

# HERMENEUTICS, TRANSLATION AND LIBERATION

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## Hermeneutics and Critique from a Liberation Ethics Perspective

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### Abstract

This article merely refers to some fundamental theses developed by the author already in his book *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). The strategy of the argument takes the following path: First, it begins with some reflections by Paul Ricoeur about universal civilization and its particular cultures; second, it summarizes a non-eurocentric historical perspective that is pertinent to the Modern Globalizing System; third, it describes the asymmetrical location of the "participants" which resulted from the violent process of inclusion in the World System; fourth, it points out to certain aspects through which one can see ethical and critical demands within the horizon of globalization; fifth, in conclusion the author suggests some relevant topics for future discussions.

**Keywords:** ethics, hermeneutics, history, globalization, universalism, eurocentrism, cultural diversity, justice, oppression

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*To my friend the philosopher Prof. Dr. Odera Orika  
from Nairobi University (Kenya) assassinated in December 1996*

### 1. Universal Civilization and particular cultures?

In 1961, as I arrived to Paris from a work-related stay of two years in Israel, I had the chance to attend some classes at the Sorbonne and to read an article by Paul Ricoeur published in *Esprit* and entitled "World Civilization and National Cultures." (Ricoeur 1964, 274-288) According to Ricoeur, "World Civilization" – which already entails the entire problematic of "globalization" – is constituted on the basis of the scientific spirit,<sup>1</sup> the technical and instrumental structures, and a rationalized and universalized politics and economy which in turn generates a form of life that eventually becomes globalized ("the inevitable standardization of housing, clothing..." etc.). (Ricoeur 1964, 277) But when one asks with an optimism that is appropriate sometimes about the signification of such a civili-

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<sup>1</sup> Science here is exclusively Greek and European, from Galilee to Descartes and Newton (Ricoeur 1964, 274-275). Thus, the scientific legacy of the Arabs and the Chinese is forgotten (Needham 1985).

zation, Ricoeur points out that "this questioning amounts to come to terms with the only humanity," (ibid., 278-279) i.e. an entry of the masses to the elemental goods, a struggle against illiteracy, and an increment in the means of consumption and culture. Even though he already writes critically:

En même temps qu'une promotion de l'humanité, le phénomène d'universalisation constitue une sorte de subtile destruction ... (du) noyau créateur des grandes civilisations, des grandes cultures, ce noyau à partir duquel nous interprétons la vie (...) le noyau éthique et mythique de l'humanité. (ibid., 280)<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, world cultures have to reckon with the other cultures that belong to great civilization, regional cultures edified from an ethical and mythical nucleus, cultures built by institutions that are not universal but rather particular:

L'humanité ne s'est pas constituée dans un seul style culturel, mais a pris dans de figures historiques cohérentes, closes<sup>3</sup>: les cultures. (ibid., 284)

Cultures that cannot recreate are unable to develop, and thus they die.<sup>4</sup> Today those cultures that cannot adapt to "scientific rationalization" and to the secularization of nature will not be able to survive. It seems, then, as if Ricoeur believed that the westernization of the world is inexorable, since only a few cultures (the great cultures not withstanding) will be able to resist the affront of the Western and Christian culture that had produced a notion of westernization based on scientific rationalization and secularization:

Il faut d'une part se réenraciner dans son passé, se refaire une âme nationale (...) Mais il faut en même temps, pour entre dans la civilisation moderne, entrer dans la rationalité scientifique, technique, politique qui exige bien souvent l'abandon pur et simple de tout un passé culturel. (ibid., 280-281)

At any rate the question remains open for a move towards communication attempt that is similar to the Ethics of Discourse:

Aux syncrétismes<sup>5</sup> il faut opposer la communication, c'est-à-dire une relation dramatique dans laquelle tour à tour je m'affirme dans mon origine et je me livre à l'imagination d'autrui selon son autre civilisation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> At its moment, I carried out a reflection that was applied to the Latin American reality [See Dussel, 1966 and 1996]. It is important to note that over thirty years of the publication of Ricoeur's article, a work with almost the same title has just been released: *National Culture and the New Global System* (Buell 1994.)

<sup>3</sup> A sort of non-communicable incommensurability is here suggested.

<sup>4</sup> "Telle est la loi tragique de la création d'une culture" (Ricoeur 1964, 285).

<sup>5</sup> In syncretism lies the possibility of an intercultural dialogue from which a world culture that is the result of a syncretic unity of all cultures will be born. Ricoeur cannot accept a hybrid solution because of a Eurocentric a priori.

<sup>6</sup> ibid., p. 288. Citing Heidegger ("It is necessary to lose ourselves in our own origins"), Ricoeur calls upon Europeans to return to their Greek, Hebrew and Christian origins: "pour avoir en face de soi un

However, the aporia remains unresolved: on the one hand, there is a civilization as a universal System – predicated upon instrumental reason, essentially at the level of scientific and technical abstract structure and also predicated upon the process of modern rationalization – and on the other hand, there are some other cultures (the great cultures) that are ultimately incommunicated, cultures that are particular rather than universal, cultures that ought to mutually communicate but for which it remains to be seen how this communication is to be achieved.

One could conclude that there is universality at the instrumental level and particularity at the material level (in relation to the ethical and mythical nucleus) of each culture. In Latin America, Leopoldo Zea in 1957, in his book *America en la historia* (Zea 1957) identified a similar problem to the one delineated above. On his part, the Caribbean Latin American Franz Fanon, confronted this very same problem in 1961 from the perspective of the oppressed colonials in *Les damnés de la terre* (Fanon 1963); these questions were discussed at the time of my return to Latin America – after ten years in Europe.<sup>7</sup> In 1973, I would write in my work: *Para un etica de la liberacion latinoamericana*, a philosophical and critical statement expressed from the periphery of the World System:

El europeo, y por ello su filosofía, ha universalizado su posición de dominador, conquistador, metropolí imperial, y ha logrado, por una pedagogía prácticamente infalible, que las élites ilustradas sean, en las colonias, los subopresores que mantienen a los oprimidos en una cultura del silencio, cultura que no sabe decir su palabra, y que sólo escucha –por sus élites ilustradas, por sus filósofos europizados– una palabra que los aliena: los hace otros que sí mismos. (Dussel 1973, 153)

Also, sometime after 1977, the same issue is being debated over in Africa through philosophical works of authors such as Eboussi Boulaga and Paulin Hontodji (Boulaga 1977, Hountondji 1977), debates that fertilized the thought on particularism and universalism. This debates led to the multicultural trend of Postcoloniality, a trend that since 1986 has found a point of reference in *Decolonizing the mind the politics language in African Literature* by Kenyan author NguNgu wa Thiong'o (Thiong'o 1986). In 1978, Edward Said published *Orientalism*, (Said 1978, cf. Said 1993) a text which allowed for the discussion about anti-eurocentric theses.

The philosophical theme is always centered on the dialectics of universalism (of a modern civilization) and the notion of particularity (of the great traditional cultures of the colonial world). The question remains open to discussion; it is currently debated with fervor leading decidedly towards the problematic of "culture."<sup>8</sup> Charles Taylor writes advocating a multicultural yet non globalizing politics:

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autre que soi, il faut avoir un soi" (ibid., p. 287). This is also the basic topic of Ricoeur's recent critics on Levinas in *Soi même come un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> See my works from that period: "Iberoamérica en la historia universal" (Dussel 1966, cf. Dussel 1968).

<sup>8</sup> In effect, Featherstone (see Featherstone 1993), is coordinating a work on *Global Culture* that begins with the question: Is there a global culture? (ibid., 1) a question that swiftly becomes: it might be possible to refer to the globalization of culture" (ibid.). Robertson tells us that "during the second half

But merely, on the human level, one could argue that it is reasonable to suppose that a culture that have provided the horizon of meaning of large numbers of human beings, of diverse characters and temperaments, over a long period of time - that have, in other words, articulated their sense of the good, the holy, the admirable- are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject. (Taylor 1992, 72-73)

## 2. Towards a history of globalization

Immanuel Wallerstein, had already since 1974 (see Wallerstein 1974, 1984, 1995) advanced the notion of a "World System." Departing from this thesis Andre Gunder Frank asserts that the "World System" (see Dussel 1966, 214ff) does not originate in Capitalism but it has existed for at least 5000 years. (see Frank 1987, 1990, 1992, and Frank/Gills 1992) Similarly, Jim Blaut is of the opinion that Modernity does not exactly begin with Capitalism but rather with the European "invasion" of America in 1492. (Blaut 1992 and 1993) I believe that this question is both complex and needs to be differentiated. Before entering this debate, and as a preamble, I would like to outline a certain historical perspective which will allow us to place the discussion within a different horizon (neither a Eurocentric, nor a Hegelian<sup>9</sup> one).

