Contrived Civilizations The Western Eurasian Mode of Hierarchies Production and the (Geo)Political Origins of *Scientia*

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Abstract

In this article I expose the idea that modernity is not only a distinctive era as historical sociology uses to think, neither only a discursive formation, as anti-foundational postcolonial critique assesses. It is rather a configuration of a Western Eurasian mode of hierarchies production with global projection that first emerged as a response to the cultural, political and geopolitical challenges that the reconfiguration of power in XIII century Mediterranean space posed to dominant strata of Latin Christianity. In order to explore the conjectural emergence and reconfiguration of this mode of hierarchies production, I reconstruct the nexus of continuity and discontinuity between modern science and late medieval Scientia.

Key Words: Modernity, Circulation of Knowledge, Eurocentrism, Scientific Revolution, Aristotelianism, Averroism

Introduction

In this article I expose the idea that modernity is not only a distinctive era as historical sociology uses to think, neither only a discursive formation, as anti-foundational postcolonial critique assesses. It is rather a configuration of a Western Eurasian mode of hierarchies production with global projection that first emerged as a response to the cultural, political and geopolitical challenges that the reconfiguration of power in XIII century Mediterranean space posed to dominant strata of Latin Christianity. In order to explore the conjectural emergence and reconfiguration of this mode of hierarchies production, I reconstruct the nexus of continuity and discontinuity between modern science and late medieval *Scientia*.

Anievas and Nisancioglu (2013: 78) have reframed the threefold theoretical conundrum of the transition to capitalism, the 'Rise of the West' and the 'breakthrough to modernity' incorporating new perspectives on The Great Divergence and postcolonial criticism to Eurocentric bias inherent in the concept of U&CD, within a conjunctural global historical and sociological frame for long-term/large-scale processes of social change. They focus on the geopolitical circumstances that unwillingly or not paved the way for the emergence of capitalism in North-Western Europe since the XIII century, the establishment of what Abu-Loghos named *pax mongolica*. The core rationale of their analysis, I maintain, can be supplemented by relocating the emergence modern science in the global scenario of XIII century, drawing on the theoretical and methodological upshots of recent non-Eurocentric scholarship on the history of science (Bala 2008; Hobson 2004; Goody 2007). A well-established understanding of the medieval roots of Europe considers what emerged in the Western part of Eurasia in XIII as a

distinct civilization (For a recent authoritative restatement of such a view, see Graukoger 2006). The defining cultural trait of this civilization would be the cosmopolitanism of its elite, a trait that, together with other defining features of societal organization and state formation, would be a crucial feature of what will later become *modernity* (Moore 1997: 583-601). It is my contention that this view remains trapped into its Eurocentric horizon. When seen from a global connected historical and sociological perspective, it was precisely the crisis of late medieval scholastic cosmopolitanism as a response to global geopolitical pressures both perceived from the East (the Mongolian empire), and suffered from the Middle East (the loss of the Crusades against Islamic states) that produced a regressive ethnocentric turn. And it was this turn which set the scene for the emergence of a Western Eurasian mode of hierarchies production, buttressed by the ideology of civilizational superiority and exceptionalism. Modern science and its medieval predecessor are integral to this ideological configuration. It is my contention that, rather than the West as a civilization, what emerged in XIII century was also generative matrix of geo-cultural meaning, a Western Eurasian mode of hierarchies production responding to needs and pressures determined by conjectural configurations of global powers.

In this essay I focus on XIII century Western Eurasia where the controversial responses that the circulation of Aristotelian thinking through Arab translations and commentaries since the turn of XII century produced within the Church and the related polities; a process which determined the rise and fall of late medieval scholasticism from Alberto Magno and Tommaso d'Aquino, until the Condemnation of 1277 at the University of Paris. The mounting hegemony of nominalism that followed, accounts for the beginning of the end of speculative reason: the premise for the transition to scientific modernity (Barnes 2000). For Nathan Sivin (1982: 5-66; for revised version 2005) in fact, 'early modern scientists claimed authority over the physical world on the ground that purely natural knowledge could not conflict with and therefore could not threaten the authority of established religion.' As O'Brien (2013: 1-24) reconstructs, 'natural philosophers accepted the subordinate status of their discipline as a handmaiden to theology'. This asset, whose major conflictuality will explode in XVI century, was legitimated on the base of the XIII century creation of a hierarchy between forms of knowledge were the Church allowed for a restricted an selective re-elaboration of Greek texts. 'Resistance and bouts of suppression marked the propagation of views based upon the circulation of pagan and Islamic ideas that contradicted core tenets of Christianity. These were that God created and controlled everything in the world and could, through divine interventions (miracles), suspend the operations of familiar natural forces as comprehended by common sense, and which classical philosophers had "rationally" explained' (O'Brien:7). Clearly, after 1277, a relevant part of those censored ideas and theories circulated, resonated and were amplified within, outside and at the margin of this newly established political and doctrinal frame. As Graukoger (2006: 49) underlines, 'what the 1277 Condemnation did was to draw into the open a number of fundamental ambiguities about just what the relative standing of theology, metaphysics, and natural philosophy was, and it was instrumental in establishing or reinforcing a set of constraints on how questions were decided as being metaphysical or natural-philosophical questions, constraints that would be widely contested in the course of the next three and a half centuries, but, at least until the early decades of the sixteenth century, contested within a framework that was established in the thirteenth century.' Yet, the destabilizing power of these processes of circulation had against the secular and ideological power of the Church provoked a resolute reaction that affected on the one hand, the regime of knowledge *in se* and the institutional asset wherein that regime was concretized; on the other hand, it radicalized the configuration of geocultural systems of representation of otherness and belonging, according of

the more conservative attitudes towards the reformulation of the ideological foundation of the social power of the Church. This intellectual destabilization intervened in a period of mounting political, socio-economic and geopolitical weakness of the dominant strata of Western Eurasia.

My argument unfolds as follow: first, I outline the conceptual tension between 'civilization' and circulation of knowledge drawing from recent non-Eurocentric historiography on science; second, I describe the specificities of the construction of the border between Christianity on the one hand and heretics, infidels, pagans and barbarians by Innocent III since 1204; third, I delineate the scenario of the profound transformations of Western Eurasian society and the way it affected the struggle within the Church; fourth, I argue for the similarities rather than difference between Islamic and Christian world in XIII century Mediterranean for as regards the connection between Aristotelianism and its ideological mobilization within multiple polities; fifth I analyze the process of articulation of the pejorative association of Aquinas' scholasticism with 'Averroism' and 'Arabism' in the geopolitical context of the shifting balance of power and hegemony from the Fourth to the Seventh Crusade, and the internecine struggles between Franciscans and Dominicans. I conclude by elaborating on the possibility to overcome success/failure narratives of modern science through Uneven and Combined Development.

