

FROM DEVELOPMENTALISM TO THE CIVILIZATIONAL QUEST*

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"Le vingt et unième siècle sera spirituel, ou ne sera pas."
(André Malraux)

Nobody, to be sure, chooses his time in history. Yet, the timing of this, our second International Seminar devoted to the implementation of the Sub-Project on "The Transformation of the World", itself part of the United Nations University's Project on "Socio-Cultural Development Alternatives in a Changing World" within the Human and Social Development Programme - takes place, under the auspices of the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, a few days only after the first salvoes devoted to the inauguration of the United Nations third development decade, simultaneously with the initiation of the important 2nd Meeting on European Security in the Capital City of free and democratic Spain. And it so happens that the dimension to be explored this year of the processes making for, and converging towards, the transformation of the world is, precisely, the dimension of economy and society. We are therefore meeting at a particularly propitious time and moment, directly summoned to face this converging, yet so very divergent, flow of analyses and recommendations which address themselves to the challenges and, much less so, to the promises of the historical period which began to take shape as of the turning-point earmarked by the years 1949 to 1973.

A mounting pile of disasters forecast would suggest a growing consensus — at least at first glance. Already, the interesting summing

(*) This paper was submitted by the author at the Second International Seminar for the sub-project "Transformation of the World" on the subject of "Economy and Society in the Transformation of the World" (Madrid, 15-19th September 1980) as part of the United Nations University Project entitled "Socio-Cultural Development Alternatives in a Changing World". It is reprinted here with the permission of the United Nations University, to which we would like to extend our thanks.

up and ordering of available data, by the Brandt Commission, and their harnessing towards its call for a massive new transfer of resources from rich to poor, towards the North-South summit in 1981, had the great merit of presenting a well argued, reasoned and reasonable approach to the dangerous challenges now facing all sectors of our world. Then, in mid-Summer, on July 24, 1980, the conclusions of a three-year U.S. presidential Report, "**The Global 2000 Report**", indicated that "Time was running out for international action to prevent the world from becoming a starving, overcrowded, polluted, resource-poor planet": "The potential for global problems of alarming proportions by the year 2000 — environmental, resource and population stresses are intensifying and will increasingly determine the quality of human life on our planet...). If present trends continue, the world in 2000 will be more crowded, more polluted, less stable ecologically, and more vulnerable to disruption than the world we live in now". A month later, punctually, on August 17, the third annual World Development Report, by the World Bank, predicted five years of sluggish growth till 1985, and an extremely painful situation for the poorest group of countries where more than eight hundred million of our brethren survive in misery, hardship and pain. Sotto voce, there were hints that, perhaps, after all, the non-affluent societies ought not to aim at a duplication of the Western pattern of growth...

But then, what?

Thirty five years after Yalta and Hiroshima, the epoch of the great waves of national and social revolutions and transformations in our times, including the two development decades, we are led to believe that problems remain untackled, their roots and solutions, profusely discussed by major intellectual schools of thoughts and action, still obscure. A time for anxiety and despair — the very tonality of the negative mind deep at work in the very fabric of large sectors of hegemonic cultures and mass media: "Apocalypse now".

Against this context firmly rooted in the achievements of different paths and modes of political and societal behaviour, in the capacity of human societies to better identify their endogenous potentials and resources, in the ethos, too, in the growing feeling that different human paths of social evolution are to be sought, in earnest, springs the principled attitude of large sectors, ever-widening, of intellectuals as citizens of their countries, cultures, civilizations, and the world —at one and the same time— to seek the roots, the hidden causality, of mounting dangers, or, at best, of the stalemate.

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A careful analysis of the course of discussions of the great debate around the twin poles of liberation and development since 1945 gives us one first clue to the present ambiguity.