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of the 1980's globalization (and its problematic variance, internationalization) became a commonly used term in intellectual, business, media and other circles – acquiring in the process a number of meaning, with varying degrees of precision" (Robertson 1994, 19.) Globalization, according him, is a recent phenomenon through which "all is structured as the whole." (ibid., 20) This view implies that such a globalization begun to speed up since 1880 and that from 1960 it entered the "phase of uncertainty," especially in 1990. (ibid., 27) Robertson himself describes in his work *Globalization. Social Theory and Global Culture* (1994) the "global field" as a field with four poles:

1 National Societies – 2 World System

4 Self-identities – 3 Humankind.

This field determines sic different sets of relations: 1-2: Relativization of national society; 2-3: Real politic-humanity problematic; 3-4: Relativization of self-identities; 4-1: Individual-society problematic; 1-3: Relativization of citizenship; 4-2: Relativization of societal reference (p.27). This work is filled with suggestions to be taken into account. Frederick Buell (Buell 1994) makes an excellent description of debates in the USA about this problem, specially pertaining to the Post-colonial debate (ibid., 217 ff) from within Marxist tradition (ibid., 265), as well as within the debates on Postmodernity and Globalization. (ibid., 325ff)

<sup>9</sup> For Hegel "world history travels from East to West; therefore, Europe is the end of universal history" ("*Die Weltgeschichte geht von Osten nach Westen; denn Europa ist schlechthin das Ende der Weltgeschichte*," [Hegel 1955, 243]). See also my lectures at Goethe University in Frankfurt (Dussel 1995).

Many of the instances of the system that is nowadays globalized have an old history.<sup>10</sup> In our interpretation the "World System" has certain stages that we would like to briefly recall here.<sup>11</sup>

*a. Stage I. Mesopotamia and Egypt.* Of the six regions of what is considered the high Neolithic<sup>12</sup> culture (Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, pre Aryan China, Mesoamerica and the Inca region) only Egypt and Mesopotamia participate in an exchange of civilizing experiences that took place constantly since the IV. millennium B.C. At this juncture, a "system" that is now globalized begins to take shape historically, according to the plausible thesis of A.G. Frank.<sup>13</sup> In a non-eurocentric conception of history it is necessary to remember that Egypt has an originary Bantu component coming from the black African South.<sup>14</sup> Thus, in the Bantu culture the dead is buried with the instruments used while still alive (This can be observed both in a present day tomb in Ghana as well as in the pyramid of the Pharaoh Tutankamon whose hundreds of utensils can be seen at the Museum of Cairo). Similarly, the Osiris' myth of the resurrection of the dead (a myth which required a culture of Pyramids and mausoleums) arrives to Europe and America, via the Judeo Christian thought, where one can find cemeteries<sup>15</sup> like in the whole Muslim world, from Marrocco to the Philippines. Normative enunciations such as "I fed bread to the hungry, gave water to thirsty, clothed the naked one"<sup>16</sup> or "that the powerful do not oppress the poor in order to do justice to the orphaned and the widow"<sup>17</sup> are today critical principles still in use in Western Culture and which come from the first stage of the "inter-regional system."

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<sup>10</sup> It might appear trivial to allude to the following ordinary examples; however, they reveal a deeper implication: the seven-day week originates in Mesopotamia; the scale that symbolizes justice is actually that of Osiris, with which she could weigh the good deeds performed in life by the dead ones of Egypt; our current dressing codes, for instance, the use of trousers, nowadays also widespread in women, was introduced in Mongolia by the horsemen of the Euro-Asian plains, approximately 8000 years ago; paper and the printing press was well known in China during the VI century BC.

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion see my *Ethics of Liberation* (Dussel 2013), in the historical introduction section 1 and 2.

<sup>12</sup> The Neolithic revolution, contrary to Hegel's claims, travels from Mesopotamia and Egypt, right at the climax of the Paleolithic and without direct connections, towards the East: India, China and pre-Colombian cultures.

<sup>13</sup> I will not refer to it as "World System" because of the exclusion of "Amerindia" extended up to the European "invasion" at the end of the fifteenth century. Rather, I will refer to it as an Afro-Asian "Interregional System at the stage I.

<sup>14</sup> The Egyptian used to refer to himself as *kmt* which meant black, synonym of a civilized subject, while the white subject (in Egyptian language "red," a pejorative term) was the barbarian of the Mediterranean. It is, then, imperative to acknowledge a black- African component of Egyptian culture.

<sup>15</sup> The Greek, Indo-European tradition states the immortality of the soul; therefore, cremation of corpses is practiced since the body is the origin of all evil.

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 125, *Egyptian Book of the Dead*.

<sup>17</sup> From the Epilogue of the Babylonian Codex of Hammurabi.

*b. Stage II. The Culture of the Horse and Iron.* Due to the use of the horse<sup>18</sup> and the use of iron,<sup>19</sup> especially in the manufacturing of weapons for the wars of the great invaders, the "inter-regional system" becomes connected. These peoples, inappropriately called "Indo-Europe-ans," have also been referred to as invaders even though their "invasions" cannot really be labeled as such. The "system" expands by becoming connected to China, and thus initiating what will be known as the "Route of Silk"; by reaching India and thus incorporating the "Aryans" of Rig Veda and by including the following civilizations: the Persians and Medes of Mesopotamia; the Hitites from Turkey, the Greek and Latins of the Mediterranean and the Germans in Northern Europe. The "system" that becomes now globalized owes so much of the configuration of its "institutions" to the peoples from the Iron and Horse stage that it is frequently held that Modernity is the sole inheritor of the II stage of the Inter-Regional Asiatic-Afro-Mediterranean System; conversely, it is frequently forgotten that China, India and most of the Muslim world are just as authentic inheritors of this system as the previous ones. The unilinear syllogism Grece-Rome-Europe is false. Baghdad is an earlier and more relevant continuation of Athens than Paris or Köln – the first is more of an inheritor of Greek thought than the seconds. One should not forget either that Athens was a colony of the Egyptian Sais (its masters in economics, science and religion: The Neith, goddess of Sais is the Palas Athena, and Plato (Plato Phaedrus, 274d) correctly asserted that the Egyptian Thoth had taught Greeks the numbers, calculus, geometry and astronomy. The armed riders of the Iron stage organized, then, the first political institutions and occupied vast territories, thus dominating many people that paid taxes and were frequently reduced to slavery. The Interregional system expanded from the Hitite Empire, whose capital was Hattusa, through the Persian Empire, the Indian kingdoms and the Chinese Empire, to the expansion of the Hellenistic world which founded Seleucia in the heart of Mesopotamia (capital of Seleucid Hellenes), city that was the "center" of the connections that sprang from China to Hispania. This primitive globalization was already intercontinental: from the Pacific to the Atlantic where an exchange of numerous techniques and findings related to astronomy, agriculture, economics and politics took place, an exchange that will persist in the present World System.

*c. Stage III. From Byzantium to Bhagdad.* It would seem that the domination of the Iron era produced endless oppression in the great empires. It would also seem, as Max Weber affirms, that, in the shacks of the slaves and the exploited ones, a critical ethics on the universalistic rebellion of the victims was propagated. The sage's critical formulations, exchanged with Egypt and Mesopotamia, were expressed in sacred books that, once re-read in situations of extreme material scarcity, produced as if by an explosion, the third stage of the "Inter-Regional System." This stage comprises the following cultures and territories: first of all, the Christian Byzantine culture; the Muslim culture (which will reach to Morocco in the Atlantic, to Poitiers in the north in 732 A.C., to the south of the Sahara, to the plateau via

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<sup>18</sup> Horse as a means of transportation from Mongolia and China through the desserts of Euro-Asian plains to India, Persia and the Mediterranean (see Narr 1965/1, 578-581).