Circulation of Knowledge vs 'Civilization'

According to the Chinese historian of science Fa-ti (2004: 2), the cartography of modernity is to be questioned by concepts which 'do not presuppose rigid, inflexible, demarcating cultural boundaries between the parties that came into contact while noting the existence of differences. There were boundaries, of course, but we cannot take them for granted. […] Nor do they privilege conventional binary categories such as Chinese/Western culture or civilization in explaining the contacts between the parties. Nor do they, moreover, essentializes power relations. On the contrary, they mark out a space for human actors as agents of historical change. They enable us to see mingling, interaction, accommodation, hybridization, and confluence as well as conflicts across borders of many kinds.' Analogously, the Indian historian Kapil Raj (2013) insists that when the history of ideas and practices is rethought as occurring within trading zones, made of circulation or acted by go-betweens 'it is in the asymmetry in negotiation processes that the power relationship resides, and it can be brought to light in its specificity only through a rigorous analysis of these processes, instead of being raised to the status of an explanatory category […] Of course, not everything circulates, and the term could suggest a blindly optimistic vision of books, ideas, practices, people, and material flowing smoothly between different cultures, communities, and geographical spaces. […] These conditions could depend on the exchange of favors, patronage, friendship, obligation, or just economic exchange, to name but a few possibilities.' In a similar vein, Roger Hart reconstructs in detail the interaction between Chinese *literati* and Jesuit missionaries to show the different perceptions of asymmetries of power and the complex interactions between geohistorical and ideological constructions deployed as a mean to make sense of the cross-cultural encounter. For Hart (2013: 2), 'rather than viewing this as the "first encounter" of two great civilizations—"China" and "the West"—we should instead critically historicize this actors, by way of furthering their own interests in the context of XVII century China. […] Narratives about this 'first encounter' contributed to imagining China and "the West" during twentieth and twentieth-first centuries.'

So, in the form of complex dispositional identities, geo-cultural constructs do permeate social action even though they simultaneously offer a set of practicable alternative in the space of cross-cultural interaction. These interactions involves hierarchies of power, so the possibility and the limits they offer and the permeability they show to be transformed are heterogeneously distributed according to social stratification. As Wang Hui (2010) remarks, the cogency of geocultural constructions depend on the way they are produced and implemented within complex articulation of power historically determined, where particular significance and cogency is attributed to elite discourses, and the shifting meaning dominant groups attach to geo-cultural constructs according to the political usage they need to mobilized. So, how is it possible to qualify the interaction between the circulation of knowledge and socially determined cultural constructs of identity and difference? And, conversely, what role constructs such as 'civilization', the East, the West, Islam or Christendom play in the over-determination of limits and possibilities to decode and recode the cross-cultural encounter within existing asymmetries of power, rather than because of existing asymmetries of power?

In Robert Moore's (1997: 599) influential narrative, the birth of Europe as an Eurasian phenomenon derive from the 'essential continuity in European history from the eleventh to the eighteenth century (whether these centuries are to be called a prolonged medieval period or a precocious early modern one) is that there was no caesura between, on the one hand, the establishment of a dominant high culture, with its accompaniments of social differentiation and administrative intensification, at the cosmopolitan or 'civilization' level which is so obvious in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and on the other, the emergence within it of the ethnicity based polities to which man directs attention, already in some important respects well under way in the thirteenth'. For John Hobson (2004: 25), the West emerged in a millennium-long linear path determined by the construction of otherness against the Islam, from V to XV century. 'During the early medieval period the Europeans came to define themselves negatively against Islam (2004: ch. 5). This was vital to the construction of Christendom, which in turn enabled the consolidation countering the eurocentric myth of the feudal economic and political system as it emerged around the end of the first millennium CE. It was also this identity that led on to the Crusades. Subsequently, European Christian identity prompted the so-called 'voyages of discovery' – or what I call the 'second round' of medieval Crusades – led by Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus'. This inflationary theory of historical development locates the preamble of 'the breakthrough to modernity' in the global scenario of Eurasia. This view has been complexified from a global perspective by Anievas and Nisancioglu (2013: 87), *inter alia*, who explain the transition to modernity addressing 'the extra-European geopolitical conditions conducive to capitalism's emergence as a distinctive mode of production'. Drawing on Abu-Loghod analysis of the impact of Mongol expansionism in XIII century Mediterranean space, they affirm that 'Up until at least the mid-13th century, the social formations making up "Europe" were the least developed region of a "world system" of increasing economic integration and cultural contacts between "East' and "West". Arising late on the periphery of this world system, European development had the most to gain from the new intersocietal links being forged, particularly through the diffusion of new technologies and 'resource portfolios' spreading from East to West. The principles of mathematics, navigational inventions, arts of war and significant military technologies all originated in the more advanced East before eventually passing to the backward West.' Before the Mongol invasion, at the turn of XII century, the constituted power of the Church was undermined by multiple factors, such as heresy, the fragmentation and dissemination of political authority and peasants' revolts, to which the ecclesiastical power offered a radical response that ended up in creating the first elements of

the ideological structure that later passed on to design a Eurocentric mode of hierarchies production, rather the West as substantial distinctive civilization and modernity as a distinctive era in human history.

Modernity, the Scientific Revolution and Eurocentrism

The foundations of modernity lay in the dichotomic definition of tradition as modern Europe's otherness, within the global space of civilizational and colonial encounters. Europe's otherness was articulated according to a spatiotemporal double mechanism of metonimic correspondences. Firstly, medieval socio-economics and cultural configurations were relegated to the role of preambles to modernity. Secondly, these same configurations were considered coincidental with coeval social formations in non-European worlds.[1] In the making, all these different worlds were organized along a descendent gradated scale of historical development that located Europe (and the West) at the outpost of progress, History, and humanity[2] Western thinking established modernity as a rupture in time, as a difference in space, as well as a distinctively progressive era for humanity as a whole. The inaugural act of the self-definition of modernity consisted in systematically cutting out the global connections with non-western worlds from its autobiography, while, at the same time, a process of indigenization of Arab, Persian, Hellenistic, Latin American, Indian, Chinese theoretical, practical and material knowledges allowed European thinkers to incorporate relevant non-European portfolios, as substantial contents. (Bala 2008; Bala 2012; Raj 2010).Through the consolidation of the combined narrative-and-epistemological strategy that located reliability and sustainability of the scientific enterprise in rationalism, mechanicism, empiricism, and mathematization, modernity was endowed with an adequate myth of the origin, however relentlessly contested in its definition: the Scientific Revolution (Gaukroger 2006; Gaukroger 2010; Cohen 1994; Osler 2000).

Patrick O'Brien (2013: 4) unseats the Scientific Revolution as contested historiographical category from its ascribed providential position and, at the same time, reassesses the importance of the Scientific Revolution as a crucial notion in an *in fieri*, negotiable, master-narrative of global modernity. O'Brien assumes the theoretical prism of the relation between the Scientific Revolution and the Great divergence debates. From his angle:

The economically significant outcome of that revolution was that conceptions of the natural world, and prognostications for its manipulation based upon systematic investigations, became steadily more optimistic. Educated and wealthy elites across Europe were prompted to lend sustained support to the extension of embryonic regimes of interconnected institutions that might predictably generate and adapt knowledge and that embodied a potential to become instrumental for private profit, for the geopolitical power of states and, by way of unintended consequences, for the health, wealth, and material welfare of Western populations.

When Vasco da Gama safely returned to Portugal after the circumnavigation of the globe in 1498, he realized a huge profit with the commodities sold from long-distance trade: a gigantic change was going to be unleashed (Chaudhuri 1985; Riello 2013; Smith and Findlen). A radical, however not sudden, protracted but discontinuous, change was going to affect the horizon of mental representations of natural knowledge and what could have been achieved through discovering the secrets of Nature and manipulating it through technological applications of scientific discoveries.