The first post-war phase —from 1945 to around 1960—, from Yalta to the break-up of the traditional imperial patterns of hegemony — the position of the problem, of the whole problématique of the dialectics of liberation and development, was definitely political. The fall of fascisms under the combined onslaught of the world-wide front of democracies and socialism : the wave of national liberation movements, leading to the emergence of an array of new independent States around the nucleus of resurgent national independent States, the formation of a group of socialist countries in the West, and, more so, the organic imbrication of liberation and socialism in China, Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Algeria, side by side with the national progressive orientation in the Bandoeng Afro-Asian group around Nasserism; the still prevalent feeling of the boundless character of the Promethean vision of the world, comforted at that time by the tempo and scope of sheer material and infrastructural reconstruction, after the great war of 1939-1945 : such were the major converging formative factors which led, objectively, to the “primacy of the political” in the complex dialectical problématique of liberation and development at that time. Such was the objective environment, at world level, the formative mould of the great theoretical interlude. The historicist-dialectical orientation, centering on the interrelation between national movements and imperialism, dependence and independence, with the rising factor of national-cultural identity as a running stream throughout. But, more so, the structuralist-functionalist neo-positivistic approach to these beginnings of the transformation of the world — “Le grand vent de l’histoire” in the words of Charles de Gaulle — centering on the concepts of “centre” and “periphery”, of the semantics and theology of economism and productivism already heralding the new wave. Obviously, and owing to the balance of forces at work, both in the political and intellectual spheres, this second orientation became the most prevalent in the fields of the human and social sciences, after Yalta. Yet, the very movement of history allowed for the clear formulation of central theses and positions, asserting the primacy of the political, but at the same time insisting on the necessity to go beyond, to seek the hidden part of the iceberg, in the civilizational and cultural formative dimensions of social dialectics.

Yet, quite obviously, this political position of the problem, with cultural undertones, could hardly fit the exuberant mood of the time. The crystallisation of a new world imperium around the U.S.A.; the resurgence of China and its civilization; the amazing reconstruction of Germany and Western Europe; the rise of Japan from Hiroshima to the second leading position in industry and technology; the upsurge of the U.S.S.R. and the socialist group of countries; the strengthening of national economies in meaning: States of Asia, Africa and Latin America, seemed to point to the primacy of economics, even more so, of technology. Such was the launching path of the ethos of the so-called "stages of development", as well as of what was perceived as the scientific and technological revolution, the post-industrial electronic age in advanced societies.

From the early 1960's onwards, the dialectics of liberation and development came to be seen in a growing way as the single path of development, in an economistic-technicist powerful blend that constitutes the mainland of developmentalism. More than ever, the imitation of advanced societies in the West, the sanctification of productivism, consumerism and boundless hedonism appeared to express the many-sided felicities of Prometheus-rex, of man as demiurgos. Thus started the Golden Age of experts, both the professional technocrats and the Self-styled saviours of mankind: there was the so-called "Third" World, to prospect, edify and salvage, while, in turn, the élites of the three marginalized continents could seek polite admission solely by their cooptation in the élitist groups of developers, towards "The Modernization of Poverty". as sketched by Galal A. Amir.¹

Then, in 1973, oil as a weapon came to deepen the impact of the loss of South-East Asia: suddenly all of a sudden, as if and out of the blues, verily, the mirage of productivism, consumerism, hedonism, the very spirit of the rise of the Western world to hegemony from the 15th century came to be seen as severely limited, by the unfolding, precisely, of the concrete social dialectics of the real-concrete societies of mankind in our time. Disruption of the public equanimity, at any one historical period, cannot but have destabilizing effects: from productivism to populism; from consumerism to basic communities; from hedonism to...— but then hedonism was there to stay. A recent statement by an experienced Western observer succinctly sums up this itinerary, from the first political-cultural stage to the second

¹ "The Modernization of Poverty — A Study in the Political Economy of Growth in Nine Arab Countries 1945-1970" Galal A. Amin (E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1974).

economistic-technicist one, having the special merit of centering on the strategies developed by the United Nations system :

"But by the end of the Sixties, it became obvious that this "trickle-down" theory would take centuries to wipe out poverty. Obscene inequalities had developed and in many countries the numbers of absolute poor had grown. Over the second development decade, new approaches were tested and have now gelled into a coherent strategy, focused on reducing inequalities.

The World Bank proclaimed that economic growth was not enough : it had to be accompanied with redistribution of investment and productive assets to the poor and the neglected rural areas.

The International Labour Office championed the view that growth of income alone was insufficient : the basic needs of the poor, from food, clothing and shelter to public services and paying jobs, should be met quickly through detailed planning.