<sup>19</sup> A metal that produces a technological revolution: from the introduction of harnesses, nails, horse-shoe, the ax, the shovel, pickax, to the improvement of agricultural plowing system, etc.

the golden Horde of the Mongols in what is now Russia, to Delhi, or Angra; and to the Mindanao in the Philippines in the fifteenth century through Malacca in the Pacific), and finally the Latin and Germanic cultures. The "System" will have as a central region from Samarkand and Bukhara (to the south of the present day Russia) up to Kabul around Bhagdad (founded in 762 and destroyed by the Mongols in 1258) which was the model of the "civilized" and "modern" for five hundred years.<sup>20</sup> The *falasifa* (philosophy in Arabic) acquires a classical splendor in the ninth century when Al Kindi (who dies in Kufic, Syria in 873 A.D.) initiates the first process of modern secularization in philosophy, thus making philosophy different from the Koran and using it as a rational hermeneutical method for its own commentary. Ibn Sina (Avicena, who dies in 1037 A.D.) who lived in Bukhara (now to the south of Russia), rediscovered and impeccably elaborated on Aristotle's logic. The Muslim Culture is the first great heir to Greek culture.<sup>21</sup> Europe, the Germanic Europe, was a peripheral region of the Mediterranean, a "remote" corner which was never central (not even during the Roman Empire) to the "Inter-Regional System" which encompassed China. The poorly labelled "Middle Ages"<sup>22</sup> were nothing but the European perception of its own darkness and its dependency on a "central" culture: the "Muslim culture." The first prominent European novel, though there are some others before, *Don Quixote*, "the knight of the sad figure," (who fought against windmills)<sup>23</sup> is attributed according to his author to an Arab writer. Could a "barbarian" European write a "literary masterpiece" of such innovative style? It was more plausible to attribute it to those thought as "cultivated," undoubtedly the Arabs who were centenarian writers of subtle "stories" (protonovels), such as the *Arabian Nights*.

All of the elements, or at least most of them, that Weber identifies in the European Middle Ages and Renaissance as "internally" constitutive of Modernity, have been truly realized in the Muslim World centuries before<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> In every culture from Egypt to China, from the Aztecs to the Incas, that which is modern signals to the center from which the best information of the "system" is managed; from which the best and newest instruments (material as well as symbolic) are used; from which political and religious power, and economic wealth is administered; in short, the modern signals to the most developed. The rest are "barbarians," non-humans, those who are outside, the "periphery." The modern in each culture is valuable because of its ethnocentricity. The "modernity" of the World System claims validity for all the other cultures; and this is a novelty in world history.

<sup>21</sup> Its octagonal mosques resemble Greek-Byzantine art, unlike later Gothic churches built with a different spirit.

<sup>22</sup> For world history, the label Middle-Ages is an invalid historical category; it does not make any sense for the Muslim world, India, China or Amerindia. It only works for Europe.

<sup>23</sup> The windmill is a symbol of technological modernity. But one must not forget that windmills actually come from the Muslim world because, since 947 BC there were wind and water mills in Seistan, a town closed to Indo. Also in Basora, the Tigris' river flow was used to give motion to floating mill wheels. Modernity for Cervantes pays for the Armada with which Europeans, Spaniards, irrevocably defeat the Turks in the battle of Lepanto in 1571, a battle financed by the Latin-American silver extracted from the mines of Zacatecas and Potosí discovered in 1546.

<sup>24</sup> According to Braudel (Braudel 1978) that because of a letter written by a merchant Jew from Cairo (1095-1099 A.C.) we know that Muslims knew all forms of credit and payment and all forms of

*d. Stage IV. The "World System": Europe as "center."* Up until the "invasion" of the American Continent in 1492, the Baltic Sea (the industrial "Northern Europe" of Hegel) and the Sea of Japan, were the most remote regions from the "center" (at that moment Baghdad and India).

The unexpected "invasion" of the Amerindian cultures (i.e: Mexico from 1519 and Perú from 1529) will give to peripheral Europe a "vantage point" when compared to China – more populated and at least at the same level of technological development as Renaissance Europe. The first Modernity (see Wallerstein 1974/1 and Chauu 1955) in its humanistic and imperial sense will be advanced by Spain as a result of the unity of the Hispanic nation brought about by Castille and Aragon in 1476 through the Port of Seville; this unification (new center) will be the predecessor of what eventually will become the first (and only) "World System." The experience and wealth of Genoa and other Renaissance Italian cities was not pertinent to the lands where the Reformation occurred<sup>25</sup>. Such experience, along with that of the ancient Arab emirates (from the Caliphate of Cordoba...) was rather directed towards the Atlantic –an "ocean," up to that moment, devoid of culture–, a horizon that will extend to the Caribbean (the new Mediterranean) in the imminence of Capitalism.

Northern Europe, up to that moment always dependent and peripheral of the Latin Mediterranean world (with the relative exception of the Vikings and the Hansa Confederation, though these themselves were dependent on the Mediterranean) is now directly connected to the "center," as embodied by the Atlantic.<sup>26</sup> The emancipation of Holland from Spain (at

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commercial association; therefore, it was not in Italy that these commercial forms of transactions first emerged as it has been so readily accepted (p.65). There was an extensive commercial network with currency instruments that allowed for the management of money among the nations of the inter-regional system. Transactions of agricultural products developed the milling industry of cereals; for instance, 100 thousand camels were used exclusively for the commercialization of dates. Muslims caravans that connected India and China with the Mediterranean reached up to six thousand camels. This commercial network gave rise to multiple industries. Merchants began to make their calculations with Arabic numbers, which actually originated in India, and used the decimal system and the numeral zero, along with algebra, etc.

<sup>25</sup> For Hegel modernity covers a geography that, departing from the Renaissance (Italy) and passing through the Reformation (Alemania), the English parliament, and the French Revolution, reaches the Enlightenment (specifically in its German and French versions). As it can be gathered from this, there is nothing "modern" to Spain Portugal and Latin America. We have referred to this vision as provincial and Eurocentric, since it considers Modernity as developing from within, as a result of an intrinsic European development which began in the Middle-Ages. Such, however, is not the case. The fact is that Southern Europe (the "Latin" one), the center of the World System, makes of this region the departing point of Modernity. Latin America is the first periphery, a century before the Anglo-Saxon America (i.e. New Holland, colony of the Holland which at the time of settlement was a Spanish colony) became, in the seventeenth century, the New England of the thirteen original colonies.

<sup>26</sup> This explain that Luther's protest, which could have ended up as the rankings of one more heretic of Medieval Europe, could now "reach" the center of the System and thus could dispense away with the mediation of Mediterranean Rome, a Rome that along with the Mediterranean will become a peripheral culture of Atlantic Europe (thus inverting the ego-political situation). The Eurocentricity implicit in the so-called "discovery" of America thus explains the world scope of the Protestant Reformation.



the beginning of the seventeenth century) and its mighty fleet, transformed Amsterdam, since 1630, into the heir of Seville. (Wallerstein 1974/2) We are now in the second Modernity, the properly bourgeois modernity of a mercantile "system" that will progressively replace the imperial Iberian superpowers. Since the "invasion" of Latin America in 1492, the "decentralization" in the sixteenth century of the "ancient system" that gravitated around Baghdad, produces a shattering revolution of the scientific paradigm of the peripheral Medieval Europe. The sixteenth century is nothing but the period of this revolution – when in 1520 Magellan (El Cano) returns from "circling" the world, there begins, "empirically," a new phase of the world's astronomic cosmology. The new scientific paradigm is only "expressed" at the beginnings of the seventeenth century (as a result of the previous Hispanic revolution) with Galilee (condemned in 1616), Descartes (disciple of the Spanish Jesuits, devoted to the practice of the "examination of conscience," which in turn was the origin of the cogito and who writes in Amsterdam in 1636 *Le Discours de la méthode*), etc. The rest is already known. However, we would like to gather a few conclusions pertinent to our topic.