If it is adequate, as per O'Brien (2013: 4), that 'technological innovations can be heuristically comprehended as connected, in either *ex post* or *ex ante* senses, to their actual or potential epistemic bases', it is also plausible to conceive technological innovation outside the restricted realm of commodity technicality. Before scientific and technical advancements became fully operational in XIX century, major changes that the Scientific Revolution was bringing about became discernible within the context of European colonial commercial expansion. Profit-driven commercial expansion pushed Portuguese, then Spanish and later Dutch, French, Deutsch and British to develop new ways to think. According to Harold J. Cook (2007: 1), 'those who were deeply invested in the materially "real" came to think that their own criteria for judging truth had wider applicability; for the growing dominion of a certain kind of knowledge, economy had consequences for the content of science.' These criteria were operational, along with *stricto sensu* applicative technology in production, navigation or warfare (Headrick 2010) They were operational in the realm of management of human and non-human resources as means of production, exchange and logistics, from plantations and extraction, to warfare.[3] Since XVII century, science offered new and powerful conceptual-and-practical technologies of governamentality (Lemke 2002). These technologies' distinctive legitimating attitude was to be factual and objective (Poovey 1998; Shapin 1994). These technologies were pragmatically mobilized toward the management of labor force and natural resources (Coronil 2000: 87-111; Monteiro 2000). William Petty is an example of the degree of maturity these new objective visions had been reaching in European thinking, already in the first half of XVII century: his political arithmetic was born at the intersection between mathematical rationalization of society, colonial rule, profitability of risk management connected through insurances and proto-statistical demography (imposed by the recrudescence of the plague) (McCormick 2010).

From a global perspective, world labor-force came to be organized into aggregate hierarchies of religion, class, race, gender and ethnicity (Quijano 2000: 533-580). Coextensively, capital allocation was beginning its perennial quest for optimal efficiency, which found in science and technology a promising formidable ally. The relation between technical/organizational rationalization and global hierarchization of labor force produced new systems to acquire, reproduce and control compulsory labor both in the colonies and in marginal parts of Europe, wherever this option was practicable within manageable levels of social conflictuality (Arrighi and Silver 2004). The same relation served capital intensive industries in the process of mechanization to increase marginal productivity of free labor in Europe, even though labor intensive production was often preferred in presence of cheap labor (Wong and Rosenthal 2011). Major changes that the notion of Scientific Revolution conceptualizes were part of this matrix of power. This matrix buttressed the design of a world system able to incorporate massive new resources into the global space of production of wealth and extraction of value, wherever the reduction of complexity through classification guaranteed the control of human labor, natural raw resources and non-human means of production.

Networks of commodities, capital, labor circulation and exchange, commercial outposts, routes, ports, hubs, which were drawn on the new maps of the world with increasing accuracy, frequency and extension, led Europeans in territories inhabited by other human groups (Blaut 1993; Klinghoffer 2006). These encounters translated into an *opus magnum* of understanding, organizing, accommodating, dominating, normalizing, incorporating, refusing, marginalizing, mocking, stigmatizing, silencing, hierarchizing differences. To cope with this astonishing

complexity, both science and religion represented collective horizons of sense for the colonizer; science and religion were both mobilized to produce a coherent ethno-story engaged in tales of superiority. In the process, something called modern Europe emerged.

Michael Adas (1989: 6-7) remarks a crucial aspect of this process:

In the Early years of European expansion, European travellers and missionaries took pride in the superiority of their technology and their understanding of the natural world. […] Still, throughout pre-industrial period, scientific and technological accomplishments remained subordinate among the standards by which Europeans judged and compared non-Western cultures. Religion, physical appearance, and social patterns dominate accounts of the areas explored and colonized. […] Europeans sense of superiority was anchored in the conviction that because they were Christian, they best understood the transcendent truths. Thus, right thinking on religious questions took precedence over mastery of the mundane world in setting the standards by which human cultures were viewed and compared. The Scientific Revolution did not end the relevance of Christian standards.

To the extent increasingly trustworthy networks of professional, intellectual and material exchanges intensified the circulation of knowledges, ideas and theories, techniques and worldviews, customs and manners, goods of consumption and art crafts, collective self-perceptions and attributive identities for otherness were shaped in the colonial expansion. White, male, Christian, heterosexual, bourgeoisie strata of western Eurasian population assured to the position of a sort of *point zero* to look at the entire world from a top-down perspective (Castro-Gomez). Modern scientific knowledge they supported and took advantage from, progressively concealed its historical emergence as a new geocultural worldview, by affirming its universality and objectivity. This glance of superiority was affected by a certain strabismus: it looked simultaneously towards peoples constructed as savages, and towards geopolitical entities to which the status of civilization was ascribed by means of orientalist criteria (Annievas, Manchanda, Shilliam 2014). Yet, this narrative-and-epistemological framework for European superiority was not new, in the sense that it was not self-generated in the conjuncture of the colonization of the Americas, even though it is undeniable that it reached a global dimension and a full racial articulation starting from there. It rather was a historical configuration of a pre-existing, ethnocentric mode of hierarchies production whose roots were located in late medieval Mediterranean.

The hermeneutics of the double border: 1492 and 1204, *anni mirabili*

Historians and astronomers share the same fascination with those singularities whose occurrence seems to pierce the abysses of time with plausible gleams of rationality: 1492 is one of the most puzzling years in world history, in this sense. It is puzzling that the same year of the *Reconquesta*, Cristoforo Colombo reached the western shore of the Atlantic to be welcomed by the oblivious Taìnos. Largely determined by unforeseeable circumstances, this coincidence offers a rare hermeneutical opportunity to understand the way Europe emerged after a long term/large scale process of construction of a double border, both internal and external. According to Walter Mignolo (2000: 21), the production of this double border consisted in 'a hierarchical relation and consequently a subalternization of knowledge occurred at the level of religion. Christianity established itself as intolerant to Judaism and Islam as well as to the

"idolatry" of the Amerindians.' This double border defined Europe's otherness in multiple ways. Externally, it demarcated the Southern frontier in the Mediterranean and the Western frontier in the Atlantic; internally it shaped alterity against the Jews, imposing no other choice between exclusion and stigmatization on one hand, and conversion on the other hand. It was in this context, in fact, that the concept of *converso* (converted) was born. Yet, 'while the expulsion of the Moors—Mignolo (ibid: 29) continues—demarcated the exterior of what would be a new commercial circuit and the Mediterranean became that frontier, the expulsion of the Jews determined one of the inner borders of the emerging system […] the converso will never be at trustworthy from+ the point of view of the state'. The anthropological possibility of conversion for Amerindians, in other words, the problem whether they belonged to humanity or not, became the center of the debate concerning the *pureza de sangre* between the Jesuit (learned in late medieval scholasticism) Sepulveda and de Las Casas. In fact, as Elman remarks 'when Europeans reached China during the age of exploration, the highest learning (scientia) of their men of culture did not connote natural science. For Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), natural philosophy, not natural science, was a field of higher learning. Science was a medieval French term, which was synonymous with accurate and systematized knowledge. When Latinized the word became *scientia* and represented among scholastics and early modern elites the specialized branches of Aristotelian moral and natural philosophy.' (p. XXIV) This teopolitical articulation of Europe's otherness was at the same time civilizational, anthropological and spatiotemporal. Both in emerging European states and in overseas colonial dominions, this teopolitical articulation of difference became instrumental to political power. It was largely implemented by state machineries for control, repression, or alienation of goods and properties.