UNICEF and the World Health Organization developed the basic services approach to meeting public needs, sanitation, water or housing. Instead of providing Western standards for the lucky few, a modest but adequate level of service could be provided to the many by using cheap materials, simple technology, brief training for grassroots workers, and popular participation. Thus, on the eve of the Third Development Decade, the Third World has at its disposal a new, alternative model of development.

The essence can be summed up in one phrase : self-help and increasing self-reliance. And it can work, as thousands of successful projects already demonstrate".²

As we consider these two main stages in the dialectics of independence of liberation and development between 1945 and 1980, we are bound to incline towards the differentiation here established. Yet, a striking particularity seems to lie at their very roots. For, in truth, both approach to address themselves to the question of "How", instead of "Why"; to method, or rather "methodology" as instrumentation, in lieu and place of "purposes"; to "technique", instead of "aims" : in short, to instrumentation in lieu and place of vision. The whole model, the matrix, the civilizational project of the West, from the 15th century to our times, never for one moment is called to

² Paul Harrison : "How the Third World is now beginning to help itself", *The Sunday Times*, 24.8.1980.

question. It seems assumed —by both orientations— that nothing different can, or indeed, could, obtain. Even facing the dwindling resources of our world? Even so, so it seems. An attitude which, *inter alia*, helps explain the emerging hints about the non-repetitive character of the Western processes of development, which now begin to surface in select sectors of the Western media — to the growing horror and despair of the thriving battalion of the good Westerners modernizers at large.

Where then do we go from here?

Could we go back to where we started, i.e. to mid-Summer 1980, amidst predictions of gloom and danger? Significantly, "The Times" published at that time a series of four articles by Peter Hazelhurst on the place of Japan in the world today and the triumph of its economy.³

"Japan has unwittingly just won the Second World War, by dint of hard work, superior managerial skill and an ability to adapt quickly to advanced technology. The Japanese have, in fact, exceeded the wildest dreams of their military masters four decades ago.(...) The vitality which has driven Japan to the top is demonstrated in the almost frightening fact that a people representing only 3 per cent of the world's population and inhabiting only 0,3 per cent of the entire area of the globe, account for 10 per cent of the world's total economic activities. Even more remarkable is the fact that Japan's success story has been achieved by an island people with no resources whatever.(...)

There can be little doubt that Japan's economic miracle is founded upon another great achievement: one of the most highly educated societies in the world".

So much for the economic achievement. What about societal processes?

"The Japanese are not plagued by class antagonisms, the rate of violent crime is low and declining. Strikes are rare and there is little evidence of vandalism. Graffiti is almost non-existent.(...) Unlike in the West, the successful individual who stands out in a group is not admired in Japan — the collective will of one's immediate group, be it in a company work squad or a neighbourhood association, is much more important. The watch-words of the social order are agreement and harmony".

³ Peter Hazelhurst "The place of Japan in the world today and the triumph of its economy".

A stupendous, or infuriating, miracle success story, as it no doubt is, depending on the stand-point of the observers. Then, as the field is defined, accurately and with precision, the question remains in its entity. How to account for such an anomalous situation? Could massive industrialization, the most stupendous advances distort the social fabric in the way to which we are witness everywhere in the world, as of the American model? Facing this panel of queries, epigones of the political orientation would heavily insist on the benefits which accrued Japan from its low posture in international politics and strategy since 1945, its dependence on the Western umbrella and immense capacity for international resilience.

They would also point out to the very strong tradition of hierarchy and authority in Japanese society, which does account for an important part of the story. Else? Should we turn to the advocates of the economic-developmental orientation, we would find specialists even more battered by this incomprehensible unique case — which alas cannot be dubbed “marginal”. For here, as nowhere else, do we reach the apex of incomprehension — as of pre-postulated concepts, categories and “theories”.

Therefore, the question remains : Where do we go from here?