The "World System" that reaches a new stage of globalization at the end of the twentieth century is already five hundred years old – the Stage III, organized around Baghdad, was also five hundred years old. This System is that of Modernity, of mercantile Capitalism (first under Spanish and then under Dutch domination) of industrial capitalism (under British domination) and transnational Capitalism (under North American domination since 1945, end of the so-called Second World War). This "System" is not merely an instrumental one as Paul Ricoeur and others indicated; it also contains material cultural moments (symbols, myths, values and traditions). It is rather ambiguously a technological system (based on instrumental reason), but it displays also many material instances (such as the ones mentioned above) and discursive instances (i.e. political institutions), etc. Furthermore, for the first time a World System confronts all the other cultures which in the Asian and Mediterranean region (obviously from China to India up to the Middle East and Northern Africa) had been fertilized internally by ancient moments of the very same "system" (Stages II and III). China, for instance, is perfectly reticent to the modernity of the World System, because for thirty centuries it has lived with such system (from its Stages II and III); therefore, it has an internal capacity to assimilate and adapt. India, as a victim of colonialism is the exception. The Muslim reality, given its comprehension of the world, draws from internal resources, originating in its first philosophical and Aristotelian Enlightenment since the ninth century, in order to encompass the secularized world (fundamentalism notwithstanding, given that it is a nonessential epiphenomenon). Latin America was the first assimilated and co-opted modern periphery (Latin America is the originary "barbarian" required by Modernity for its own definition). With the exception of few ethnicities, still today resisting the invasion, destruction and assimilation, the destruction of the great majority of Amerindian cultures were the origin of "mestizaje." This is not the case with the Bantu world or any other "non-universal" indigenous culture, cultures whose process of "assimilation" is more complex.

At any rate, concomitantly with the globalization of modernity, the almost absolute exteriority of other sophisticated cultures has progressively diminished. But, suddenly, the

capacity for expansion is halted and thus a process of exclusion begins, out of the internal crisis within this very World System. Let us consider, then, the processes of inclusion and exclusion that are both violent and mortal.

### 3. The asymmetrical inclusion of the victims of the World-System

From the fifteenth century onwards, Europe as a secondary and peripheral culture, dialectically expands its horizons and includes (subsumes) first and foremost Amerindia (from Mexico to Peru) the richest area in metal and whose urban centers were the most densely populated. For three centuries Europe will accumulate wealth and military technology, will monopolize power and will lead in the management of the World System's centrality (not anymore in the sense meant by Wallerstein, but incorporating many of the aspects of the autopoiesis of the "system" in the sense meant by Luhmann [Luhmann 1984]) in order to territorially occupy certain regions of Asia and, since the Berlin Congress (in 1885, just a century ago), to prepare for the "invasion" of Africa. It was only since the fifteenth century that the purported "superiority" of Europe was exerted on the Amerindian cultures; these cultures did not know iron, gun powder and the horse. Such was not the case with Africa which resisted until the times of the Industrial Revolution, thus proving that until the fifteenth century the so called European superiority was ineffectual. The "colonial world" is the victim; it is a denied and divided world, an excluded world. In relation to this Franz Fanon wrote:

Como es una negación sistemática del Otro, una decisión furiosa de privar al Otro de todo atributo de humanidad, el colonialismo empuja al pueblo dominado a plantearse constantemente la pregunta: ¿Quién soy en realidad?<sup>27</sup> (Fanon 1963, 228)

The point here is to locate historically, empirically and concretely this "negation of the Other."<sup>28</sup> The ethic of discourse indicates that if there is asymmetry among the participants concerned in the argumentative community, the justified decision is invalid. We will show how a radical invalidity blurs any present decision in the modern World System.

*a. The Irrationality of Violence as Origin.* From the fifteenth century onwards, the modern World System will always expand itself by means of an initial violence which constitutes the relation among systems, nations, cultures and people. Modern Europe, since the "invasion" of Amerindia in 1492, never initiated the process of "inclusion" of the other

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<sup>27</sup> This reality is found in exteriority – to express it in Levinas' words – it is an extra-ontological and extra-linguistic reality that pertains to the languages of the World-System; it is a prius that precedes the "being" of the "comprehension of being" of the modern World-System.

<sup>28</sup> In my work in progress *Liberation Ethics*, I devote the whole fourth chapter to analyze this "original negation," alienation as negation of alterity as I will architectonically refer to it in the future. This "originary negation" is the co-option of the other in the dominant system; it implies an alienation of the other's alterity, a negation of the other's possibility to live, a negation to participate in the center's discourse; in short, the inability of the other to accomplish his/her goals (including the cultural ones). [See Dussel, 1973, 1985].

culture (The Caribbean Indians were exterminated in the course of one century; so, only the Mexican Conquest can be construed as the originary "inclusion" in reference to the whole process of inclusion carried out by Europe [see Dussel 1995, 35ff]). The invasion of America originates the propagation of "modern subjectivity" in a practical sense: the *ego conquiro* (I conquer) precedes the *ego cogito*. Neither Europe (Spain, Portugal, England, France, etc.) nor the United States<sup>29</sup> ever initiated their relation with peripheral cultures (in Latin America since the sixteenth century and in Asia since the eighteenth century)<sup>30</sup> with a peaceful proposition based on rational arguments.<sup>31</sup> This relation was always and solely carried out by the violence of weaponry. Spanish, Portuguese, British, French and North American armies occupied strategic territories. These nations defeated their opponents on the basis of military technological superiority, unconditionally subjugating them to their domination. This is the "other face of Modernity," a face that has been ignored since Kant, a face which is constitutive of modernity's "being" and of the World System whose most recent globalization is herewith being considered (in the era of the transnationals and after the so-called<sup>32</sup> Second World War). These are but a few instances of Modernity's violent irrationality: The colonial conquest in Latin America by Spaniards and Portuguese,<sup>33</sup> in North America by Anglo Saxons (who still celebrate at Thanksgiving the Native American offering so that the colonials would not starve, colonials who as a gesture of gratitude, initiated a fierce battle that did not spare a single Native American. This battle is still

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<sup>29</sup> I am referring to the violent occupation of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines in 1898, approximately a century ago. The Philippines' courageous resistance against the North American "invasion" resulted in the loss of two hundred and fifty thousand lives.

<sup>30</sup> Before the Industrial revolution the "conquest in Africa and Asia was carried out solely in limited islands and territories (Because Portugal still had intentions of building a "World-Empire"--much in the manner of Charles V of Spain, who in the face of financial failure must abdicate in 1557 –, Angola and Mozambique were perhaps the exceptions to the pattern that characterized the conquest of Asia and Africa) Wallerstein makes it clear that the "World-System" does not have an imperial project (a project that would impose an official language, culture, religion; and political, military and economic organization). With a "Company of the West and East Indies," Amsterdam can commercially organize the system. There is, then, a simplification by negation of the quality in favor of quantity: only "black numbers" matter for book-keeping purposes.

<sup>31</sup> Bartolomé de las Casas in the midst of sixteenth century Latin America proposed in his work *De Unico Modo* that Europeans must rely on rational arguments and testimonies of morally virtuous life, rather than resorting to violence (see Dussel, 1995, confer. 5.3)

<sup>32</sup> I insist on the adjective "so-called," because it was not a "world" war, but actually an intra-capitalist war triggered by the hegemony of the World System. Germany and Japan attempted to participate in a market-economy monopolized by England, and to a lesser degree by France and other "traditional" Central European powers; the United States defeat of Germany and Japan wrested the hegemony of the United Kingdom. We are specifically referring to the North American hegemony that since 1945 allowed for the colonial emancipation of Africa and Asia. From 1989 such hegemony for the first time in the history of humanity rests in the hands of *one military super Austin Power*.

<sup>33</sup> Some fifteen million Indians died as a result of violence carried out with sophisticated arms, with dogs trained to kill Indians; this violence was also evident in the slavery and devastation of Indians in plantations and mines and as a consequence of diseases foreign to the indigenous population of the Americas...the conquest was the first process of globalization.

praised today in the American Western film where it meets with the universal complicity of audiences) in French Canada, in the enslaved Africa,<sup>34</sup> in the filibustering<sup>35</sup> of the Caribbean, in the opium war of China or in the violent occupation of India – murdering all those who would "compete" with the British textile industry, thus destroying the centenarian production of silk.

