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ANTI-CARTESIAN MEDITATIONS:  
ON THE ORIGIN OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL ANTI-DISDISCOURSE OF  
MODERNITY<sup>1</sup>

This work is consciously and explicitly polemical. It is polemical toward the disparaging belief in the existence of a “South of Europe” (and thereby Latin America), a belief which has been epistemically *constructed* by the Enlightenment from the center and north of Europe since the middle of the 18th Century. The Enlightenment *constructed* (in an unconsciously deployed *making*<sup>2</sup>) three categories that concealed European “exteriority”: Orientalism (described by Edward Said), Eurocentric Occidentalism (fabricated by Hegel among others), and the existence of a “South of Europe.” This “South” *was* (in the past) the center of history around the Mediterranean (Greece, Rome, the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, not to mention the Arab world of the Maghreb, already discredited two centuries prior), but was already at that moment a cultural leftover, a cultural periphery, because for the 18th-Century Europe of the Industrial Revolution, the entire Mediterranean was the “old world.” In de Pauw’s phrase: “Africa begins at the Pyrenees,” and the Iberian Americas, evidently, were situated as colonies of the already semi-peripheral Spain and Portugal. With that, Latin America simply “disappeared from the map and from history” until today, the beginning of the 21st Century. The goal of this work – which will certainly be criticized as “pretentious” – is to attempt to begin reinstating these Americas within global geopolitics and the history of philosophy.

**§ 1. Was René Descartes the first modern philosopher?**

We will begin with an inquiry into the standard telling of European history of philosophy of the last two centuries. Such histories indicate not only the time of events but equally their geopolitical position. Modernity originates – according to the common interpretation that we will attempt to refute – in a “place” and in a “time.” The geopolitical “displacement” of this “place” and this “time” will mean equally a “philosophic,” thematic, and paradigmatic displacement.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by George Ciccariello-Maher. This article began as a presentation at the Second Annual Conference of the Caribbean Philosophical Association (Puerto Rico, 2005), where I was invited by the Association president Lewis Gordon. I later expounded on the subject with some additional content in a speech given at the 10<sup>th</sup> Book Fair in Santo Domingo (April 25<sup>th</sup> 2007), where we also began to prepare the *Fifth Centenary* celebration of the first critical-messianic scream in Santo Domingo – which in 1511 took the form of Walter Benjamin’s *Now-Time* – against the injustice of the nascent Modernity, of the colonialism inaugurated not only on the American Continent but throughout the periphery of the world-system.

<sup>2</sup> [Tr: English in original].

### a. Where and when has the origin of Modernity been situated?

Stephen Toulmin writes:

Some people date the origin of modernity to the year 1436<sup>3</sup>, with Gutenberg's adoption of moveable type; some to A.D. 1520, and Luther's rebellion against Church authority; others to 1648, and the end of the Thirty Years' War; others to the American or French Revolution of 1776 or 1789; while modern times start for a few only in 1895 [...] <sup>4</sup> Modern science and technology can thus be seen as the source either of blessings, or of problems, or both. In either case, their intellectual origin makes the 1630s the most plausible starting date for Modernity.<sup>5</sup>

In general, and even for J. Habermas,<sup>6</sup> the origin of Modernity consists of a "movement" from South to North, and from the East of Europe to the West between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which is approximately the following: a) from the Italian Renaissance of the *Quattrocento* (not considered by Toulmin), b) the Lutheran reform in Germany, and c) the scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in d) the bourgeois political Revolution in England, North America, and France. Note the curve of the process: from Italy, to Germany, to France, and toward England and the United States. Well, we need to refute this "enlightened" historical *construction* of the process at the origin of Modernity, since it represents an "intra" European, Eurocentric, self-centered, and ideological view, from the perspective of the centrality of Northern Europe that has prevailed since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, dominating even up to our own days.