Some time ago, and till very recently indeed, any attempt to interpret the Japanese miracle through the lenses of a historicist dialectical conception of history, reaching for the historical formation of its own national-cultural specificity within the wider mould of the civilization vision of the Orient, of Asia to which Japan belongs, such an attempt would have been dubbed non-scientific or, to say the least, erratic. Yet, the most respectable daily Journal of the West, in its admirable conclusion, “Behind the Japanese Miracle”⁴, finds the courage to question “the supremacy of Western culture” :

“Behind the economic story there is the shared social creed that makes the warp and weft of Japanese society so much more secure than our own. This security is not simply the result of a discipline or conformism or hierarchy which Western democracy has long since outgrown. It is the legacy of the Confucian State system which dominated China’s history and was imparted to her neighbours Korea and Vietnam. Although it did take root in Japan during the era when Chinese culture was imported before A.D. 1000 it was virtually the official doctrine during the Tokugawa rule (1615-1867) which immediately preceded Japan’s century of modernization on the Western

⁴ The Times, 24.7.80

model. Whatever the current political doctrines governing these four countries, the deep stream of Confucian thinking still runs in all of them.

This fact may have been disguised in the past thirty years by Japan's attachment to many aspects of Western culture from the best music, art and literature to the latest fad of youth culture. Yet running through Japan's postwar economic and political arrangements will be found the old instinct for consensus rather than adversary politics, the old respect for hierarchy, the natural acceptance of cooperation and compromise in all aspects of life".

What, then is missing?

"What the West often overlooks is that Japan and the three other countries sharing in East Asian civilization have at all times during the past century seen themselves in confrontation, and often in conflict, with the Western world. That followed from each having been wrested out of its old enclosed world by Western power in the nineteenth century. Since then their modernization, their political manoeuvres, their constant self-analysis and internal debates have always in essence revolved round their relationship to the West. How, they have constantly asked themselves, can we equal them and regain our pride? How in doing so, can we ensure that our own distinctive civilization will not be undermined in the process?"

Wherefore the conclusion: "The Western world has been slow to appreciate the constant swell of this long process of adjustment; slower still to realize that if East Asia must admit influences from the West then surely the West must arrive at its own assessment of this residual Confucianism".

Finally, the heartland, the kernel of the matter :

"To reduce polarities to the simplest definition it could be said that the imperative of the East Asian outlook is human obligation. Japanese are born into families as the basic group and loyalties must work upwards from there or society cannot function. Against this is a Western view of being born as individuals and seeking thereafter a fulfilment to which first the family and later society should contribute. The East Asian emphasizes human obligations, the West human rights.

Thus far East Asia has found the concept of individualism repellent or difficult to digest. Thus far the West has found

East Asia's conformism and consequent inhibition of original thought as no less undesirable. No good would be had by each pointing only to the faults of the other. Perhaps the West should now be more ready than in the past to take note of East Asian virtues".

I have quoted at length so as to present what perhaps has been the most striking and authoritative analysis in recent times. The most revealing, too. It is neither the time nor the place to present anew to our distinguished audience our theses on the dialectics of time.⁵ Yet, what "The Times" designates as "East Asian" is rather to be defined as "Oriental" :

East Asia has been visibly more fortunate than the other major civilizational circles of the Orient —the Islamic-Arab circle—to maintain the continuity of its specificity, owing to its geopolitical and strategic distancing. For the vision of time does determine the accepted patterns of social and inter-human relations.

We are leaving the shores of methodology as instrumentation, to the core hinterland of purposes, meaning, significance —the transition from "How" to "Why"— thus only but echoing the in-depths movements at work in the whole range of human and social sciences and thought, at the heart of the transformation of the world in our times, as of the crucial period of 1949-1973.

As we join hands with the variegated panoply of national, regional, international and transnational institutions, engaged in the prospection of the avenues to the future, essentially around the promotion of the indispensable New International Economic Order, we are bound to define the specificity of the United Nations University's quest and endeavours : in short, of a mission for the United Nations University, springing from its very Charter.

We are therefore called upon to formulate the broad orientations for prospective research and thought dealing with the dimension of economy and society at the times of the transformation of the world which our SCA Project would like to stress, at the converging point of, and within the broader mould, of the United Nations University's Programmes and Projects concerned with this field.

⁵ A. Abdel-Malek "On the Dialectics of Time — Positions," (Teheran Symposium, 1979) in *L'Impact de la Pensée occidentale rend-il possible un Dialogue réel entre les Civilisations?* Berg Intern. Paris, 1979, 197-215.