*b. Economic exploitation as structure.* The despotic dominance over the bodies of the new colonial servants was structured on the basis of an economic system which was founded not even on an unequal exchange, but on the simple extraction, pillaging or illegal appropriation of all resources that could be exploited through military dominance. Indians were sent by means of the system of *encomiendas* – a system characterized by gratuitous labor – to work in the fields; later to work in the haciendas, (farms) receiving fictitious salaries; they were sent to the mines where they labored their lives away in the *mita*; Africans were commoditized as slaves, used and slaughtered like animals (treated as pure merchandise deprived of fundamental rights such as marriage, paternity or any other right known to humans; their bodies could be used sexually or economically by the slave "masters" who had full rights over their lives, including their sadistic torture and their extermination). The mining wealth (gold and silver) was simply possessed by the colonials who had to pay taxes to the Crown; the rest of the colonials' revenues would then be funneled into the European world market in Europe (the first true world market whose first currency was coined with the silver extracted by the indigenous contingent in Mexico and Peru, or by the African slaves later in Minas Gerais, Brazil) This is the "originary accumulation" of colonial extraction. (see Dussel 1988)

When the mercantilism promoted by the extraction of metals and tropical products was transformed into Industrial Capitalism (circa 1750), the World System in its very center will start the accumulation of a surplus (*sensus strictus*). In Europe, such system would restructure the colonial contract under British economy, thus initiating an uneven exchange with the textile industry. Around 1870 the accumulation of wealth and technology allows for the expansion of imperialism, territorially opening railroad lines and crossing the oceans with steamships. Great areas (Argentina, Canada, Australia, etc.) are incorporated in the World System by means of the gigantic extraction of agricultural and mining products. The periphery will always remain in an asymmetric position.

The present stage of transnational capitalism now focuses on the periphery; its capital is now invested in industries of less relevance. By doing so, capitalism absorbs the low salary of miserable external proletariat (in Asia or Latin America). The Asymmetric relation is incontestable. The Great Seven (the group of the seven, G7) decide the destiny of the rest of

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<sup>34</sup> The Christian nations of England, Portugal, Holland and France, stained their white hands with the blood of over thirteen million African peasants, sold as beast of burdens in the south of the thirteen colonies, in Cuba, in Cartagena de Indias, in North -Eastern Brazil. In face of a sensitive and global ethical consciousness, the complicity of these nations still awaits for its own "Nuremberg Trial "

<sup>35</sup> Bandits who, in the name of England and France, looted Spanish ships filled with the silver extracted from the mines in Zacatecas, Durango Guancavélica and Potosí, at the cost of Indians who rested lifeless at the bottom of these mines.

humanity. The concentration of wealth in the hands of the United States, Japan and Europe (whose population does not reach 15% of the total world's population) controls, uses, consumes and destroys irresponsibly up to 80% of the nonrenewable resources of the world.

*c. The Metropolitan Political Domination:* We are not addressing the structure of interstate politics. We are not addressing either the structure of national politics. Rather, we are referring to the political structure of the World System which has been around for five hundred years. The metropolitan system (in a *de jure* assumption) was organized on the basis of violence, a political system which was termed, for instance, in Latin America, the state of the Indies (Spanish America) or the state of Brazil: the state without rights. The colonies (or ultramarine provinces) were totally subaltern to the power of the European Kings (Spanish, English, French, etc.), to their courts, councils and other political organisms.

The political status of the inhabitants of the colonies was near to zero; these inhabitants had virtually no rights vis-a-vis the European power. In the World System the periphery was politically meaningless. The anti-colonial process of national emancipation (from the beginnings of the nineteenth century in Latin America and during the second half of the twentieth century in Africa and Asia) showed from its beginning the neo-colonial traces of the colonial period. The elites that led the emancipation process profited from the structural economic exploitation, from the military domination and especially from the cultural domestication. The neo-colonial situation is nothing but the continuation of the political and colonial dominance (included the military sense in which the Pentagon has replaced the military power of the old European metropolis, a power which is exerted via an incontestable computerized technology as it was witnessed in the Gulf War, where the dominance of the center gave a clear example to the peripheral nations as to their possible destiny were they to oppose the New World Order, an Order triumphantly proclaimed by President George Bush).<sup>36</sup>

*d. Cultural Hegemony of the World System.* In the fifteenth century begins the cultural penetration into territories that, up to that juncture remained peripheral. Europe as the center of the World System culturally penetrates these peripheries; this system is not merely an instrumental institution (as it could be suggested by Ricoeur), but also, and rather ambiguously, a value-ridden cultural development in the sense of the *Lebenswelt* of a particular culture with pretensions of universality<sup>37</sup> (European culture).<sup>38</sup> Over the centuries cultural

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<sup>36</sup> That so many European and North American philosophers based upon *ad hoc* arguments.

<sup>37</sup> The World-System is "global" but the fundamental European culture in the center of the system is "particular." The European is prone to assume that his/her culture even the post-conventional one is the universal culture of the future (indeed, many Marxist from the center fell into this fetishism). The World-System has certainly cultural elements but is not a culture in the truest sense of the word, since the world system culture has been instrumentally expanded in an external fashion upon other cultures, other cultures that, in keeping with their capacity of resistance or creativity, either accepted or rejected the cultural values of the "World-System" (from eating in Burger King through drinking Coke, to wearing blue jeans). In these examples "goods" are also cultural material objects which are consumed in different fashions: when eats them ones drinks them and wears them.

transmission was implemented by an educational system that move from generation to generation (elementary and high school, higher and ecclesiastical, etc.; by means of books, newspapers etc.; by means of poetry, novels and theater, etc.). The metropolis was in charge of consolidating colonial elite that was loyal to the incumbent empire. Violent repression warned against the possibility of a much desired emancipation. In the neocolonial stage, on the most part, though with a few exceptions, the neocolonial elite was in many ways co-opted by the incumbent culture, a modern and hegemonic culture. Mimetism in the cultivated avant-gardes was a sad reality.

In the present times, the postmodern phenomenon,<sup>39</sup> has taken again this problem, since the cultural means of expansion have been revolutionized. The repercussion of this revolution, carried out by mass media industries such as the radio, the cinema and television, amounts to a radical change of the structure that underlies the constitution and consumption of cultural objects; therefore, the problem of exchange has been also altered as has been altered the cultural penetration of the peripheries carried out by the World System. These peripheries specifically referred to particular cultures affected by the process of globalization in the postcolonial age.

*e. The paradox of exclusion in globalization.* But the mechanisms of inclusion in the World System, far from diminishing, have actually augmented peripheral heterogeneity, given that the aggressive actions of domination have not destroyed their exteriority but rather have pushed this exteriority to its limits via a non-intentional politics of exclusion. Indeed, after five hundred years of the inauguration, development and global culmination of the World System, identified with transnational Capitalism at the economic level, two critical and absolute limits emerge to close upon the whole structure of the World System. The first, the ecological destruction, a non-intentional and irreversible process, the consequence of a devastating technology which springs from the following short-term selection criteria: the increment of the rate of profit<sup>40</sup> (the essence of capital as valorization of value). But, in relation to his previous idea, the second, embodied by the impoverishment of most of humanity located in the postcolonial peripheral horizon of late capitalism; this, in many cases, is the beginning of the end (hunger, AIDS, etc., like in Africa Bangladesh, Haiti, etc.); this is the possible extinction of the Homo species (more due to ecological effects than due to the nuclear holocaust). Therefore, the extinction of life on earth is the last limit of the World System. We are then addressing the plight of the victims of such System.

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<sup>38</sup> Latin America constituted the periphery as a dependent, alienated and repetitive culture. Latin America, due to its constitutive "mestizaje," was the first to receive the "impact" of the process of acculturation: the Christianization of the Amerindian cultures, and the forthcoming colonization (and here colonization is not used in the metaphorical sense implied by Habermas but in its original and real sense).

<sup>39</sup> Postmodernity viewed as the inherent culture of present "late capitalism." See Frederic Jameson's excellent work *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Jameson 1991). Also consider Aijaz Ahmad "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory" (Ahmad 1987, 3-16); Ahmad will later criticize Said (Ahmad 1992).