Glimpsing the origin of Modernity through "new eyes" requires that we situate ourselves *outside* Germano-Latin Europe and see it as outside observers ("engaged," clearly, but not the "zero point" of observation). So-called *medieval* or *feudal* Europe of the *Dark Ages* is nothing more than a Eurocentric mirage that was not self-discovered since the 7<sup>th</sup> century to be a *peripheral*, *secondary*, and *isolated* civilization, "cloistered" and "besieged" by the Muslim world, which had been more developed and connected with the history of Africa and Asia up to 1492. Europe had to interact with the great cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, which since 1453—the seizure of Constantinople—were definitively Ottoman. Europe was "shut in" since the 7<sup>th</sup> century, which prevented—despite the efforts of the Crusades—any contact with the most weighty elements of the culture, technology, and economics of the "Old World" (what we have deemed the "3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of the inter-regional, Asiatic-Afro-Mediterranean system"<sup>7</sup>).

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<sup>3</sup> Recalling that the Chinese had empirically and historically discovered the printing press centuries earlier.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmópolis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> J. Habermas includes "the discovery of the New World," in Juergen Habermas, *El discurso filosófico de la Modernidad* (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 1989), p. 15, but in following M. Weber's arguments he is unable to derive any conclusions from this purely accidental indication.

<sup>7</sup> See E. Dussel, *Política de la Liberación. Historia mundial y crítica* (Madrid: Trotta, 2007); and *Materiales para una política de la liberación* (Madrid- México: Plaza y Valdés, 2007).

We have studied this geographic-ideological relationship in various works.<sup>8</sup> To sum up the state of the question: Europe *was never the center of world history* until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (let's say until 1800, only two centuries ago). It comes to be the center as an effect of the Industrial Revolution. But thanks to a mirage—as we have said—the *entirety of prior world history* appears dazzled by Eurocentrism (Max Weber's position) as though it had Europe at its heart. This distorts the phenomenon of the history of Modernity. Let's look once more at the case of Hegel.

In all of his *University Lectures*, Hegel espouses his subjects against the *background* and horizon of a specific categorization of world history. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,<sup>9</sup> he divides history into four moments: "the Oriental world,"<sup>10</sup> "the Greek world," "the Roman world," and the "Germanic world." Here we can see the—completely Eurocentric—schematic significance of this ideological construction; and what's more: it is Germano-centric from the North of Europe (since the negation of the South of Europe had already occurred). On the other hand, the "Germanic world" (he doesn't say "European") is itself divided into three moments: "the Germanic-Christian world" (ruling out the "Latin"), "the Middle Age" (without being situated geopolitically in world history), and "the modern age." And the latter, in turn, has three moments: "the Reformation" (a Germanic phenomenon), "the constitutional reform" of the modern state, and "the Enlightenment and Revolution."

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*,<sup>11</sup> again, Hegel divides history into three moments: a) "Natural religion" (comprising "primitive," Chinese, Vedantic, Buddhist, Persian, and Syrian religions); b) "the religion of spiritual individuality" (Jewish, Greek, Roman), and, as its culmination, c.) "absolute religion," (Christianity). The Orient is always propaedeutic, infantile, providing the "first steps." The "Germanic world" (Northern Europe) is the end of history.

In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*,<sup>12</sup> in another way, Hegel considers history to be the "development of the ideal of particular forms of artistic beauty" in three moments: a) "symbolic art forms" (Zoroastrianism, Brahmanism, Egyptian, Hindu, Mahomedan, and Mystic Christian art); b) "classical art forms" (Greek and Roman); and c) "the Romantic art form." The latter is divided in three: a) that of primitive Christianity; b) "the Chivalry" of the Middle Ages; and c) that of the "formal autonomy of individual particularities" (which, as with the previous cases, deals with Modernity).

But nothing is better for dealing with our subject than the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.<sup>13</sup> These begin with a) "Oriental philosophy" (according to the

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<sup>8</sup> E. Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas* (New York: Continuum, 1995); *Ética de la Liberación* (Madrid: Trotta, 1998); and *Hacia una filosofía política crítica* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brower, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bände* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), vol. 12.

<sup>10</sup> He already puts forth the ideology of "Orientalism."

