equally inadequate interpretation of its own western culture. "Orientalism" (a defect in the European interpretation of all cultures east of Europe, as Edward Said shows in his famous 1978 text, *Orientalism*) was a defect connected to and simultaneous with "occidentalism" (the misguided interpretation of Europe's own culture). The hypothesis that had permitted us to reject the idea that there was no Latin American culture now enabled us to discover a new *critical* vision of both peripheral and even European culture. This task was undertaken almost simultaneously in all areas of peripheral postcolonial culture (Asia, Africa, and Latin America), although unfortunately to a lesser extent in Europe and the United States.

In effect, beginning with the "postmodern" problematic about the nature of Modernity—which is still, in the final instance, a "European" vision of Modernity—we began to notice that what we ourselves had called "postmodern"[50] was something distinct from that alluded to by the Postmodernists of the 1980s (or at least their definition of the phenomenon of Modernity was different from the understanding I had developed through my works that sought to situate Latin America in confrontation with a modern culture as seen from the perspective of the colonial periphery). For that reason, we saw need to reconstruct the concept of "Modernity" from an "exterior" perspective, that is to say, a *global* perspective (not provincial like the European perspective). This was necessary because "Modernity," in the United States and Europe, had (and continues to have) a clearly Eurocentric connotation, notorious from Lyotard or G. Vattimo through J. Habermas, and in another, more subtle manner even in I. Wallerstein, who we identify with a "second Eurocentrism."

Focusing on this line of argument allowed us to glimpse a problematic and categorial horizon that relaunched again the subject of culture, only this time as a critique of "liberal multiculturalism" (in the manner of John Rawls, for example, in *The Law of Peoples*), and also as a critique of the superficial optimism of the ostensible ease with which some suggested the possibility of multicultural communication or dialogue, ingenuously (or cynically) presupposing a symmetry between participants which is nonexistent in reality.

This was no longer a matter of "locating" Latin America. It was a matter of trying to "situate" *all of the cultures* that today *inevitably* confront each other in all levels of everyday life, from communication, education and research, to the politics of expansion, and cultural or even military resistance. Cultural systems, minted throughout the millennia, can be torn apart in decades, or develop through confrontation with other cultures. No culture is assured survival in advance. All of these issues are of increasing importance today, a crucial moment in the history of cultures of the planet.

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49 In those affirmations that are so evidently true for all Europeans or North Americans that "Europe is the culmination of world history," or that that history "develops from East to West," from the beginning of humanity through its full development. See my first lecture given in Frankfurt, published in my book: *Von der Erfindung Amerikas zur Entdeckung des Anderen. Ein Projekt der Transmoderne*, Patmos Verlag, Düsseldorf 1993. Available in English as *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*, Continuum Publishing, New York, 1995.

50 In 1976, before Lyotard, I used this concept in the opening words of my *Filosofía de la Liberación* when I wrote: "Philosophy of liberation is postmodern, popular (of the people, with the people), profeminine philosophy. It is philosophy expressed by ("pressed out from") the youth of the world, the oppressed of the earth, the wretched of the Earth," *Philosophy of Liberation*, Orbis Books, New York 1985.

In our vision of the course *Hypothesis for the study of Latin America within Universal History*, and in the initial works of that period, I tended to portray the development of each culture as an independent or autonomous whole. There were "contact zones" (like the Eastern Mediterranean, the Pacific Ocean and the Euroasiatic steppes from Gobi to the Caspian Sea), but I explicitly attributed the unfolding of the "world-system" to the moments of the Portuguese expansion into the South Atlantic and toward the Indian Ocean, or to Spain's "discovery of America," or to the first between the great, independent cultural *ecumenes*[51] (from Amerindia, China, Hindustan, the Islamic world, Bantu Cultures, Byzantine and Latin-Germanic cultures). This theory would undergo a radical modification due to A. Gunder Frank's proposed "five thousand year world-system"—which immediately imposed itself on me because it mirrored my own chronology—which changed our panorama. If there existed firm contacts in the steppes and deserts of Northeastern Asia (through the so-called "silk route"), it was above all the region of old Persia – first Helenized (around Seleukon, not far from the ruins of Babylon) and later Islamicized (Samarkand or Bagdad) – that served as the axis around which the Asiatic-Afro-Mediterreanean world turned. Latin-Germanic Europe was always peripheral (although in the South it carried some weight due to the presence of the ancient Roman empire), but was never the "center" of that immense continental mass. The Muslim world (from Mindanao in the Phillipines, Malaka, and Delhi, the "heart" of the Muslim world, to the Magreb, Fez in Morrocco, or the Andalucia of Averroës' Cordoba) was a much more highly-developed mercantilist culture (scientifically, theoretically, economically, and culturally) than Latin-Germanic Europe after the catastrophic Germanic invasions[52] and the Islamic invasions that began in the seventh century. *Against* to Max Weber, we must recognize the great civilizational difference that existed between the future European culture (still underdeveloped) with respect to Islamic culture through the twelfth century (the Turkish-Siberian invasions would later cut short the great Arabic culture).

In the west, "Modernity," which was initiated with the *invasion* of America by Spain—whose culture was inherited from the Mediterranean Muslims (around Andalucia) and the Italian Renaissance (through the Catalan presence in southern Italy)[53]—is the geopolitical

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51[Tr: this reference is, literally, to the Greek for ihhabited (*oixos*) spaces (*nenon*), and rendered in English as anything from "cultural circles" to "regional civilizations." For an understanding of Dussel's view of the role of these ecumenes, see the "Appendix" in *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation, (1492-1979)*, William B.Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1981, 297-298.]