<sup>40</sup> Marx would have spoken of "surplus value." In real socialism the criterion, equally devastating, was that of the increase of the rate of production.

#### 4. Ethical criticism of globalization as exclusion

Ethics as practical philosophy, in order to be critical needs of a certain diagnoses; it requires the explanatory and interpretative mediation of the critical human and social sciences. We have seen the manner by which the third criterion of demarcation allows for the discernment between the mere functional social sciences and the critical ones.<sup>41</sup> A moral that is purely procedural like the one characteristic of the ethics of Discourse, an ethics which presupposes the impossibility of an empirical perfect symmetry among the participants involved in the argumentative community, does not have the possibility to use this third criterion of demarcation because it has abandoned the material ethic. This abandonment is based on the opinion that such ethic is particular, linked to selfish impulses, to a "good life" or to cultural values exempted from universalist assumptions. Morality only offers the rules for the discussion on the fundamentation of practical norms, but it cannot offer material instructions to the very same discussion; rather, it leaves the discussion of topics under the responsibility of the "experts." But are these experts critical enough? Can discursive morality offer a criterion in order to discern which scientific experts are really functional and which are critical in relation to the system (a system that unintentionally excludes the ones who do not participate, despite their being affected by it)? None of this can be pondered by the ethics of Discourse. Let's then consider how can we approach the problem.

*a. The Need of Criticism from the Symmetric and Anti-Hegemonic Community of Victims.* The discursive reason whose intersubjective praxis reaches validity in a communication community could carry out its grounding and hegemonic praxis from the incumbent system<sup>42</sup> (in keeping with our topic, from the center of the World-System which begins to be globalized since the Conquest of Mexico in 1519) or from a "community of victims." The latter could be exemplified by a group of women which become conscious of "machismo," a group of African Americans who struggle against racial discrimination, a group of marginalized subjects who struggle against urban exclusion...or the challenge of peripheral cultures and nations to a World System that becomes increasingly globalized. The ethic of Discourse has not yet imagined this perspective: the participants of an affected community of victims that in the hegemonic community are excluded or who are in an asymmetrical

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<sup>41</sup> It seems that there is an awareness of this issue in writing: "Something different happens with the political economy that in the eighteenth century competes with the rational natural law (...) As Political Economy, the sciences of economy still keep, in terms of theory of the crisis, a relation with the global society (...). But, despite all this, it ends up destroying economy once it becomes a specialized science [read it as functional]. Today economic science treats economy as a sub-system of society and dispenses with questions of legitimacy" (Habermas 1981/1, 17). Economy would not be in this predicament were it practiced as a critical social science (as it is practiced by those who exercise the discipline as a critical economy, just as it was practiced by Marx in his time).

<sup>42</sup> It is definitely "hegemonic" if the third criterion of demarcation is not explicitly put in the foreground. Yet it cannot carry it out because it is material (or the material has been abandoned at the beginning of its formal process).

position can conversely acquire symmetrical participation when they are "among themselves." At the "bottom of history," as a person excluded from the process of globalization (as a woman, as a peasant, as an Indian, and as a Guatemalan), a privileged victim reminds us:

Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú. Tengo veintitrés años. Quisiera dar este testimonio vivo que no he aprendido en un libro y que tampoco he aprendido sola a que todo esto lo he aprendido con mi pueblo<sup>43</sup> y es algo que quiero enfocar ... (Menchú 1985, 21)

The discursive reason itself can be functional to the incumbent system or it can be inter-subjectively critical. I think we have taken a step forward. We have departed from the strong and critical (negative and material) position of the first Frankfurt School; and, now, we also include, within the linguistic and discursive paradigm of the second Frankfurt School, such a "criticism." The criticism we are referring to has little to do with the theoretical "critical thinking" of someone like Stephen Toulmin and Hans Albert, neither does it have much to do with the Habermasian emancipation (Emancipation) as discursive Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). The problem is really about an ethical criticism which departs from the notion of taking side, empirically and intersubjectively, with the victim, considering thus its material negativity (with "a" in German). When the supportive scientist (Gramsci's "organic intellectual") has adopted this intersubjective, practical and discursive perspective, and proceeds to project a program of scientific investigation which in turn seeks to explain – according to the best available scientific resources – the cause of the victims negativity, we come across with the position from which critical social sciences develop (and also Liberation Philosophy and its corresponding ethics which functions as its necessary introduction).<sup>44</sup> So, when Marx writes:

Del hecho de que la ganancia pueda estar por debajo del plusvalor o sea de que el capital pueda intercambiarse por una ganancia pero sin valorarse en sentido estricto, se desprende que no sólo los capitalistas individuales, sino las naciones pueden intercambiar continuamente entre sí (...) sin que por ello hayan de obtener ganancias iguales. Uno puede apropiarse constantemente de una parte del plustrabajo de la otra, por el que nada da a cambio, sólo que en este caso, ello no ocurre en la misma medida que entre el capitalista y el obrero. (Marx 1974, 755)<sup>45</sup>

Surely, Marx was not especially interested, mainly during his life time, in the competition of capital (and the national global capital) in the World Market. This, however, does interest me, since it has to do with the problem of the globalization of the productive capital and

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<sup>43</sup> The "community of victims."

<sup>44</sup> The critical theory of Horkheimer formulated this question ambiguously, since it confused in a single program the critical social sciences and the ethical critical philosophy (a philosophy that I call "Liberation Ethics"). It is important to distinguish one from the other and to know how to articulate each one of them.

<sup>45</sup> See also Hinkelammert's lecture "Die Marxsche Wertlehre und die Philosophie der Befreiung" (Hinkelammert 1995, 35-74). In addition, see my article "Marx's Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63 and the 'Concept' of Dependency" (Dussel 1990, 61-101).



the globalization of the market. The surplus relation between the capitalist and the worker is intricately related to the "essence" of capital – which is what, historically, interested Marx and what was ethically presented to the English workers, in order to explain the cause of their material negativity: the misery of the working class. My interest in the problem of competition among national capital has to do with the misery of peripheral nations (with its peoples, ethnicities, groups, working class, etc.), as national capital is transferred as surplus from one nation to the other. Globalization has not yet advanced to the point of erasing national borders.<sup>46</sup>

The intersubjective consensus that claims validity and that is reached in the community of victims; a consensus that also integrates critical and scientific "explanations" is, however, inimical to the valid consensus of the "hegemonic community." For instance, the consensus of North American and European popular opinion about peripheral countries, an opinion which asserts that peoples from these countries do not work, that they are racially and rationally inferior, that they deserve their misery for their lack of a competitive edge, etc. All this accounts for a growing xenophobia as was ostensible in California during the debate around proposition 187, or in South Africa, or in the former socialist Eastern Europe. All this can be positively explained from the stand point of the social sciences used by the dominant system. It is not merely a coincidence that these sciences are formulated in Harvard, London or Frankfurt, or that the neo-classical economy, the economic neo-liberalism or the liberal "minimal" state came from Chicago. All these social scientific theories elaborated in the North, along with the recent geopolitical and military theories that buttress the fight against drugs, are nothing but an effective cover up for the actual occupation of the countries in the South.

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<sup>46</sup> If this were to happen, the so-called transnational corporation would disappear, corporations that operate with the average difference of *national global capitals* in relation to their organic composition: they invest productive capital of high technological development in countries with low salaries; this, in turns, gives transnational corporation an advantage when competing with the capitals from the nation where the transnational headquarters are (absorbing high salaries); they also have an advantage over the capitals in the nations where the transnational operates (nations with a technological disadvantage.) This setting allows them to transfer value (surplus value) from the periphery to the center. The transfer of surplus value is achieved by means of diverse mechanism among which we will mention the following: the expiration of parts and whole products, collection of royalties, or simply profiting from high interests of phantom international credits. Only Marx has a theoretical categorical framework (of critical economy or of critique of the economy) that serves to "unveil" and "explain" these "facts," facts that are invisible to the "functional" economy (neo-classical, Keynesian, neo-liberal, etc.). the massive poverty of peripheral nations is a non-intentional effect of the globalization of the productive, commercial and financial capital, a fundamental material structure of the World-System. Since, as we have said, products (merchandise) are symbolic and cultural objects of consumption and thus such a system is also a cultural system: Coca-Cola is beheld "in its beauty," one can feel its "cool softness," one can taste its "bubbly flavor," it displaces traditional drinks (and really nourishing), it creates new needs and finally it must be purchased...thus transferring values to the "center" (vital human work that is objectivized). A country becomes richer while another becomes poorer; this is the contradiction that the Ricardian economist could not see in England and that we cannot see at the global level.