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, vols. 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, vols. 13-15.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, vols. 18-20.

recently-constructed “Orientalism”), including Chinese and Hindu philosophy (Vedantic in Sankhara, and Buddhist in Gautama, among others). Hegel then passes to b) “Greek philosophy” (without dealing with Roman philosophy). This is followed by c) the “philosophy of the Middle Ages” (in two moments: 1) “Arab philosophy,” which includes Jews, and 2) “Scholastic philosophy” which culminates with the Renaissance and the Lutheran Reformation<sup>14</sup>). Finally, he arrives at d) “Modern philosophy” (*Neuere Philosophie*). Here, we should pause. Hegel suspects some questions but doesn’t know how to provide them with sufficient reasonability-rationability. He writes of Modernity:

The human being acquires confidence in himself (*Zutrauen zu sich selbst*) [...] With the invention of gunpowder<sup>15</sup> individual enmity disappears in warfare [...] Man<sup>16</sup> discovers America, its treasures and its people, he discovers nature, he discovers himself (*sich selbst*).<sup>17</sup>

Having said this with regard to geopolitical conditions outside Europe, Hegel closes himself into a totally Eurocentered reflection. He thus attempts, in the first pages on Modern Philosophy, to explain the new situation of the philosopher toward socio-historic reality. His negative point of departure is the Middle Ages (for me, the “Third Stage” of the inter-regional system). “During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries is when *true* philosophy *reappears*.”<sup>18</sup> In the first place, for Hegel this new philosophy unfolds: a) There is, on the one hand, a *realism* of the experience, which opposes “knowledge and the object over which it falls,”<sup>19</sup> having a source a<sub>1</sub>) as observation of physical *nature*, and another, a<sub>2</sub>) as *political* analysis of the “spiritual world of States.”<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, there is b), an *idealist* direction, in which “everything resides in thought and Spirit itself is the entire content.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This means that for Hegel, the Renaissance is still not a constitutive part of Modernity. On this point – but for very different reasons – we agree with Hegel against Giovanni Arrighi, for example. From within his habitually “Eurocentric” perspective, Hegel indicates that: “Although Wycliffe, Hus and Arnold of Brescia had already set themselves apart from the course of Scholastic philosophy [...] it is with Luther that the movement of the freedom of the spirit originates” (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, II, 3, C; Hegel, 1970, vol. 20, p.50). If the Atlantic had not been opened up to Northern Europe, Luther would have been the Wycliffe or the Hus of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century without any later significance.

<sup>15</sup> He seems not to know that gunpowder, paper, the printing press, the compass, and many other technical discoveries had been invented centuries earlier by China. This is the infantile Eurocentrism of pure ignorance.

<sup>16</sup> As if the indigenous Americans were not “humans” who had “discovered” their own continent many millennia prior, but instead needed to wait for the Europeans so that “Man” *could discover* the Americas. Such a vulgar ideogeme is not worthy of a renowned philosopher.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, III, Introduction; Hegel, 1970, vol. 20, p. 62. [Dussel’s translation].

<sup>18</sup> Ancient philosophy “reappears,” albeit with differences, without fully discovering the radical geopolitical turn entailed by Modernity, which is situated for the first time in a world-system that was completely impossible for Greeks and Romans.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

In the second place, Hegel details the central *problems* of the new philosophy (God and his deduction from pure spirit; the conception of good and evil; the question of freedom and necessity).

In the third place, he occupies himself with two historical phases. “a) First, the reconciliation is announced of those contradictions under the form of a few attempts [...] still insufficiently clear and precise; here we have Bacon [born in London in 1561<sup>22</sup>] and Jacob Boehme.”<sup>23</sup> Both are born in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. “b) Metaphysical reconciliation. Here the authentic philosophy of this age commences: it begins with Descartes.”<sup>24</sup> Let’s think about what we have shown thus far.