If 1492 is such an *annus mirabilis* because it concretizes the hermeneutics of the double border, then an analogous hermeneutic gaze would find similar clues in 1204. This year marks the onset of the production of another double border, since it hosted either the Fourth Crusade or the Albigensian Crusade, both deliberated by pope Innocent III (Sayers 1994). Both the Fourth and the Albigensian Crusade were started before 1204 and of course generated outcomes after 1204. So as the beginning of the Age of Explorations and the several waves of campaigns to expel the Moors from Andalucía largely predated 1492. As well as the processes of long term/large scale historical and social change whose roots are used to be placed in 1492 and 1204 produced effects long time after the events happened in those two particular years. Moore authoritative narrative, correctly considered the first half of XIII century as the culmination of the process of construction of *cristianitas* as a persecutory society.(Moore 2001) Heretics, Jews, moors and other 'minorities', provided the boundaries for otherness that was essential for the elaboration of late medieval collective identity.

As Bernard Hamilton (2008:164-181) remarks, a subtle though strong tie connects the Fourth and the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars:

Innocent III considered them [the Cathars] an international threat. In the first year of his reign [1198] the Cathar supporters were accused of assassinating his *podestà* of Orvieto in the Papal States, and the pope was informed that the ruler of Christian Bosnia, with many of his subjects, had professed the dualist faith. Although in 1203 Bosnia returned to the Roman obedience in response to Hungarian pressure, Innocent became aware of the true extent of Balkan dualism in 1204 when the Bulgaria Church acknowledged the papal primacy, and the Fourth Crusade set up a Latin patriarch in Constantinople.

The Fourth Crusade, promoted through the usual call for reconquering the Holy Land, came to be governed by conjunctural but decisive episodic circumstances, which diverted the crusade from its original target Jerusalem; troops of knights and soldiers of fortune moved across the Balkans, to finally end up in the sack of Constantinople. The destruction that followed the siege of Byzantium violently recomposed temporarily the orthodox schism of 1054 (Orth 1994). It unified Western and Eastern Europe under Latin Christian rule, pushing towards the Urals the external border of Latin Christendom.

The Albigensian Crusade was moved against Catharism in the region of Languedoc, where they were organized in strong churches engaged in active proselytism (Orioli 2008). For this reason (which made them distinctive from other heresies) Catharism had grown increasingly strong since the end of XI century, as Western extension of bogomilism that was spread in Byzantium since the beginning of X century (Deane 2011; Sumption 1978; Peck 2008). Catharism was seen as the most dangerous inner threat to the political and spiritual authority of Catholic Church, because Cathars' complex genetic relation with late antiquity gnostic dualism, together with radicalism in drawing the extreme doctrinal consequences of this heritage, made them and the papacy mutually exclusive in those territories where they competed for the control of the hearts and minds of the inhabitants (Enrico 2008). The defeat of the Cathars (that came two decades later) mortified several political insurgencies against the papacy in Europe. The outcome of the protracted condemnation and slaughter of these heretics was double: in terms of practical devices of control and repression, the machinery of the inquisition was introduced and implemented from patrimonial expropriation against discriminated subjects or groups, to the confinement of specific social groups in particular occupational positions, from the selective inclusion into the polity, to the limitation of access to different kind of political resources (Moore 2007). In terms of ideology, the struggle against heresy legitimized the doctrine of papal primacy as supreme political and spiritual authority on hearth (Cipollone 1992; Franzen 2009; Pennington 1976: 49-67; Watt 2008: 114-126).

The repression of heresy was changing in emphasis, thus it needed a more adequate theological support. Augustinian theology, that had dominated previous centuries, provided theological foundations for the coexistence of different religious beliefs (that had found its more adequate synthesis in *the Confessions*) started to become anachronistic. Its logic of coexistence in a (*ante litteram*) multicultural environment vacillated in front of the papal state's need to radicalize the existing lines of demarcation between Christendom and its others. As Rebecca Rist (2009) narrates, otherness had to be constructed as inferior to Latin Christendom, in order to justify the papal universalistic claim to submission of whoever, pagan, atheist or heretics, soldier, king or peasant, to the pope's authority. Otherness came to be increasingly constructed as irreconcilable alterity and exteriority. Being conducted also against Catholic princes who did not aligned themselves and their subjects with the papacy, both the political and military endeavor of the Fourth and the Albigensian Crusade, irreversibly pushed the frontiers of the meaning of 'crusade' far beyond the consolidated semantic field of 'reconquering the *sacrum sepolcrum*': 'crusade' became a flexible instrumental mobilizing notion of military praxis, and became part of a more extended imagery that included heterogeneous universalistic claims of expansion under the flag of Latin Christianity (Nicolle, 2011; Phillips 2004).

The pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216) is often acknowledged as a foundational moment in European identity. In fact, it was Innocent III that reinforced and legitimated on more solid grounds the doctrine of papal *plenitudo potestatis* against all other secular and

spiritual powers on heart. Yet, this does not mean that he succeeded in such a universalizing project: more radical divergences and strong political tensions arose between the papacy and the other secular kingdoms in Latin Christendom, particularly the empire. However, it was precisely the shift towards these universalistic expansionist pretensions of Latin Christianity that allowed both religious and secular western Eurasian authorities to claim unprecedented rights of territorial expansion and power consolidation. As Abulafia(2008: 10) explains,

It was this sense of the integrity of Latin society, professing one faith or 'law', that remained from the aggressive universalism of the late eleventh- and twelfth- century Church, and that still formed a significant core of the teaching of such lawyer popes as Innocent III and Boniface VIII. But by the end of the century it was western kings—In France, England, Castile, Naples and so on—who emphatically utilized this awareness of Christian identity in order to enhance their own, and not the pope's, authority. […] It was secular rulers who most successfully took up the message of submission to higher authority to serve their own ends, and to bring their own subjects securely under their own authority.

But these aspirations where counter-balanced both by the presence of Islamic states in the Mediterranean and by Mongol impressive expansionism towards the western part of Eurasia. This circumstance forced a greater awareness of previously barely suspected peoples in the Asian steppes. Mounting preoccupations with Mongols invasions, paradoxically, were also interpreted as the presage of the imminent fall of the Arab kingdoms.[4] And this stimulated a more active engagement in the evangelization of the East as a mean of penetration, in the hope to make new alliances against Islam.

Within these cross-cutting tensions, though, an ideological structure was emerging, whose changing configurations were doomed to affect (and coextensively being affected by) the connected history of the other worlds. An ideology that could be deployed by different actors; one that worked simultaneously as an identity formation tool for heterogeneous elites and dominant groups, as well as a system of representation and hierarchization of anthropological diversity to make sense of a world with changing geocultural horizons. A structure of meaning whose first connotation was the institutional profession of Christian faith, generating political and territorial fallouts which were either consolidating or, even more significantly, claimed and attempted. Yet, this notion was a by-product of geopolitical aspirations placed in a historical context where Latin Christianity pretension of being the strongest power and the most advanced civilization was periodically perturbed. This claim was undermined by the ubiquitous awareness of a certain degree of inconsistence involved in this self-portrait, both in terms of power and in terms of knowledge. If there existed a long term pattern of collective religious identity that defined Latin Christianity, then there also existed an equivalently shared long-term perception that within the changing structures of power in the Mediterranean and in the Eurasian space, this identity corresponded to an unstable geopolitical position. In this *in fieri* construction of belonging, eastern and southern frontiers of what had been the *mare nostrum* before the fragmentation that succeeded the fall of the Western Roman Empire were still inhabited by 'dreadful' peoples; and these peoples were powerful and organized: either violent and barbarian, or sophisticated and erudite possessing desirable wisdoms. More often, 'the others' got materialized in recombining concrete historical configurations of these positional ethnocentric tropes.