Ethics has much to reflect and much to say in this sense. The little work by Kant *The Perpetual Peace* was an attempt during his time to propose a universal principle on international relations. This proposition is stated as follows:

Las acciones referidas al derecho de otros seres humanos cuya máxima no admiten publicidad (Publizität) son injustas. (Kant 1968/9, 245)<sup>47</sup>

That a maxim ought to be articulated publicly has to do with a formal and procedural principle. But once again we are riddled by uncertainties as we ponder our contemporary reality; so, can the international organisms begin to dialogue and discuss in a public manner, without taking into account a procedural requirement which amounts to a minimum of symmetry among the participants? Is there no power to veto in the United Nations? Is not there an asymmetrical dominance exerted by the "Group of Seven" (G7)<sup>48</sup> over decisions of economic and political world relevance? (a group which, as I write this lines today July 1, 1996, is gathering in Lyon).<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, what is the criteria that guide this discussions? Is it not true that the valorization of value, of capital, the possibility to overcome the crisis and to increase the profits of transnational corporations, of banks constitute (International Monetary Fund, Inter American Bank of Development, etc.) the criteria that guide this conversations? What has ethics to say, apart from the establishment of certain rules, in order to determine the symmetrical participation of the affected ones, in order to reach a sense of fairness by establishing norms (...) whose possible conditions are, beforehand, known to be empirically inexistent? Apel in his talk on the dialogue East – West says with optimism in reference to "Towards a Macroethics of Humanity"(see Apel 1992):

Actualmente vivimos, por primera vez en la historia, en una civilización planetaria (...) la unidad de la historia humana se ha realizado hoy en un sentido (...) como una unidad éticamente deseable, y en parte existente, de cooperación respecto a la formación, preservación y reforma de las condiciones comunes de la civilización del mundo actual. (Apel 1992, 21)

After foregrounding the content of the universal ethical principle that makes itself present in those moral institutions, a principle that is advanced by the non-contingent proposi-

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<sup>47</sup> A maxim which cannot be published without provoking the failure of its very purposes, that must remain secret in order to achieve the desired success, that cannot be publicly proclaimed without causing the resentment in all towards my intentions (...) This maxim will never be based on nothing but injustice" (ibid., B 100, A 94). It would be good to relay this to Admiral Canarys against Hitler, or to the heroes that died under Pinochet and Somoza's hands. Kant's law is applicable to a metropolitan "civil state" how would Kant have thought had he had been an Afro-Caribbean slave in Jamaica during the eighteenth century? Would he have made public his plan to flee the sugar plantation in order to reach the Central American Atlantic coast, thus reaching freedom?

<sup>48</sup> In the United Nations there are over one hundred and fifty nations represented, are these seven nations more human, and do they have more of a right and dignity than the rest? Would not the reason be simply based on the fact that these seven nations are more powerful and richer. We have schematically shown historical aspects of the accumulation of this wealth.

<sup>49</sup> I read in *Cinco días* (Madrid, July 1, 1996, 25): "The G-7 warns that globalization will increase employment and inequality."

tions belonging to the institution (or philosophical meta-institutions – of argumentative discourse), he concludes again rather optimistically:

Esta fundamentación aparentemente esotérica está, en cierto sentido, bien confirmada hoy (...) junto con aquellas declaraciones públicas que acompañan a los cientos de diálogos y reuniones sobre asuntos de importancia vital para la humanidad (...) pues estas reuniones y diálogos, en la mayoría de los casos, intentan al menos ser algo semejante a los discursos prácticos, luchando por soluciones aceptables para todos los seres humanos afectados. (ibid., 30)

All impoverished peripheral countries, the oppressed classes of the center and the periphery, the Afro Americans and Hispanics in the USA, women all over the world, the homeless children from Bogota or Sao Paulo, the elderly in miserable retirement homes, the millions of marginalized people, and the millions of immigrant who flee their countries for economic, political and racial reasons; all these victims attest to the fact that Apel's optimism is misplaced due to the enormous asymmetry that characterizes all those meetings and dialogues where the affected ones are on the most part absent and the decisions taken are not "acceptable" by the great majority of humanity

*b. From the Ethical Duties of the Production, Reproduction and Development of Life of Each One of the Community Human Beings.* It seems apparent that the universal and discursive principle is by definition the last rational instance. However, such is not the case. Wallerstein writes:

We can assert, if we wish, that the principle of universalism both on a world-wide scale and within each of the sovereign states that constitute the interstate system is hypocritical. But it is precisely because there is in reality a hierarchy of states within the interstate system and a hierarchy of citizens within each sovereign state that the ideology of universalism matters. (Featherstone 1993, 43)

The domination among states, cultures and individuals can be measured by the quality of life, by the chance that life offers each of the affected parties to the full realization of his/her life. Nonetheless, for this realization to occur, human life must be one of the criterion also (not only as a discursive and public intersubjectivity); it must be a positive, universal criterion of practical truth (of the ethical and material reason), a criterion from which an ethical, material, universal and positive principle can be grounded, point of departure of the negative or critical principle (of the commitment to avoid the death of humanity).

As we have written, we propose the following initial description of the material universal principle of ethics, the principle of corporeality as sensibility, containing a pulsional order, a principle that functions as a cultural and valorative (hermeneutical and symbolic) point of reference for every norm, action, institution or ethical system, a principle whose point of departure is the universality of human life. He who acts ethically<sup>50</sup> ought to be (as an obligation or ethical inclination towards the good) reproducing and develop in a responsible manner the life of each and every other human being, having as a rule the normative

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<sup>50</sup> To make explicit the "ethical" action is redundant, since to be ethical is to be human. But in this case the redundancy is not gratuitous because it emphasizes the intention of the enunciation.

enunciations with a truth claims in a life community. The point of departure, in cultural and historical terms,<sup>51</sup> ought to be a "worthy life" that is shared in solidarity with humanity and having humanity as an ultimate reference point, thus showing universalizing claims<sup>52</sup> (a "worthy life" with a manner to interpret happiness and with a sort of reference to the values implicit in the understanding of human beings).

This material principle of ethics includes the point of departure and contains the "matter" (*Inhalt*) of all the forthcoming moments (formal, procedural, factual, critical or of liberation). This moment constitutes the ethical content of all praxis and of all future projects of development: under any circumstances cannot be denied nor can it be overcome or ignored. . It is the room (place?) from which the facticity of the quotidian and ethical world as such is established. It is not merely a pathological or particular horizon that can be discarded in order to reach an a priori horizon of transcendental principles – as in the case of Kant or Apel. Neither does it consist exclusively of the cultural horizon – as in the case with the communitarians – or the incommensurable horizon – as in the case of the postmodern. But, furthermore, although such is the necessary departure point which is always presupposed in any moral system or ethics, it should not be forgotten that such is not a sufficient horizon, since in order for the validity, factibility or ethical critique, one must resort to other principles of co-determination.

But this very same positive principle is transformed in a negative critical principle. Ethical principles grounded from sets of criteria; now passing from "to be a life" to "ought to be" a life they must live. The following examples can clarify the question:

1. This is a hungry victim; therefore, his/her life is in danger (it is a factual judgment or a descriptive enunciation).

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<sup>51</sup> Even in a nonconventional culture, where each individual must rationally justify his/her decisions, and not only act by following the mores and conventions of tradition, the project of argumentative and intersubjective critique (by Apel or Habermas) are already a project of worthy and nonconventional life, a project that blooms in a historical culture and in a given moment, etc.