52 A further explication of what we are discussing can be found in my article: "Europa, Modernidad y Eurocentrismo" in *Filosofia política crítica*, Desclée de Browuer, Bilbao, 2001, pp.345ss. There are translations in diverse languages: "Europa, Moderne und Eurozentrismus. Semantische *Verfehlung* des *Europa*-Begriffs" in Manfred Buhr, *Das Geistige Erbe Europas*, Instituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici 5, Viviarium, Napoli, 1994, pp.855-867; "Europe, modernité, eurocentrisme" in Francis Guibal, *1492: "Recontre" de deux mondes?*" *Regards croisés*, Editions Histoire et Anthropologie, Strasbourg, 1996, pp. 42-58; "Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism" in *Nepantla: Views from South* (Durham), Vol.I, Issue 3 (2000), pp.465-478.

53 For intellectuals from Northern Europe and the United States, from J. Habermas to Toulmin, Modernity more or less follows this geopolitical path: Renaissance (East)→Protestant Reform (North)→French Revolution (West)→English Parlimentariansm. Western Mediterranean Europe (Portugal and Spain) is explicitly excluded. This is due to a historic myopia. Even G. Arrighi, who studies Genovese financial capital, ignores that this represented a moment of the Spanish Empire (and not vice versa). That is to say, Renaissance Italy was still Mediterranean (ancient), whereas Spain was Atlantic (that is to say: modern).

"opening" from Europe to the Atlantic; it is the unfolding and control of the "world-system" in a strict sense (through the oceans, and no longer the slow and dangerous continental caravans), and the "invention" of the *colonial system*, which over 300 years would progressively shift the politico-economic balance in favor of the peripheral and isolated old Europe. This was all, moreover, simultaneous with the origin and development of capitalism (which was mercantile in its initial stages, based only upon the primitive accumulation of capital). That is to say: modernity, colonialism, the world-system, and capitalism were all simultaneous and mutually-constitutive aspects of the same reality.

If this is the case, *then Spain was the first modern nation.* This theory runs contrary to all interpretations of modernity as originating in central of Europe and the United States, and is even contrary to the opinion of the great majority of contemporary Spanish intellectuals. However, it asserts itself upon us with increasing force in proportion to the discovery of new arguments. In effect, the First Modernity, the Iberian Modernity (from 1492 through approximately 1630), which came to have Muslim tinges through Andalucia (the most educated area of the Mediterranean[54] during the twelfth century), was inspired by the humanist Italian Rennaisance. This tendency was firmly implanted by the "Reform" of Cardinal Cisneros, by the university reform of the Salamancan Dominicans (whose Second Scholastic school was not merely medival, but in fact "modern"), and in particular, a little later, by the Baroque Jesuit culture that in the philosophical figure of Francisco Suárez inaugurated, in a strict sense, modern metaphysical thinking.[55] *Don Quijote* is the first modern literary work of its type in Europe, whose characters have each foot in a different world: in the Islamic south and in the Christian north, in the most advanced culture of their era and in emergent European modernity.[56] The first syntactic theory of a romance language was the guide to Spanish (Castilian) grammar edited by Nebrija in 1492. In 1521 the first bourgeois revolution, in Castile, was put down by Carlos V (the commoners fought to defend their urban charters). The first global currency was minted with Mexican and Peruvian silver, which passed through Sevilla and eventually accumulated in China. This was a pre-bourgeois, humanist, mercantile Modernity, which initiated the expansion of Europe.

It was only the *Second Modernity* that developed in the United Provinces of the Lowlands, which had been a Spanish province until the beginning of the seventeenth century[57]: this was a new stage of Modernity (1630-1688), now properly bourgeois in its own right. The *Third Modernity*, which was English and then later French, extended the earlier model (initiated philosophically by Decartes and Spinoza, unfolding with more practical coherence in the possessive individualism of Hobbes, Locke, and Hume). With

54 See the magnificent reinterpretation of the history of philosophy by Abed Yabri's two books: *Crítica de la razón árabe*, Icaria, Barcelona, 2001; and *El legado filosófico árabe. Alfarabi, Avicena, Avempace, Averroes, Abenjaldún. Lecturas contemporáneas*, Trotta, Madrid, 2001.

55 Keep in mind that René Descartes was a student at La Flèche, a Jesuit school, and that the first philosophical work that he read was F. Suarez's *Disputaciones metafisicas*. See the historical chapter in the book that I am currently writing entitled *Política de Liberación*.

56 But we should not forget that the medieval gentleman, Quijote, confronts the windmills which are symbols of Modernity (but which originated in the Muslim world: Baghdad had windmills in the seventh century).

57 See the first three volumes of Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System*, Academic Press, New York, 1974-1989, vol. 1-3.

the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment, Modernity reached its fullest development, and at the same time colonialism was strengthened through Northern European expansion, first into Asia and later into Africa.

Modernity, like the "world system," is five centuries old, and both were coextensive with European domination of the world, a Europe which has represented the "core" since 1492. For its part, Latin America was a constitutive moment of Modernity. The colonial system could not be feudal—a central question for social sciences in general, as demonstrated by Sergio Bagú—but was instead peripheral to the modern capitalist world, and thereby to the modern world itself.