From a global perspective, that cultural and geohistorical entity we refer to as Latin Christianity was part of the Eurasian system of long-distance exchange whose main pole of attraction, for intensity, density and aggregated value, was China. In this China-centered gravitational landscape, the Mediterranean was the scenario where the geocultural construction of a Christian 'us' was engaging in a long-term confrontation with a constructed Islamic 'them', either teopolitically (in terms of violent reciprocal accusations of infidelitas), or intellectually (in all the fields of knowledge production), or geopolitically (for the reiterate flare-up of conflictuality to control the long distance commercial maritime routes towards the East). The world was allocentric to Latin Christianity: its political center was contested among the Church and secular rulers; its religious center, the Holy Land, was located in the House of Islam (Dar al-Islam); its economic center, that is, where the supply of highly remunerative goods (whose structural scarcity did not match the increasing demand in western Eurasia) came from, was located in China.

The politics of late medieval scholasticism

The idea that Christianity as a geo-cultural space would be an adequate unit of analysis wherein it is correct to locate the transformation in medieval *scientia* that were considered responsible for the eventual emergence of modern western scientific rationality forces sociological imagination into the narrowness of success/failure narratives. Yet, new histories of Islamic science as well as the history of science in East and Southern Asia confute this view, and provide new cross-cutting readings about the way long-term processes of emergence of specific regimes for the production of knowledge are entangled with conjunctural global phenomena, socio-political and ideological transformations.

Elman's history of Chinese science (2005:160-169) explains that XVIII century scientific knowledge in China did not fall a path to Western science, because it responded to needs and pressures locally determined, both socially and politically. Among these pressures, the Rites Controversy occupies a singular place. After the Jesuits were obliged by Rome to abandon their conciliatory approach to the evangelization of China, which allowed for saving Chinese rituals and looser rules to translate Christian beliefs into Chines terms, Chinese elite changed behavior in front of Western knowledge, and turned to classics. But while Western historiography has constructed around the rites controversy a narrative of opposed civilizational worldviews between China and Europe, between East and West, Elman demonstrates how the Rites Controversy was mainly an intestine struggle within the different orders of Catholic Church, that was encapsulated into a wider and complex geo-cultural and geo-political scenario. I think that this explanation is better positioned than Hobson's binary relational definition of Christendom and Islam to understand how the collapse of Aquinas' scholasticism occurred from the second half of XIII century. The conflict between the newly formed orders of Franciscans and Dominicans is emblematic of the way the deep reconfiguration of Western Eurasian society affected the organization of society, its hierarchical organization and the cultural and ideological devices that were integral, co-formative and co-transformative of that historical reality.

For Hobson (2004: 25), the so-called 'Islamic clause' is invoked in Eurocentric narratives to dismiss 'the Eastern input on the grounds that these [Aristotelian] texts were in fact pure Greek works and that the Muslims had added nothing of intellectual value – all they did was return the original Greek works to the Europeans.' This explanation provides useful insights within a frame that consider macro-aggregate constructions such as East and West as valuable

when retrospectively projected from modernity backwards. But the construction of the presumed Greek purity of classical philosophical texts was a far more complex process of adaptation, modification, rejection and translation which does not design a linear historical development that from the VI century to the threshold of XVI century, which would account for the cumulative rise of something called modern Europe. The presumed continuity of this long-term geocultural configuration, as well as the formation of modern science as an incremental trend of intensification away from speculation towards a pragmatic approach to natural phenomena, fails in unthinking its orientalist presumptions and occludes the discrete and synchronic co-existence of multiple threads, whose heterogeneity can be reduced to the master-narrative of the breakthrough to modernity only through a deterministic ex-post Eurocentric logic of cumulative causation.

The idea that XIII century was the crossroad of a period of profound reconfiguration in the socio-economic base of power for Western Europe dominant groups is grounded upon solid documental bases. More complicated is how to qualify this reconfiguration. Wallerstein (1999:46) narrates that the income of the Western Eurasian ruling strata was squeezed. 'They were involved in exceptionally high level of internecine struggle, which negatively affected their wealth, their authority, and their lives […] In a period of economic tightness, the internecine warfare of the ruling strata for the declining global revenues was reflected in increasing conflict between the Church and the temporal rulers, and by great struggles within the Church itself'. Even more important was the social conflictuality that was generating mounting uprisings among the peasants, much before the diffusion of the plague in XIV century created the scarcity of wage-labour that provided workers with a temporary counter-power against feudal lords. As a secular power, since the XI century, the Church and its apparatuses were constantly engaged in providing and ideological legitimation for social hierarchies they ruled, so the global pressures socio-economic and cultural change put on how the ideational order of the spatially defined societal formations the Church controlled called for a deep redefinition that disclosed further internecine political divergence, coded in the theoretical idiom of theological battle.

The population growth that serial demographic data register as culminating in XIII century overwhelms technological change as principle explanatory factor for what the historiography of the 1990s had labeled the *mutation féodale*. This mutation forced the Church to attempt to codify these ongoing transformations by means of the delegitimation of the doctrine of the three orders, according to which society was peacefully tripartite between *laboratories* (labourers), *bellatores* (knights), *oratores* (clerics). As Mathieu Arnoux (2013: 72-90) systematizes, either Le Goff or Duby, or Powell after them, considered the theological framework of the Three Orders as a theoretical construction whose collapse depended from its inability to cope simultaneously with the ambiguous political collocation of the figure of the bishops, between knights and clerics, with different degrees of discretionality over the land that competed to them, and the growing disagreement about the acceptance of a social model, which presented the clergy as one among other orders of the society, with no priority nor special dignity.

For Mann, Christendom was a hierarchical integrated system reproduced by Catholic Christian norms. But this image of enduring configuration of power fails at recognizing the global dynamics of transformation that affected the Church in XIII century. Analogously, whereas Hobson associates the 'trifunctionality' of exposed by Duby with the binarism between Christian identity as defined against a negative construction of Islam, he falls short in correctly

locating the ideological role of the Crusades in XIII century within the collapse of the three orders doctrine as ideological architecture of governance. The aforementioned radicalization of the doctrine of *plenitudo potestatis* boosted by Innocent III and his successors was already a response to this discontents. It was part of a full-fledged strategy of reconfiguration of the power of the Church in a tumultuous period where forces of disaggregating forces appeared stronger than ever. The new political agenda of papal power involved the institutionalization of the two mendicants Dominican and Franciscan by Innocent III at the beginning of XIII century. The two mendicant orders were at the direct dependences of the Pope, and provided a formidable ideological and intellectual weapon. Ideologically, they undermined the legitimacy of heretical claims to pauperism; intellectually, they undermined the independence of secular academic institutions. Within these newly institutionalized orders, Aquinas' scholasticism was framed.