3.1 Quite naturally, the starting point of such a thrust-concerned, precisely, with the "transformation" of the world- can only be towards that which is changing ,as against the restatement of acquired knowledge and accepted ideas. In this quest, a clear distinction ought to obtain between that which is new, and that which is innovative; between novelty as the formative influence in fashion, and novation; between avant-garde and creativity. A tenuous divide, no doubt. The usual criterium of social efficacy, geared itself in the ethos of productivism and consumerism, and more generally in the rationale of scientism and the primacy of technology, can be but a starting point. It is of importance to go beyond, to seek the reasons wherefore the hidden potentials of a given society, or cultural ensemble, lie dormant, or have been made to be so, or look so. From that point, our critical quest could proceed to select such patterns of societal, or, better, socio-cultural maintenance through transformation, which alone seem to strengthen national-cultural identity, now rightly seen as a vital requirement of an acceptable human new world pattern.

The distinction between "modernism" and "modernity" could be of a genuine help in this realm : modernism, as the apex of hegemonic reductionism, of the centre and periphery approach internalized and accepted by docile peripheries; while modernity would seek, precisely, to ensure the maintenance of specificity through transformation, and even more so the identification and harnessing of the potentials specific to this very transformation.

Such an attitude would require us to focus on select instances where modernity has obtained —as a combinatory between national-cultural specificity and radical transformation— with a view to better comprehend the commonfactors, at work in totally different historically defined societies, and yet capable of parallel if not identical degrees of efficacy, of efficient actualization. And this comparative study could then be reversed to better eliminate the barriers to such a process, helping all concerned to define policies capable of overcoming the hidden breaks that distort and nullify.

3.2 As we bear in mind the immense differences obtaining between geo-cultural areas, as well as the very differing socio-economic and political-ideological systems obtaining in each area, including the tempi of acceleration and resistance, further scrutiny of "new" processes and trends could be engaged upon in non-manichean terms. Thus: ecologism and the grass-roots approach, the greening of advanced Western industrialized societies, can be viewed both as a generous attempt to overcome the stultification of over-industrialization, and

a shrewd and refined life-style deeply entrenched in the objective hegemonic position of these societies in the international market and geo-strategic situation.

Yet, when all is said and done, could we fail to link several positive aspects of this new attitude to historical surplus value with the powerful upsurge of the civilizational quest, often combining fundamentalism and radicalism, through the hitherto uncharted paths of revolutionary social dialectics in non-Western so-called underdeveloped societies, essentially in the Orient, but more globally so all over the hitherto marginalized tri-continental area?

A contrario, on the other side of the river, the same critical approach should obtain in the investigation, precisely, of this spiritual revival in non-Western societies and cultures. Could it not perhaps signalize the reluctance of certain sectors to confront the harsh realities of realpolitik, to back down from realism to essentialism?

In a word, how could modernity escape the deadlock of escapism? How could it face the iron pressures and implacable challenges of the balance of power, of the control of space via the scientific and technological revolution?

3.3 This is precisely the locus of our quest for a renewed vision of the State, as the instrument and focus of social power. Attention in this regard ought to be paid to the following : the growing functions of the State as compared with the more optimistic and restrictive visions of classical political thought and social philosophy; the weakening of several centrally managed functions vis-à-vis self-management and self-reliance, coupled with an immense strengthening of the central coercitive power of the State; inter alia. The now classical exploration of the interrelations between modes of production and the State, between the socio-economic dimension and social power ought to be largely and vigorously completed by the exploration of the rôle of the models of the contemporary State in the unification of our planet ("la mondialisation du monde"), the putting to the fore the ever-growing importance of geo-strategy and politics.

3.4 As we go through such a prospection, one vital area appears to be the analysis of the interrelation, to our mind central and organic, between the problems of power on the one hand, and contents and forms of democracy on the other hand. How, if not by a deepened and more efficient democratic organization, could we bring to bear rationality and the visions of the heart on the implacable realities of the balance-of-power approach? Democracy, therefore, not only as an

antidote to autocracy; but as the only powerful influence to the implacable parameters of the transformation of power in the world — both at local, and at regional and international levels— as we now know of it. If anarchy and demogogy do not appear to be consensus of the widest strata of populations and informed opinion, how are we to seek ways and means to strengthen the definition by the wide masses of the people of their destinies, and the control, by the people, of decision-makers and the implementation of the desired visions?