In this context, we mounted a critique of the ingenuous position that imagined intercultural dialogue as a possible—and in part idealized—multicultural symmetry in which communication between rational beings would be possible. "Discourse Ethics" adopted this optimistic position. Richard Rorty, and to some extent A. MacIntyre, demonstrated the complete incommensurability of an impossible communication, or at least its extreme difficulty. In any case, they dispensed with the situatedness of cultures (without naming them concretely or studying their history and structural content), failing to recognize the asymmetrical that resulted from their respective *positions* in the colonial system. Western culture, with its obvious "Occidentalism," has positioned all other cultures as primitive, pre-modern, traditional, and underdeveloped.

Upon delineating a theory of a "dialogue between cultures," it may seem that all cultures exist under symmetrical conditions. Or, that through an *ad hoc* anthropology, the task of neutral observation (or in the best cases, "engaged" observation) of primitive cultures can be achieved. In this case there exist superior cultures (of academic "cultural anthropology") and "the others" (the primitives). In both extremes there are the developed, symmetrical cultures and "the others" (that cannot even be situated asymmetrically due to the unsurpassable cultural abyss separating them from the former). Such is the case of Durkheim and Habermas. In the face of anthropology's observational perspective, there can be no cultural dialogue with China, India, the Islamic world, etc., because they are neither enlightened nor primitive cultures. They are "no man's land."

These cultures – neither "metropolitan" nor "primitive" – are being destroyed by propaganda and the sale of merchandise, material products which are always cultural (like drinks, foods, clothes, vehicles, etc.), while on the other hand there is an ostensible attempt to preserve these cultures by valorizing in isolation folkloric elements or secondary cultural moments. A transnational restaurant chain can subsume in his menus a plate typical of a specific to a culinary culture (like Taco Bell). This passes for the "respect" of other cultures.

This type of altruistic multiculturalism is clearly formulated in John Rawls' "overlapping consensus," which requires the acceptance of certain procedural principles (which are inadvertently and profoundly culturally western) by all members of a political community, while at the same time permitting the diversity of cultural (or religious) values. Politically, this presupposes that those who establish the dialogue accept a liberal, multicultural State, overlooking the fact that the very structure of this multicultural State – as institutionalized in the present – is an expression of western culture and restricts the possibility for the survival of all other cultures. Surreptitiously, a cultural structure has been imposed in the name of purely formal elements of coexistence (which were an expression of the development of a determinate culture). Moreover, this

liberal State is founded upon an economic structure of transnational capitalism, invisible to its defenders, that has only smoothed out unacceptable anti-western differences in "incorporated" cultures thanks to the previously-mentioned "overlapping consensus" (which results from a prior hollowing-out of the critical anti-capitalist elements of those cultures).

This sort of sterile multicultural dialogue (which also frequently takes place between universal religions), becomes in certain cases an aggressive cultural politics, such as Huntington's call, in *The Clash of Civilizations*, for the defense of western culture through military means, particularly against Islamic fundamentalists, under whose soil (they forget to mention) exist the greatest petroleum reserves in the world (and without referring to the presence of a Christian fundamentalism on a comparable scale, especially in the United States). Again, they fail to mention that "the fundamentalism of the market" –as George Soros calls it—serves as the foundation for an aggressive military fundamentalism, taking the form of "preventative wars" which are disguised as cultural confrontations or the as expansion of democratic political culture. In this way, we have passed from a.) the claim of a symmetrical multicultural dialogue to b.) simple suppression of all dialogue and the forced imposition of that same western culture through military technology (at least this is the pretext, since we have suggested that it is merely about the fulfillment of economic interests, such as the role played by petroleum in thewar in Iraq[52]).

In their work *Empire*, Negri and Hardt maintain a certain postmodern perspective on the globalized structure of the world-system. It is necessary to place prior to any such vision an interpretation which allows for a more dramatic understanding of the present conjuncture of world history, under the military hegemony of the North American State, which – as *home-State*[58] for the largest transnational corporations, is slowly, as when in the Roman Republic Caesar crossed the Rubicon – is transforming from a *republic* into an *empire*, [53] a post-Cold-War domination that sets its sights on unipolar control of global power. To what is multicultural dialogue reduced in such a situation, if not to a certain naïve recognition of the asymmetries between participants? How is it possible to imagine a symmetrical dialogue given the near impossibility of seizing the technological instruments of a capitalism based in military expansion? Will everything be lost, and will the imposition of an Occidentalism (identified more and more by the day with the "Americanism" of the United States), erase from the face of the earth all of the universal cultures which have been developing over the last few millennia? Will English be the only remaining classical language, imposed upon humanity which, under such a weight, will forget their own traditions?

5. The transversality of transmodern intercultural dialogue: mutual liberation of universal postcolonial cultures

Thus we arrive to the most recent stage of development (which as always had been anticipated in earlier intuitions), beginning from the new hypotheses of André Gunder Frank. His *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*[59] (and the more complex argument put forth by Kenneth Pomeranz in *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and*

58[Tr: English in original.]

59 University of California Press, 1988

the Making of the Modern World Economy[60]) which again allows us to open up a broader critical problematic, which should take up again the interpretative keys to the problem of culture that we discovered in the 1960s. We are now able to to introduce an new theoretical proposition – which we call the "*Trans*-modern" – and which constitutes an explicit overcoming of the concept "Post-modernity" (since the latter *still represents a final moment of Modernity*).