Aquinas' research program

Aquinas, during the years of his early period of higher education was a student at the newly born university of Naples, just founded by Frederick II to form the *intelligentsia* of his empire As Nardi (1992: 87) points out, 'the main difference between Frederick's studium and the most important seats of learning in Europe was that in Naples the eccesiastical authorities had no authority to recruit teachers, award the *licentia docendi*, or exercise jurisdictional powers'. In the first decades of XIII century, academic institutions' support oscillated between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Aquinas was pupil of the greatest late Medieval Latin translator of Aristotle, Alberto Magno. Aquinas was a Dominican. The Dominicans aimed at fighting heresy and proved less concerned with Eastern influences; Franciscans aimed at re-establishing the pure original essence of Christianity and were hardened against whatever they saw as fatal intrusions of Islamic elements in Christian theology. They both had just entered the universities of Paris and other major Western European cities, after overcoming the fierce, still vehement collective opposition of the majority of secular *magister*. From sociology of knowledge perspective, the core questions of the research program of Aquinas' scholasticism were born at the conjuncture of the changing relations between secular and religious powers. Western Eurasian dominant strata lacked a geoculture that could sublimate desegregating contradictions into a coherent ideological architecture. Such architecture was called, on the one hand, to offer an acceptable compromise between the papacy and the empire, and, on the other hand, to produce a durable synthesis between the teleological narrative of revealed truth, the epistemological foundation of Christian superiority, and the concomitant hierarchy between human cultures and groups through their position within the late medieval regime of knowledge production.

The previous seven centuries of Christendom had been largely dominated by a convergence of Neo-Platonism and millenarism: Christian negative theology and monastic rule had been oriented by a radical anti-somatic Platonism. Such attitude disdained natural knowledge because it was irreparably compromised with matter. Since matter was considered the most corrupted form in the hierarchy of Being, efforts to understand the secrets of nature tended to be neglected as an activity that diverted man from prayer and contemplation: the only way to salvation. The scholastic way, in turn, located the potentials and also the limits of natural philosophy in the logics of deductive ability to infer necessary conclusions from theological, revealed, unquestionable, but rationalizable assumptions of faith. So, philosophy and religion were not separated but connected. In fact, philosophy had sensible knowledge as

organizing principle, while theology had revealed truths; the former set a condition of possibility for other cultures to produce theological knowledge through reason, the latter set Christianity's superiority on the basis of an epistemological incommensurability in the form of a global narrative: after the Revelation, Christianity represented the most advanced historical achievement of human understanding. Franklin Perkins (2006: 2-3) converges with Jordan when he affirms that:

Into the Christian, medieval world, the distinction between Europe and non-Europe is less clear and relevant than that between Christian and non-Christian, as non-Christian cultures became the 'other' to Western Christian identity. This complex relationship of indebtedness and distance had a determinative impact on Western thought, as it partly drove the attempt to distinguish philosophy from theology. Medieval thinkers from Augustine to Aquinas took philosophy as that enterprise developed in its highest form by Greeks. For them, the attempt to validate and circumscribe philosophy was at the same time the attempt to validate and circumscribe pagan thought. Later, whenever the thought of other cultures is encountered, the very same distinction—between philosophy and theology or natural and revealed theologies—are deployed, as will be seen in Europe's reaction to Confucianism. [Thus] *the separation of theology and philosophy is a peculiarity of a culture which defines itself by faith in certain texts that contradict reason*. In other words it results from the need to create a space for pagan thought.

This accommodation was made necessary by the obtrusive presence of Greek philosophy: Greek thinkers had developed the highest form of philosophy possible before the revelation. But historically, the scholastic way emerged in the eleventh century after the rediscovery of Aristotle by Latin Christianity thanks to Arab-Islamic thinkers, after centuries of Christian oblivion and partial ignorance (Brams 2003).

Different Christian theological doctrines used to converge toward a certain degree of pluralism, even cosmopolitanism;[5] notwithstanding the fact that, as per O'Brien, 'the medieval Church had reacted to threats to its power by strengthening its intellectual foundations, in order to resist Muslim infidels, heretics, and secular authorities' (O'Brien: 2013:8). Tommaso d'Aquino (1967a) (condensed these broadly conceived pluralistic views with the hermeneutic circle *credo ut intelligam et intelligo ut credam* (that is 'I believe in order that I may know and I know in order that I may believe'). He attempted to enlarge and consolidate the claim of Christian superiority by making it more flexible. Aquinas extended the sharp Aristotelian distinction between civilization and barbarism; he disclosed the latter into two possible definitions of otherness, in order to introduce a third anthropological space. The first definition of barbarism was relative and positional: an 'other' is somebody that belongs to another culture (*quod aliquem*); the second definition was still absolute: a barbarian is who 'does not know his own speech', that is, who belongs to a people which does not have a written language. A position that set the terms of the aforementioned controversy between Bartolomè de las Casas and Luis Sepulveda three centuries later, as Pagden demonstrates.

Aquinas epitomized the contradictions of the changing world he lived in and offered a sophisticated solution to them. The most powerful and canonical form to accomplish his task in the intellectual scenario of his times was to place his theses at the highest level of abstraction; that is, to produce a theological axiomatics: a *summa teologica* (d'Aquino, 1967b). Given his ambition, it could not have been otherwise: the conventional procedures of intelligibility in high

learned elites of Latin Christendom, after the revival of the dialectics that followed the spread of Arab aristotelianism (often stigmatized by his opponents as Averroism), were ruled by the *logica nova*, exposed by the Stagirite in his *Organon* (Biffi, 2008). The method of the *logica nova* was syllogism. There followed that Aquinas epistemological system implied, rather than simply involve, the deduction of epistemological, juridical, ethical ad economic corollaries from the rationalized principles of faith. These corollaries had to prove not only argumentative coherent, rather they had to comply with formal dialectical reasoning in order to be accepted as legitimate. This looks evident if one considers the way Aquinas' juridical theories were formally inferred by theological truths: the *lex divina* and *lex aeterna* emanated from the (however controversial) interpellation of revelation and rationality (d'Aquino 1985). The dominant late medieval frame for the validation of knowledge will be supplanted in XVII century, when the fallacies and incompleteness of both medieval natural philosophy and Renaissance science, came to be denigrated altogether as contemplative, useless and unreliable by the empiricist logic of validation of knowledge that affirmed itself as *new* (Broke, Osler, and Meer 2001). This new logic dethroned its predecessors precisely through the overturn of the Aristotelian logic Bacon introduced in his groundbreaking work named, eloquently, *Novum Organon* (Lindberg, 2008).

Aquinas' thinking was confronting with the sophisticated dynamic equilibrium between radical rationalism and religious orthodoxy of Islamic scholasticism (al-Jabri 2004). Differently from thinkers such Sigieri di Brabante, he did not conceived the possibility of partial irreconcilability between faith and reason, that seemed to emerge from many readings of Averroe's comments on Aristotle that were being studies in Western universities, together with the translations of the Stagirite. To be sure, Arab interpretation of Aristotle, constituted the framework of reference for Aquinas to carve out a space for *scientia* within Christian theology (Spallino 2002).

Knowledge and ideology in late medieval Mediterranean

Before the Mongols opened the terrestrial way towards the East, the spacetime of Christendom was the Mediterranean, where it interacted with Arab-Islamic worlds, which acted as the only intermediary for the circulation of knowledge, capital and goods. So the Arab-Christian Mediterranean was an integrated space whose main cultural cleavage, for as regards the circulation of knowledge, was languages. Hence the relevance of those agents, such as Averroé in Cordoba, or Michele Scoto and Alberto Magno in Naples, whose translations, commentaries, teachings and controversies made circulation possible across existing civilizational borderscapes.