3.5 How can we visualize the futures of liberty as the understanding of necessity? Could we, somehow, at certain given points and conditions, break the implacable over-whelming influence of necessity? Perhaps through the implementation of the New International Economic Order, using the tools, precisely, of the scientific and technological revolution?

Here lies the difficulty, the area of confrontations, the rising dangers: the challenge and promise of meaningful mediation, of the dedicated quest for patterns for a nonantagonistic dialectical treatment of contradictions - towards complementarity.

A few days ago, the French essayist Bertrand de Jouvenel on the basis of the major UN demographic studies, "**The Future Prospectives of World Population as evaluated in 1968**", underlines the critical stage of the very position of the problem of economy and society in the transformation of the world: "While meat represents 1.300 calories per day for North Americans, 1.100 for the populations of Western Europe, 1.000 in Eastern Europe and USSR, the average becomes 167 for Africa; it falls down to less than 100 in many other countries."

"It will appear abnormal that our 'developed' populations, which will then represent only but one-fifth of the world's population continue to appropriate regions defined as 'developed', for they now occupy 42 % of the lands of our globe, 42 % of its permanent pasture lands, 45 % of its forests, and % 47 of its harvestable lands. Such a wide 'tray' for a relatively much lighter weight will soon appear unacceptable. Could we not then see part of the human weight coming from the other over-loaded tray, displace itself as it were to the developed tray?

For where disequilibrium obtains, flux obtains too: It would be reasonable for us to expect it".⁶

⁶ "Les Repas du Monde", *Le Monde*, 4.9.1980; cf. also the recent discussions at the U.N. Funds for Population Activities (UNFPA), in Rome, in Michele Champenois "Quand le Monde pauvre entrera dans la Ville...", *Le Monde*, 9.9.1980.

Could we not prepare our minds and souls for the now visible and unavoidable restructuration of patterns of human interaction and survival?

This series of problematic areas link up directly with the basic need now felt for a restructuration of the main body of social and political theory, based upon genuinely meaningful comparatism of real-concrete societal comparable units, taken in the course of the dialectical path. To be sure, there is no dirth of pre-postulations under theoretical garb. It is important, in this respect, to identify our real needs: not only for meaningful social theory, now perceived as an urgent and relevant need by different formative schools of thought and action in the world, but perhaps more so, for the identification of problematic areas little tackled till now.

These could comprise the following :

- a) the conception of progress seen as a succession of "stages";
- b) the historicity of progress, as compared with the universal dimension of social evolution;
- c) the differentiation of societal groups, in classes, categories, professional groups, trends, plus the regional and local diversification;
- d) the formation of social ethos as compared with social philosophies and ideologies;
- e) the biological factors in societal processes, essentially gender, age, especially seen in the relations to social power and visions of the world; etc.
- f) the requisites of a realistic, real-concrete, philosophical approach to the problems of economy and society as the fabric of the endogenous, inner, circle of the transformation of the world;
- g) the transition from the contemplative ethically oriented scientist to the new type of scientist and intellectual as responsible citizen: his required training in economy, geo-strategy, social and political planning, philosophy;
- h) if "Man does not live by bread alone" how could a more perceptive planning of the economic and social cadres responsible for the future take into account the non-economistic dimension of human life, generally regrouped under the label of "superstructure", but genuinely made of philosophy, religion, ideology, spirituality, in general?

i) After the failures now clearly perceived of the economic-technicist approach, what could be the prospects of culture and spirituality in the reshaping of the socio-economic fabric of human societies at the times of the transformation of the world?

j) What can be the place and rôle of vision, artistic imagination, dream, mysticism —as related to our real— concrete approaches?

From the much needed technocrat to the philosopher in the city; from stages of development to "The Republic", from the technocratic bureaucrat or the bureaucrat — as— technocrat, to the philosopher-king: how could we tackle this most difficult of the difficult equations between reality and vision?

More than ever before, perhaps, are we now summoned to advance on paths untrodden. May our United Nations University —hand in hand with the wide networks of advanced centers of academic teaching and research, of thought and action in our times— lucidly and fearlessly fulfil its mission towards its civilizational quest, to which purposes this new stage of our modest endeavours starting this day will hope to contribute its responsible and humane share.