<sup>52</sup> The claim of universality in every culture (from the Eskimo or Bantú to the Aztec Nahuatl or Modern European nonconventional cultures) indicates the presence of the universal material principle within every culture; this opposes ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism or cultural fundamentalism is the attempt to impose in other cultures the claim of universality inherent to my own (ours) culture, even before such claim was discursive or interculturally tested. Each culture serious claim to universality must be tested in a rational dialogue whenever there is a confrontation of cultures. And when cultures historically confront each other, the dialogue is only possible from the claim of universality that characterizes each one of these cultures; and materially, forms the principle of content that has to do with the reproduction and development that underpins each culture and all cultural subjects. This process allows for a material unveiling of real articulations, once the dialogue has been initiated on the manner in which a culture reproduces and develops, in a concrete fashion, human lives. The intersubjective and discursive moment is precisely the procedural moment which formally allows for such a dialogue without denying, however, the logic of the material content from which the participants must depart. All this was brought to failure by the Eurocentrism that Modernity implemented on peripheral cultures from the end of the fifteenth century until the present (See Dussel 2000).

2. I am responsible<sup>53</sup> for the hunger of this victim. Ergo (a normative enunciation is founded).

3. I ought (this is an ethical obligation) first of all, *to criticize* the norm, action, institution or ethical system partially or thoroughly, since those are the cause of this negativity of victim. Also and furthermore:

4. I ought *to transform* the norm, action, institution or structures that are responsible for such negation of the victim.

The point is then to negatively judge the system (norm, action, etc.) as the mediation that causes victims. This is the *Krisis* par excellence. This is the final judgment (in the manner of Benjamin's description of Paul Klee's work) carried out by the Court (from the standpoint of the victims) of History (*kriterion*) which measures all norms, actions, institution or ethical system in accordance to its goodness (or evil). The preamble to the judgement of the system with a negative "no" is the intention of "not" producing victims (if these victims did not exist, this critique would not be necessary). Therefore, the reason why the oldest and most venerable imperatives of humanity were always negative ones can be comprehended. Here one may place Wellmer's proposal (Wellmer 1986, Kap.1) on the strength of the universal imperative as a prohibition of a non-generalizable maxim.

The ethical and critical principle in its negative moments is, first and foremost, negative as a judgement related to the non-reproduction of the life of each human being; and, positive, as a demand for the development of the life of each human being. This principle can take approximately the following form: whoever acts ethically and critically has recognized that the victims of any norm, action, institution or ethical system etc. have been denied the possibility to live (in totality or in partial moments). Therefore, one is obliged, in the first place, to deny the "goodness" of the "cause" of such a victim; that is to say to criticize the "non-truth" (Adorno's *Unwahrheit*) of the moment that causes the victim (which from this moment onwards appears as the dominant one). Secondly, to create in common solidarity the means, in order to transform this situation.

This material and critical universal principles make it possible to orientate abstractly and fundamentally the political organizations, conferences, forums and debates praised by the Ethics of Discourse, gatherings that take place in reference to the process of globalization. However, this material and universal principle (the asymmetry must always recall) and from such interpretation the victims ought to become aware of their situation; they should be moved to struggle for their recognition and for their rights, so that the impact of their acquired awareness move beyond the restricted space of these gatherings; and, thus, become useful in their daily lives. Liberation Ethics, then, quite beyond its formal principles will also articulate a material principle which can be exerted negatively as a critique of the World System that, due to its contents, becomes increasingly globalized at these levels: economic, ecological, pulsional etc.

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<sup>53</sup> In the irrevocable sense indicated by Levinas, but also if one considers all the necessary mediations, since any human, being a moment in the complex structure of human development cannot be declared as being absolutely innocent of anything, not even of non-intentional repercussions. There is always a sort of (direct, indirect, conscious or non-intentional) complicity in the victimization of the other, a complicity that binds us to all.

c. *The Philosophical Importance of North-South and South-South Discursive Dialogue.* Philosophy, in its ethical dimension, has a responsibility, then, in this "orientation." It must promote a discussion between philosophers from the North and those from the South. In the promotion of this dialogue it is deserving of mention the asymmetry that characterizes these two regions: the philosophers from the North who enjoy an hegemony of material power in the form of universities and other educational structures, publishing houses, journals, research centers, funds, scholarships and grants, alliance with diverse areas: intelligence, the military and transnationals, etc. Conversely, philosophers in the South must develop a genuine discourse that springs from its underdeveloped situation, from its oppressive and marginalized reality, and even from its exclusion. This dialogue would endow philosophers from the South recognition amongst their peers and recognition within the civil society. From this recognition, philosophers in the South can then proceed to elaborate a critique of the peripheral systems that work in complicity with a globalization that excludes and destroys the cultural identities of the subjugated nations.

But, furthermore, it becomes necessary for the South to count with the aid of the North in order to initiate South to South philosophical dialogues; i.e. dialogues among Asia, Africa and Latin America. In this manner the acute problems, elicited non-intentionally from the process of globalization, could be dealt with solely from the demands characteristic of the South, thus dispensing with the tampering mediation (usually non-critical and influential) of structures from the North. Along with Prof. Odera Oduka,<sup>54</sup> I organized an international committee for the South-South philosophical dialogue in December 1994, in Cairo. He was scheduled to participate in a panel organized by the APA in April of 1995, in Seattle, Washington; but he was assassinated in 1995 by one of those dictatorial governments in the peripheral world that are fearful of critical philosophers. His death amounts to a testimony of loyalty to criticism, to peripheral African philosophy, a truly "universal" and nascent philosophy.

### **5. Conclusion: The principle of liberation in globalization's exclusions**

These are nothing but a few words for a future discussion. Given that globalization produces non-intentional devastating effects in at least two thousand million humans and in countless cultures, cultures and peoples known as the victims of such process of globalization, Liberation Ethics must still forewarn that the function of ethics in relation to globalization does not end in the provision of discursive regulations needed to reach a consensus from which specific measures can be implemented. Its function does not end either in offering abstract guidelines (no matter how sufficient they might be) for the principle of reproducing and helping to develop the life of any human subject—a principle that is universal and from which the discursive principle functions as its moral mediation of application. Liberation Ethics, must still take into consideration the factibility of the decisions to which

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<sup>54</sup> Professor of the University of Nairobi (Kenya), President of the African Philosophical Association, personal friend of the author of these notes.

it arrives based upon the fulfillment of the two principles already discussed: the material and the formal principles.

Indeed, in the peripheral countries the factibility of the best decisions, the ones that are praiseworthy and meritorious, fix absolute limits: what is possible (from a technical, economic, political etc. point of view) determines a third area of the action and makes that a decision reached by consensus, a mediation of human life, become effective and actually possible. There is, then, an ethical principle of factibility that subsumes instrumental reason within the evaluation of the goals (from the material principle of life and the moral discursive principle: the principle of factibility should be nothing but mediation for life decided rationally and symmetrically by the affected ones). What is thus done is then "good." So, the process of globalization is "good" for the following instances: for certain countries, certain cultures, for corporations, political parties and some scientific and philosophical communities. But for the victims, as Adorno would say, the truthful becomes untruthful; and concerning the reproduction of life and their symmetric participation the "efficient" becomes inefficient. The ethical factibility for the reproduction and development of the life of the members of impoverished and peripheral countries and devastated cultures consists of halting such process of globalization, a globalization whose only criterion is the "efficient competition" in the market place (a principle of formal and instrumental factibility devoid of any ethical criterion or principle). This criterion solely tied to the "valorization of value" is responsible for the ecological destruction and ultimately for the destruction of life on earth and the concrete life of most of humanity. It is then at this juncture that an Ethics that founds the motivation of historical subjects (the victims in the process of conscientization) becomes necessary, not only for the purpose of serving as a background to forums, conferences and debates, that seek to establish rational and ethical limitations to the "efficiency of the Total Market" in the midst of globalization, but also to materially found the norms, actions, institutions and ethical systems that the daily plight of the victims begins to organize in countless ways and as part of the so-called "new social movements" (feminist and ecological movements, poor nations, oppressed social classes, indigenous ethnicities, marginal urban populations, immigrants,, political refugees, anti-racial groups, homeless children, the unprotected elderly and so many other "liberation fronts"). The forging of a critical liberal Ethics, must occur in the interior of these new historical subjects to justify their goals, programs and decisions.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> In Chapter six of the already mentioned *Liberation Ethics* I have discussed what I have now called the "Principle-Liberation," not included in this lecture.

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