The coordinates of the debate around the relation between faith and reason in the Mediterranean were set by the theoretical controversies that constituted the genealogy connecting Al-Kindi (801-872) from Basra (Iraq), al-Farabi (872-951) from Damascus (Syria), Ibn-Sina (980-1037) from Mazar-i-Sharif (Afghanistan), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) from Tus (Iran), and Ibn-Rushd (1128-1198) from Seville (Andalucía). And if it is true that few Aristotelian works had been already translated in Latin by Boethius in V century, it is also true that Arab-Islamic natural knowledge, astronomy and theology is not reducible to a transmission of Greek and Hellenistic ideas: Arabic thinkers interpreted those ideas through a complex and rich

theoretical apparatus whose historical production derived from the interplay of Persian, Indian and Syrian interventions. As George Saliba (2011) maintains, this global cross-genealogy of knowledge had endowed Arab thinkers with refined techniques for conceptual elaboration they deployed in their commentaries to (among others) Aristotle. In the process of appropriation of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, or Euclid's Elements, besides Aristotle's works, they were producing new unexplored insights. Saliba ascribes the beginning of the *opus* of translation of Greek texts since VIII century to the competition among different communities of beaurocrats to access the highest echelons of the Abbasid state, emerged after the defeat of the Omeyadd dynasty. From this original effort, along the political developments of the Islamic caliphates from the VIII century to the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1256, the sorts of the production of knowledge in Islamic world, results intimately connected to the ideological role ideas plaid in systems of governance deployed by Islamic states, after the fragmentation of the Abbasid empire.

From a history of philosophy perspective, Al-Jabri provides an interesting entry point in the vastness of the heterogeneous articulation between ideology, knowledge and religion in the Arab-Islamic states of the late medieval Mediterranean. For Al-Jabri, Arab thinking conflates a cognitive dimension, that is, what theories says about the knowledge they produce and how it should be produced, and an ideological dimension, that is 'the content which thought carries, or the ideological, sociopolitical, function to which the cognitive dimension fulfills, seeks to fulfill or wanted to make it fulfill. From this angle, al-Jabri argues that Arab thinking underwent a schismatic configuration between East and West that was evident in XII and XIII century. Eastern philosophy was largely hegemoized by Avicenna's attempt at reconciling faith and reason, while, from the autonomous and peculiar historical development of the state of al-Andalus, the rationalist perspective of Averroé emerged, from the political and ideological closure that the learned elites and dominant strata of al-Andalus imposed over the political and intellectual influence of Eastern thinking. The jurists of al-Andalus provided a favourable institutional framework for the study of Aristotle that emphasized physics, mathematics, eoconomics over methaphysics, and this gave a different imprint to the complex theoretical system Averroé produced, at the intersection of the translation of Aristotle and the commentaries on Aristotle. Al-Jabri over-emphasizes this distinction between rationalist and methaphisical trends in Arab thinking because, in a modernist fashion, he attempts at explaining the failure of Arab thinking in following the path to scientific modernity that itself had somewhat inaugurated. In so doing, he reproduces the narratives of success/failure that are so familiar in the Eurocentric narratives of the transition from *scientia* tio modern science. He reproduces the classical Schumpeterian thesis of the gap between Islam and the West. Yet, the cartography of knowledge he maps, serves as a simplified schematic representation of the integrating geocultural space of XIII century Mediterranean.

Late medieval Mediterranean has been limitedly understood by Hobson through the binarism Christianity/Islam or East/West, while the circulation of scientific knowledge happened within the articulated space of late medieval scholasticism both Arab and Christian, within the global space connecting the Mediterranean with Asia Hodgson referred to as Ouekumene (Hondgson 1993). Rather than considered it in terms of geo-historical difference, the heterogeneity of this integrated and integrating spacetime can be reconstructed through the similarities between the supposedly adverse two sides of aforementioned binarisms, analogously to what Parthasarathi proposes about the relation between India and Europe in XVIII century, in order to reframe the global co-production of the Great Divergence (Parthasarathi 2011). The Mediterranean thus appears a heterogeneous landscape where co-

existed similar theoretical problematics; here, the main cleavage was not cognitive, neither ideological, rather linguistical. Hence the relevance of translators across such porous cultural borders. In both, theoretical struggles over how to produce knowledge involved evident political and ideological dimensions, and were mobilized strategically by different groups of powers, polities and states to pursue their objectives (Hobson 2005: 63-95). On both sides of what is used to be thought of in terms of the Islam/Christendom divide, there existed at least three approaches to knowledge that diverged around the nature of the Greek/Hellenistic heritage and what was the appropriate usage of this heritage. On both sides, scholasticism, both Arab and Christian, was a space of ideological tension Arnzen 2004). A first trend gave priority to Aristotle's Methaphysics as a powerful tool to make reason and faith complementary and reciprocally interpellating; Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas championed this position. A second trend read Aristotle through neo-platonic lens and chose the esoteric way as a path to true knowledge and enlightenment; the Persian aristocracy under the Abbassid caliphate, as well as conservative Augustinian Christian thinkers such as Bonaventure, safeguarded this attitude. A third trend did not give priority to Aristotele's Methaphysics, rather to other aspects of the Stagirite teachings, such as physics, mathematics, logics, economics and law; Averroé inaugurated this trend, followed by Christian scholars, the so-called averroists, among which Sigieri of Brabante was a leading figure (Daibier 2012). Within this tripartite schematic articulation, it is noteworthy that the phenomenology of the attack on Aquinas' scholasticism consisted in the polarization between Christian orthodoxy on the one hand, and those who rejected whatever doctrine who could be associated with 'eastern thinking' as well as those who were confronting with Aristotle after the Arab translations, on the other hand.

Heterodox Aristotelianism, Averroism, Arabism

The fact that the association of Aquinas' scholasticism with Islamic influences played a role in its marginalization since the last decades of XIII century is confirmed by rhetorical arguments supporting several *questio*, in the course of the doctrinal controversies concerning the ecclesiastic condemnation of the teaching of Aristotle from 1270 onwards Hissete 1977; Piche 1999; Grabmann 1941; Bianchi 1990). During the 1260s, the mounting divergences between Franciscans and Dominicans reverberate into major institutions, including the University of Paris, where the study of Aristotle was spread both at the faculty of theology and the faculty of arts. Franciscan chairmen such as Bonaveture and William of Baglione launched open attacks on what they called Aritotelian heterodoxy, which included Aquinas' (Thijssen 1998). Aquinas' returned to chair the University of Paris in 1268-1272, the second time after 1252-1259, in the middle of this climate of suspicion and ostrachization. In 1270 he wrote the famous opuscole against the Averroists *On the Unity of Thought*, where he takes the distances from what he describes as dangerous misunderstandings in Aristotle thinking. Nonetheless, seven years later, Aquinas' theses were condemned by the Tempier, the Bishop of Paris, under the general rubric of 'heterodox Aristotelianism'. This label gathered every thought that was not conform with the established orthodoxy and was mobilized to stigmatize Arab influences to which the public reading of Aristotle into Universities came to be associated since the last quarter of XIII century.