This most recent working-hypothesis can be formulated in the following, heavily simplified, manner: Modernity (capitalism, colonialism, the first world-system) is not contemporary with European hegemony, which functioned as the "center" of the market with respect to the rest of the cultures. The "centrality" of the world market and Modernity are not synchronous phenomena. Modern Europe became the "center" *after* it was already "modern". For I. Wallerstein, these phenomena are coextensive (this is why he delays Modernity and its centrality in the world market until the "Enlightenment" and the emergence of liberalism). In my view, the four phenomena (capitalism, the world-system, colonialism, and modernity) are contemporary to one another (but they respond to the "centrality" of the world market). Today, then, I should note that until 1789 (to give a symbolic date for the end of the eighteenth century), China and the region of Hindustan had a productive-economic weight in the "world market" (producing its most important goods, like porcelain, silk, etc.) that Europe was not capable of matching. Europe could not sell *anything* in the market of the Far East, and it has only been able to make purchases in the Chinese market during the past three centuries thanks to Latin America silver (primarily from Peru and Mexico).

Europe began to function as the "center" of the world market (and therefore to extend the "world system" throughout the world) with the advent of the industrial revolution; on the cultural plane, this produced the phenomenon of the Enlightenment, the origins of which, in the long run,[61] we should look for (according to the hypothesis of Morrocan philosopher Al-Yabri, who we will discuss later) in the Averröist philosophy of the caliphate of Córdoba. Europe's crucial and enlightened hegemony scarcely lasted two centuries (1789-1989).[62] Only two centuries! Too short-term to profoundly transform the "ethico-mythical nucleus" (to use Ricoeur's expression) of ancient and universal cultures like the Chinese and others of the Far East (like the Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.), the Hindustanic, the Islamic, the Russian-Byzantine, and even the Bantu or the Latin American (though with a different structural composition). These cultures have been partly *colonized* (included through negation in the totality, as aspect A of Diagram 1), but most of the structure of their values has been excluded—*scorned, negated and ignored*—

60 Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000. In this text Pomeranz proves that until 1800 England did not actually have any significant advantage over the Yangtze River Delta in China, and that after evaluating, with new arguments, the ecological development of the exploitation of the land in both regions, he attributes the possibility of the industrial revolution in England to two fortuitous factors which were external to the English economic system: the possession of colonies and the use of coal. No other factor were responsible for the minimal initial advantage of England over the Yangtze River Delta region which, within a short time, became enormous. He does not even consider an economic crisis in China and Hindustan. The increasing and anti-ecological use of land in China required s greater degree of peasant labor, which prevented the simultaneous development of a nascent capitalist industry in China (unlike England, which could do so thanks to the factors external to its economic system).

61[Tr: English in original.]

62 From the French Revolution to the fall of the USSR, which has meant the unipolar rise of the current North American hegemony, after the end of the Cold War.

rather than annihilated. The economic and political system has been dominated in order to exert colonial power and to accumulate massive riches, but those cultures were deemed to be unworthy, insignificant, unimportant, and useless. The tendency to disparage those cultures, however, has allowed them to survive in silence, in the shadows, simultaneously scorned by their own modernized and westernized elites. That negated "exterior," that alterity—always extant and latent—indicates the existence of an unsuspected cultural richness, which is slowly revived like the flames of the fire of those fathoms buried under the sea of ashes from hundreds of years of colonialism. That cultural exteriority is not merely a substantive, uncontaminated, and eternal "identity." It has been evolving in the face of Modernity itself; what is at stake is "identity" in the sense of process and growth, but always as an exteriority.

These universal cultures, asymmetrical in terms of their economic, political, scientific, technological, and military conditions, therefore maintain an alterity with respect to European Modernity, with which they have coexisted and have learned to respond in their own way to its challenges. They are not dead but alive, and presently in the midst of a process of rebirth, searching for new paths for future development (and inevitably at times taking the wrong paths). Since they are not modern, these cultures cannot be "post"-modern either. They are simultaneously pre-modern (older than modernity), contemporary to Modernity, and soon, to Transmodernity as well. Postmodernism is a final stage in modern European/North American culture, the "core" of Modernity. Chinese or Vedic cultures could never be European post-modern, but rather are something very different as a result of their distinct roots.

Thus, the strict concept of the "*trans*-modern"[63] attempts to indicate the radical novelty of the irruption – as if from nothing – from the transformative exteriority of that which is always Distinct, those universal cultures in the process of development which assume the challenges of Modernity, and even European/North American Post-modernity, but which respond *from another place, another location.* They respond from the perspective of their own cultural experiences, which are distinct from those of Europeans/North Americans, and therefore have the capacity to respond with solutions which would be absolutely impossible for an exclusively modern culture. A future *trans*-modern culture – which assumes the positive moments of Modernity (as evaluated through criteria distinct from the perspective of the other ancient cultures) – will have a rich pluriversity and would be the fruit of an authentic intercultural dialogue, that would need to bear clearly in mind existing asymmetries (to be an "imperial-core" or part of the semi-peripheral "central chorus"—like Europe today, and even more so since the 2003 Iraq War—is not the same as to be part of the postcolonial and peripheral world). But a post-colonial and peripheral world like that of India, in a position of abysmal asymmetry with respect to the metropolitan core of the colonial era, does not for this reason cease to be a creative nucleus of ancient cultural renewal which is decisively distinct from all of the others, with the capacity to propose novel and necessary answers for the anguishing challenges that the Planet throws upon us at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

"*Trans*-modernity" points toward all of those aspects that are situated "beyond" (and also "prior to") the structures valorized by modern European/North American culture, and

63 See Section 5, "La *Trans*-modernidad como afirmación," in my article "World-System and Transmodernity," in *Nepantla: Views from South* (Duke, Durham), Vol.3 Issue 2 (2002), pp.221-244.

which are present in the great non-European universal cultures and have begun to move toward a pluriversal utopia.
An intercultural dialogue must be *transversal*,[64] that is to say, it needs to set out from a *place other than* a mere dialogue between the learned experts of the academic or institutionally-dominant worlds. It must be a multicultural dialogue that does not presuppose the illusion of a non-existent symmetry between cultures. We will now turn to some aspects of this critical, intercultural dialogue with respect to *trans*-modernity.