Elizabeth Lowe maintains that 'the majority of medieval thinkers considered Aquinas' use of Aristotle as a 'foreign' to their more traditional Augustinian views. Fundamentally, the Condemnations of 1277 were the open eruption of long-simmering between traditional Augustinians, Thomas and his followers, and the more radical Averroists. Frustrated by the

earlier condemnation of 1270 to quell the activity of the Averroist, conservative theologians appealed to the bishop of Paris. […] the Condemnation of 1277 injected the universities with an atmosphere of repression and cautious cynicism.' Yet the eruption of the conservative theologians, towards whom Franciscans converged against their Dominican adversaries, which found its condition of possibility in the suspicion alimented against Aristotelian thinking, had its detonator in geopolitics (Lowe 2003:50). During the 1260s, the mounting divergences between Franciscans and Dominicans reverberates into major institutionas, including the Univeristy of Paris, where the study of Aristotle was spread both at the faculty of theology and the faculty of arts. Franciscan chairmen such as Bonaveture and William of Baglione launched open attacks on what they called 'radical' or 'heterodox' Aristotelianism, which came to include some of Aquinas' theses in 1277. Aquinas' returned to chair the University of Paris in 1268-1272, the second time after 1252-1259, in the middle of this climate of suspicion and ostrachization. In 1270 he wrote the famous opuscole against the Averroists *On the Unity of Thought*, where he takes the distances from what he describes as dangerous misunderstandings in Aristotle thinking (McInerny 1993). Nonetheless, seven years later, Aquinas' theses were included in the list of 219 'errors' condemned by Tempier, the Bishop of Paris.

In his work on the theological origins of modernity, Gillespie re-interpellates Hans Blumenberg's thesis of the legitimacy of the modern age (Blumenberg 1985). According to both, nominalism represented a reoccupation of the *vacuum* left by the inability of Aquinas' scholasticism to come to terms with the issue of theodicy (simply put, the diatribe concerning whether the origin of evil is human or divine).

Superior or more powerful modern ideas did not drive out or overcome medieval ideas; rather they pushed over the remnants of the medieval world after the *internecine* struggle between scholasticism and nominalism had reduced it to rubble. Modern 'reason' was able to overcome medieval 'superstition' or 'dogma' only because that 'dogma' was fatally weakened by the great metaphysical/theological crisis that brought the world in which it made sense to an end (Gillespie 2010, 12).

Gillespie uses the word 'internecine' to suggest the nature of the crisis in late medieval scholasticism where nominalism intervened in the second half of XIII century. Yet, Gillespie (ibid: 21) himself also has to admit that:

The immediate dispute that shattered [Aquinas'] synthesis was the growth of Aristotelianism […] This phenomenon was seen with deep suspicion by the pious defenders of a more 'original' Christianity not merely because of its pagan roots but also and perhaps more importantly because of its connection with Islam. Paganism was a known and tolerable evil; Islam, by contrast, was an ominous theological and political threat. This was especially true after the failure of the Crusades. For almost two hundred years Christianity had seemed to gain ground against Islam, especially in the East, but after the loss of all the Christian colonies in the Levant in the later thirteenth century and the rise of Islamic military power, this optimism dimmed and the suspicion of Islamic influences on Christian thought became more intense.

Gillespies's perspective evokes what Charles Taylor narrative of the West as secular societal formation has systematically neglected, i.e. the constitutive historical role of geopolitics in the collapse of late medieval western Eurasian ideological asset. Rather than being only a theological struggle fought both on the battlefield of doctrine and within institutional ecclesiastic

hierarchies, the intellectual attack on Aquinas' scholasticism was encapsulated into the construct of the civilizational confrontation between Christendom and Islam, whose significance needs to be addressed in geopolitical terms (Küçük 2010: 111-130). In fact, even though the first condemnation of Aristotle by the Church was in 1210, the same year of the institutionalization of Franciscan order by Innocent III, it was only in the second half of the XIII century that it assumed the relevance of a resolute political censorship, and a vehement widespread cultural rejection followed (Le Goff 1999:71-113). From the Seventh Crusade (1249-1250) to the final loss of the remaining possessions in the Holy Land (1289-1291), the relative decline in power of Christian rulers and states in the Mediterranean politically strengthen those groups such as Franciscans that, for reasons that where neither strictly geopolitical nor strictly doctrinal, advocated a rejection of those theological and philosophical trends that could be somehow related to the powerful and advanced Islamic synthesis of Aristotelianism Bianchi 1990). In this sense, the accusation of averroism, which corresponded to the metonymic expression of the accusation of Arabism and thus automatically associated with *infidelitas*, consisted in an ideological construction of dualistic opposition between Islam and Christianity that was strategically mobilized within intestine struggles between the two groups of power of the newly established mendicant orders These groups were competing to acquire dominant positions within the space of power they had jointly obtained within the Church, that is, within the territories of Western Eurasian societal formations where the Church ruled. To the extent powerful processes of circulation of knowledge were ideologically stigmatized as Eastern influences, and exteriorized under the pejorative notion of 'arabism', the attack on late medieval scholasticism and the following emergence of nominalism was thus a regressive cultural response to geopolitical pressures, articulated through political struggles.

Concluding remarks

The accusations of Averroism that were moved against a vast array of ideas and thinkers related in multiple ways to the Arab translation and interpretation of Aristotle, which corresponded to the metonymic expression of the accusation of heterodoxy and Arabism, as such automatically associated with heresy and *infidelitas*, consisted in an ideological construction of dualistic opposition between Islam and Christianity that was strategically mobilized in elite discourses within intestine struggles between the two groups of power of the newly established mendicant orders. These groups were competing to acquire dominant positions in state apparatuses of the Church, that is, within the territories of Western Eurasian societal formations where the Church ruled, as well as in academic institutions within the space of power they had jointly obtained by the expansionist interference of the Church in universities. To the extent powerful processes of circulation of knowledge were ideologically stigmatized as Eastern influences, and exteriorized under the pejorative notion of 'averroists' or 'radical aristotelianism', the attack on late medieval scholasticism and the following emergence of nominalism was thus a regressive cultural response to geopolitical pressures, articulated through political struggles.

From these global reconfigurations of power, rather than the Western civilization and Europe as historical facts, the *Western Eurasian mode of hierarchies production* emerged, before any hyperreal construct named 'Europe'. This ideological architecture, which largely predates the construction of a European identity through the construction of the colonial other, implied a particular configuration of the epistemological organization of the different forms of knowledge, in a delicate and evolving (dis)equilibrium that, rather than following an inner logic

of knowledge production, theological rigor, or scientific discovery, was encapsulated into power structures, social conflicts, ideological confrontations, and the legitimating discourses they buttressed. These structures of power responded to conjunctural transformations of global processes, either political or geopolitical, rather than to inner cultural logics whose development can be understood in terms of incremental intensification of civilizational intrinsic patterns of identity-formation.

Notes

[1] For a reconsideration of the classic Ernst Bloch's argument about the 'non-contemporaneity o the contemporaneous', in global history, (see.Schafer 2004: 104-125).

[2] Cfr. Hobson on the concept of "gradated" in (2012)

[3] For a bibliographical review, (see. Seth 2009: 373-388; Harding 2011)

[4] See the revival of the legend of Prester John Christian kingdom in the East, in the aftermath of failure of the Fifth Crusade (1225). (John 1995: 291-298)

[5] Scholasticism, as a theoretical approach with common methodological features, appears as a common trait of different civilizational environments. (see Cabezón 1998)

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