DIAGRAM 2
Rough sketch of the meaning of cultural trans-modernity
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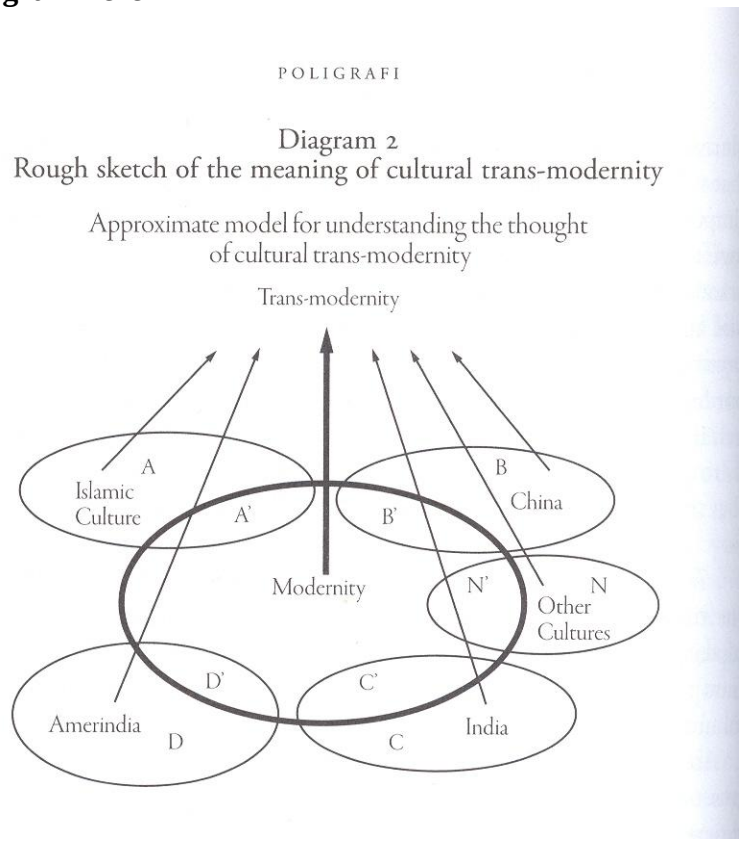

We will take as the leitmotif of our exposition a philosophical discussion of Islamic culture. Mohammed Abed Al-Yabri, in his texts *Crítica de la razón árabe*[65] and *The Arab*

64 "Transversal" connotes that movement from the periphery to the periphery. From the feminist movement to the antiracist and anticolonial struggles. These "Differences" enter into dialogue from the perspective of their *distinct* negativities, without the necessity of transversing the "center" of hegemony. Frequently, large metropolitan cities have subway services that extend from suburban neighborhoods to the center; however they do not offer connecting service between the suburban subcenters themselves. This is an analogy for what occurs in intercultural dialogue.
65 Icaria-Antrazyt, Barcelona, 2001.

Philosophical Legacy,[66] is an excellent example of what we hope to explain. Al-Yabri is a Maghreb philosopher, which is to say that he is from a cultural region which was under the influence of the classical thought of the Caliphate of Córdoba, which began a deconstruction of Arab tradition.[67] This culminated in an authentic philosophical "Enlightenment," a direct antecedent of the Latin-Germanic revival of thirteenth-century Paris, and as such represented even a direct antecedent of the eighteenth-century European *Aufklärung* (which was, according to the hypothesis of Al-Yabri, Averröist).

5.1. *Affirmation of scorned exteriority*

Everything begins through an *affirmation*. The *negation of the negation* is the second moment. How can one negate the disparagement of oneself but through setting-out on the path of the self-discovery of one's own value? This is the affirmation of an evolving and flexible identity in the face of Modernity. Postcolonial cultures need effective decolonization, but for this they must begin with self-valorization.

However, there are different ways to affirm oneself, some of which are misguided. For this reason, beginning with the example suggested in the first place, Al-Yabri criticizes the typical interpretations or hermeneutic "readings" of the Islamic tradition by contemporary Arab philosophy in the Muslim world. The first interpretive strand is that of fundamentalism (the "*Salafis*"[68]). This interpretation has an *affirmative* intention, like all the rest, since it attempts to recuperate ancient Arab tradition in the present. But for Al-Yabri such a current is ahistorical—merely apologetic and traditionalist. Another interpretative strand is the liberal-Europeanist, which claims to be merely Modern, but in the end negates the past or does not know how to reconstruct it. The third is the leftist interpretation ("Marxist *salafism*").[69] The question, considering these three interpretative strands, is: "How [can we] reconstruct our legacy [today]?"[70]

It seems evident that the first step is to study that legacy affirmatively. Al-Yabri, a reader whose mother tongue is Arabic and whose training in Islamic cultural traditions date back to childhood, has an enormous advantage above all the other European and North American specialists who study the Arab world as a scientific "object" and as a "foreign" culture. Thus, he reads the classics, grasps neglected nuances, and he does this through contemporary French hermeneutic philosophy that he, along with all Maghrebs, has

66 Trotta, Madrid, 2001.

67 Arabic, after centuries of translation of the Hellenic philosophical works from Greek, invented an extremely sophisticated technical-philosophical language. For that reason, from Morocco to the Philippines, the philosophy of the Muslim world is called "Arab philosophy," the name of the classic language.

68 *El legado*, p.20ss. To the question of "how to recognize the glory of our civilization, and how to give new life to our legacy," our author responds with a thorough description of the ambiguous, partial, and Eurocentric responses. The "salafies" originated from the position of Yamal al-Din al Afgani (+1897), who struggled against the English in Afganistan. He resided in Istanbul, took refuge in Cairo and eventually fled to Paris. That movement intended to liberate and unify the Muslim world. [Tr: "Salafi" means predecessors or ancestors, and refers to an interpretation of Islam which derives from the lives and behavior of the three generations that followed Muhammad.]

69 I have indicated above that my first publication (1965) sought to criticize the interpretations or hermenteutics of the "Latin American issue." All *new* interpretations grasp consciousness and critique other partial interpretations.

70 *Ibid.*, p.24.

studied. In this way he positively expounds the thought of Al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), Avempace (Ibn Bajjah), Averröes (Ibn Rushd), and Ibn Khaldun, but he does so not merely as an ingenuous and apologetic *pure affirmation*.

On the plane of popular culture, another example, Rigoberta Menchú, in *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*,[71] dedicates long chapters to the description of the culture of her Mayan village in Guatemala. She begins with a self-valorizing affirmation of herself, and this is the originary reflection upon which she constructs her entire edifice. Against prevalent opinion, it is necessary to begin from the positive origin of one's own cultural tradition.

This first step represents a reminiscence of the past from an identity which is prior to Modernity or which has imperceptibly evolved in the inevitable and furtive contact with Modernity.

5.2. *Critiquing one's tradition with the resources of one's culture*

But the only way to grow from within one's tradition is to engage in critique from within the assumptions of that same culture. It is necessary to find within one's culture the originary moments of a self-criticism.

It is in this way that Al-Yabri carries out a "deconstruction" of his own tradition with critical elements of the same, and with others adopted from Modernity itself. It is not Modernity that imposes the tools upon the critical intellectual; it is the critical intellectual that controls and directs the selection of those modern instruments that will be useful for the critical reconstruction of her own tradition. In this way, Al- Yabri shows that the "eastern" schools of the Arab world[72] should initially confront head-on their primary enemy: Gnostic Persian thought. In a strict sense, the *mu'tazilíes* strictly created the first theoretical Islamic thought (which was anti-Persian), with components of the *Koran*, but which also creatively subsumed elements of Greek-Byzantine culture, with the political aim of justifying the legitimacy of the Caliphate state.[73] This is how *eastern* traditions were born. However, the Abbasid schools in Baghdad, as well as in outlying regions like Samarkand and Bukhara, as well as the Fatimite traditions of Cairo, with theorists such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna, were inclined toward the Neo-Platonic thought with theological-

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71 tr. E. Burgos-Debray, Verso, London, 1987.

72The schools linked to Baghdad are truly *oriental*, closer to the Persian Gnosticism, whereas those linked to Cairo, to the Alexandrian Neo-Platonic tradition, are *occidental* within the Islamic East, as we will see.

73 In a truly original and authoritative manner, Al-Yabri shows that "Greek philosophical sciences" transformed into Islamic "philosophy," theology, and jurisprudence thanks to four philosophical currents: "The first is that which is represented by Iranian translators and secretaries [...], the *eastern (Persian) model* of neo-Platonism. The second is that which is represented by Christian doctors and translators that had come from the Persian school of Yundisapur […which] besides Nestorian teachers lodged a group of teachers from the Athenian school […] this was the *western neo-Platonic model*. The third [and most important] current, *eastern*, was that which was represented by the Harranian translators, teachers, and wise men. The fourth, western, was that which appeared finally with the arrival of the Alexandrian Academy" (Al-Yabri, *op. cit.*, p.177 [Tr: my translation]). The Academy functioned for 50 years in the city of the Sabeans in Harran. This school was fundamental, since it represented a synthesis of Persian, Neo-platonic, and Aristotelian thought (see *op cit.*, p.165)—a question rarely studied outside of the Arab philosophical world, since it requires a bibliography of texts that have not been translated into western languages. The "Brothers of Purity" [Tr: an association of Arab philosophers founded in Syria in the tenth century] depended on the tradition of Harran.

mystic tinges (like "enlightenment"). On the contrary – and against many historians of Arab philosophy – Al-Yabri teaches that the properly *western* Andaluz-Maghreb philosophy (situated around the great cultural capitals of Córdoba in the north and Fez in the south[74]), represented an original rupture that would have a powerful and lasting legacy. For motives as much political as economic (and here Morocan philosophy utilizes the critical tools of Modern European philosophy) the Cordoban caliphate, which as we have seen was *western*, broke the theologizing perspective of *eastern* thought, thereby inaugurating a clear distinction between natural *reason* (which achieves knowledge through scientific observation, developing physics, mechanics, and mathematics in a new way), and enlightened reason attained through *faith.* This introduced a distinction between *reason* and *faith,* in which these were neither blurred together nor negated, but rather articulated in a novel way.

It was the philosopher Ibn-Abdun who brought the rationalist orientation of the Baghdad school to Al-Andalus (contrary to the position of Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and Avicenna). A second generation, at the beginning of the fifth century of the Hegira (the eleventh Cristian century) specialized in mathematics and medicine. The third generation, with Avempace, integrated physics and metaphysics and discarded the neo-Platonic Gnosticism of the *eastern* school, invoking rational Aristotelian argumentation (purged of neo-Platonism).[75]

The Almohads had the following cultural motto: "Abandon the argument from authority and return to the sources." This was the cultural movement led by Ibn Tumart, during times of great change and thereby of great political liberty and critical, rationalist impetus. Ibn Tumart criticized analogy, seeing it as a method which moves from the known to the unknown.[76] If Al-Farabi and Avicenna had sought (due to the multiplicity and the political problems of *eastern* thought) to unite philosophy and theology,[77] Averröes (in the Almohad *West*) intended to separate them while showing their mutual autonomy and complementarity. Such was the theme of his work *Doctrina decisive y fundamento de la Concordia entre la revelación y la ciencia*, a veritable "discourse on method": (revealed) truth cannot contradict (rational) truth, and vice versa. In particular, his *Destrucción de la destrucción* shows that the arguments with which Al-Ghazali sought to demonstrate the irrationality of philosophy were not demonstrably true or apodictic. Thus Averröes elaborated and expressed the so-called doctrine of "double

74 Fez came to have over 300,000 inhabitants in the twelfth century.

75 See Al-Yabri, *El legado*…, p.226ss. For Avempace, human perfection did not consist in the ecstatic contemplation of Sufism, but rather in the life of the "solitary man" (who, like a budding plant in the imperfect city longs for the perfect city), and the rational study of philosophical sciences. The act of the "intellect agent" *par excellence*—the knowledge of the wise—is spiritual and divine. Al-Yabri dedicates several wonderful pages to the theme of Avempace and his treatise on the happiness of the wise, which was inspired by and develops upon the late work of Aristotle. See my article: "La ética definitiva de Aristótles o el tratado moral contemporáneo al *Del Alma*" in *El dualismo en la antropología de la Cristiandad,* cited above, pp. 297-314.

76 Al-Yabri shows the remarkable similarities between the basic theses of Ibn-Tumart and Averröes (*El legado*…., p.323ss).

77 That is to say, they confused and blurred the two in several manners, which would prove inadequate for Averröes.

truth," so wrongly interpreted in the Medieval Latin World.[78] At the same time, the Cordoban philosopher suggested a method through which to interact with *other* cultures:

It is doubtless that we need to make use, to aid our research (a rational study of existent beings), of the investigations carried out by all those who preceded us [i.e. the Greeks] [...] Be that as it is, and since in reality the ancient philosophers already studied, and with greater care, the rules of reason (logic, method), it would be useful for us to lay our hands on the books of those philosophers, so that, if we find everything they say therein to be reasonable, we accept it, but if there is something unreasonable, it can serve us as a precaution and warning.[79]

For this reason, "to adopt the Averröist spirit is to break with the Gnostic,obscurantist, and e*astern* spirit of Avicennes."[80] As we can see, Arab philosophy practiced this method that we are describing. It remained faithful to its tradition but it subsumed the best elements of the other culture (as determined according to its own criteria), which were in some aspects more highly developed (for example, in the elaboration of logical science).
In the same way, Rigoberta Menchú searches for the cause for the passivity and fatalism of related indigenous communities, and initiates a community critique that will bring them to commit themselves to the struggle against the mestizo government and military repression. Thus, the critical intellectual should be someone located "between" (in-betweeness[81]) the two cultures (their own culture and Modern culture). This is really the issue of the "border" (the "frontier") between two cultures as a *locus* for "critical thought." This theme is explored at length by Walter Mignolo, in the case of the Mexican-American "frontier" as a creative bicultural space.

5.3. *Strategy of resistance: hermeneutic time*

In order to resist it is necessary to mature. The affirmation of one's own values require time, study, reflection, a return to the *texts* or symbols and constitutive myths of one's culture, before or at least at the same time that one consults the domain of the texts of the modern hegemonic culture.
Al-Yabri shows the error of "some Arab intellectuals, whose relations with the European cultural legacy seems to be more narrow than those that they maintain with the Arab-Islamic legacy, who pose the problem of contemporary Arab thought in these terms: How can this thought assimilate the experience of liberalism *before or without the Arab world going through the stage of liberalism?*"[82] Abdalah Laroui, Zaki Nayib Mahmud, Mayid Fajri and many others pose the question in this fashion. The real problem, however, is different:

78 The "Latin Averröism" which was present in the schools of art, and would decisively influence the origins of experimental science in Europe, was an exception to this.
79 Cit. Al-Yabri, *Crítica de la razón árabe*, pp. 157-158. [Tr: my translation.]
80 Ibid., p.159
81[Tr: English in original.]
82 Ibid..

How can Arab thought recuperate and assimilate the rationalist experience of its own cultural legacy and bring it to life again, with a perspective similar to that of our ancestors: to struggle against feudalism, against Gnosticism, against fatalism, and to install the city of reason and justice, a free Arab city, democratic and socialist?[83]

As one can observe, a project of this scope requires tenacity, time, intelligence, research, and solidarity. It requires the long-term maturation of a new response in *cultural resistance*, not only to the elites of other cultures, particularly those that are dominant, but also against the Eurocentricism of elites in peripheral, colonial, and fundamentalist cultures.
Rigoberta shows, for her part, how the community, upon gaining critical consciousness, reinterpreted traditional Christianity in order to justify the community's struggle of against the domination of the militarized white elites in Guatemala. This represents a new hermeneutics of the constitutive *text* of the cultural life of the community (since the symbolic level is fundamental for Amerindians, which integrates Mayan with Christian/colonial sources).

5.4. *Intercultural dialogue between critics of their own culture*

This intercultural dialogue is neither only nor principally a dialogue between cultural apologists that attempt to demonstrate to others the virtues and values of their own culture. It is, above all, a dialogue between a culture's critical innovators (intellectuals of the "border," *between* their culture and Modernity). It is not a dialogue among those who merely defend their culture from its enemies, but rather among those who *recreate it, departing from the critical assumptions* found in their own cultural tradition and in that of globalizing Modernity. Modernity can serve as a critical catalyst (if it is used by the expert hand of critics of their own culture). But, additionally, this is not even the dialogue between the critics of the metropolitan "core" and the critics of the cultural "periphery." It is more than anything *a dialogue between the "critics of the periphery,*" it must be an intercultural South-South dialogue before can become a South-North dialogue.
This sort of dialogue is essential. As a Latin American philosopher, I would like to begin a conversation with Al-Yabri beginning from the following question: Why did Islamic philosophical thought fall into such a profound crisis after the fourteenth century? This cannot be explained merely by the slow and growing presence of the Ottoman Empire. Why did this philosophy enter the blind alley of fundamentalist thought? It is necessary to lend a hand through a broader world-historical interpretation in order to understand that the Islamic world, after having been the "key" to contact with the "ancient world" (from Byzantium, and to a lesser degree Latin-Germanic Europe, to Hindustan and China), would slowly but inevitably be left *outside* the central zone of contact with other universal cultures by the constitution of an ocean-based world-system under Spanish and Portugese domination. The loss of "centrality" (and with it, "information"), the relative impoverishment (even if only for the inflation of silver due to the extraction of massive quantities from Latin America), as well as other non-cultural and non-philosophical factors, plunged the Arab world into "peripheral" poverty. This led to a political factionalism and isolationism that "tribalized" it, disintegrating into destructive

83 Ibid., p.160

separatisms the ancient regions once unified by law, religion, science, commerce, and the Arab language. This philosophical decadence was only a moment in a broader civilizational decadence, of the economic, political and military crisis of a world transformed from "core" to "periphery." It is therefore necessary to link, for example, the history of the Islamic world with the nascent "world system," with Latin America and with the growth of European Modernity, which through 1800 was, in cultural terms, as important as Hindu-Chinese culture. In the nineteenth century, that is to say after the industrial revolution, this would even allow the "colonization" of the Arab world. Cultural "coloniality" is expressed philosophically as philosophical decadence. Salazar Bondy posed a similar question in 1969: "Is it possible to think philosophically and creatively from the position of colonial being?"[84]

In the case of Rigoberta Menchú, the most productive dialogue was realized between the critics of different communities, and between those of the indigenous communities and critical elements of the mestizo world and of hegemonic Latin America. Rigoberta was transformed into an interlocutor of many voices, of many claims, by feminists, ecologists, antiracist movements, etc.

Intercultural dialogue brings about a transversal and mutual cross-fertilization among the critical thinkers of the periphery and those from "border" spaces, and the organization of networks to discuss their own specific problems transforms this process of self-affirmation into a weapon of liberation. We should inform ourselves and learn from the failures, the achievements, and the still-theoretical justification of the creative processes in the face of the globalization of European/North American culture, whose pretense of universality must be deconstructed from the optical multi-focality of each culture.

5.5. *Strategy for trans-modern liberation growth*

A strategy presupposes a project. We have defined the "*trans*-modern" project as a libration intention that synthesizes all that we have discussed. In the first place, it suggests the affirmation, the self-valorization of one's own negated or merely devalued cultural moments which are found in the exteriority of Modernity, those still remaining *outside* of the destructive consideration of that ostensibly universal modern culture. Secondly, those traditional values ignored by Modernity should be a point of departure for an internal critique, from within the culture's own hermeneutical possibilities. Thirdly, the critics, in order to be critics, should be those who, living in the biculturality of the "borders," can create critical thought. Fourthly, this means a long period of resistance, of maturation, and of the accumulation of forces. It is a period of the creative and accelerated cultivation and development of one's own cultural tradition, which is now on the path toward a *trans*-modern utopia. This represents a strategy for the growth and creativity of a renovated culture, which is not merely decolonized, but is moreover entirely new.

The dialogue, then, between the critical cultural innovators is neither modern nor post-modern, but rather in a strict sense "*trans*-modern," because, as we have shown, the creative force does not come from the interior of Modernity, but rather from its exteriority, or better yet from its "borderlands." This exteriority is not pure negativity. It

84*¿Existe una filosofía en nuestra América?*, Siglo XXI, México, 1969.

is *the positivity rooted in a tradition distinct from the Modern*. For example, for the Indigenous cultures of Latin America there exists an affirmation of Nature that is completely distinct and much more ecologically balanced, which today is more necessary than ever, given that capitalist Modernity confronts Nature as something exploitable, marketable, and destructible. The death of Nature is the collective suicide of humanity, and yet this globalizing modern culture learns nothing about Nature from other cultures, which are apparently more "primitive" or "backwards" according to developmentalist parameters. This ecological principle can also integrate the best of Modernity (and it should not refuse all elements of Modernity from the perspective of a pure, substantialist cultural identity), in order even to construct scientific and technological development that emerges from the very experience of Modernity.

The affirmation and development of the cultural alterity of postcolonial communities (*peoples*), which subsumes within itself the best elements of Modernity, should not develop a cultural style that tends towards an undifferentiated or empty globalized unity, but rather a *trans*-modern pluriversality (with many universalities: European, Islamic,Vedic, Taoist, Buddhist, Latin American, Bantu, etc.), one which is multicultural, and engaged in a critical intercultural dialogue.