In the first place, evidently, Hegel introduces Jacob Boehme (born in Alt-Seidenberg in 1575) who is a German, the mystical and popular thinker of the Germanic interiority, representing an amusing and nationalist folkloric note; but nothing more. In the second place, although he attempts to speak of “historic-external factors of the life circumstances of philosophers,”<sup>25</sup> he doesn’t go beyond indicating sociological aspects that make the modern philosopher not a monk but a common man of the street, one who “is not isolated from the rest of society.”<sup>26</sup> In no way does he imagine—in his Northern-European ignorance—the global geopolitical cataclysm that had occurred since the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in all cultures on Earth (in the Far East, Southeast Asia, India, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Indigenous North America, from the European invasion of the “fourth continent”).

It is within this provincial, Eurocentric view that Descartes appears in the historical discourse of Hegel as he who “initiates the authentic philosophy of the modern epoch” (*Cartesius fängt eigentlich die Philosophie der neueren Zeit an*).<sup>27</sup> We shall look into the question more closely.

## b. Descartes and the Jesuits

René Descartes was born in France, in La Haye en Touraine in 1596, and died in 1650. That is to say, he lived during the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. An orphan shortly after birth, he was educated by his grandmother. In 1606, he entered Jesuit school in La Flèche, and it was there that—until 1615—he would receive his only formal education in philosophy.<sup>28</sup> In other words, Descartes leaves home at ten years old, and the Jesuit priest Chastellier was like a second father to him.

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<sup>22</sup> We should recall the dates, since in his old age he would live into the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, having been born 70 years after the beginning of Columbus’s “invasion” of the Americas, when Bartolomé de las Casas was approaching death (+ 1566).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>27</sup> Already cited, *Ibid.*, p.70.

<sup>28</sup> See Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes. An intellectual biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); and John Cottingham (Ed.), *Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

The first philosophical work that he would study was the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* by Francisco Suárez, published in 1597, a year after Descartes' birth.

It is known that the Spanish Basque Ignacio de Loyola—who is born almost at the same time as Modernity, in 1491, a year prior to Columbus's "discovery of the western Atlantic"; and dies in 1556, forty years before Descartes' birth—a philosophy student in Paris, founded schools to provide a philosophical education for clerics and young nobles or those from the well-to-do bourgeois classes. In 1603, the Jesuits were called by King Henry IV—after having been expelled from France in 1591—founding the school of La Flèche in 1604, housed in an enormous palace on four square hectares donated to the priests by the King himself. The education provided, according to the Council of Trent—which "modernized," by rationalizing, all aspects of the Catholic Church—was completely "modern" in its *ratio studiorum*. Each Jesuit constituted a singular, independent, and modern *subjectivity*, performing daily an individual "examination of conscience," without communal choral hymns or prayers as was the case with medieval Benedictine monks.<sup>29</sup> Put differently, the young Descartes needed to withdraw into silence three times a day,<sup>30</sup> to *reflect* on his own subjectivity and "examine" with extreme *self-consciousness* and *clarity* the intention and content of every action, the actions carried out hour-by-hour, judging these actions according to the criterion that "man is raised to praise, revere, and serve God."<sup>31</sup> These examinations were a remembrance of St. Augustine of Hippo's *exercitatio animi*. It was a daily practice of the *ego cogito*: "I have self-consciousness of having done this and that"; all of which dominated the subjectivity in a disciplined manner (even prior to the Calvinism that M. Weber proposes as the capitalist ethic). These studies were extremely methodical:

They shall not study from textbooks or imperfectly the principal faculties, first they should go into their foundations, giving time and competent study [...] The faculties that all should ordinarily learn are: letters of humanities, logic, natural philosophy, and provided the necessary supplies, some mathematics and moral, metaphysics, and scholastic theology [...] Without such study there should be an hour every day to debate whatever faculty is being studied [...] There should be public debates every Sunday after dinner.<sup>32</sup>

Hence the Young Descartes, from 1606 to 1611, would have engaged in the *lectio*, *repetitiones*, *sabbatinae disputationes*, and at the end of the month, the *menstruae disputationes*.<sup>33</sup> In those exercises, students read Erasmus, Melanchthon, and

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<sup>29</sup> One reads as early as 1538 "of examining the consciousness in that way of the lines," in Ignacio de Loyola, *Obras completas* (Madrid: BAC, 1952). This refers to a line for each day in a notebook, in which one indicated the errors committed, counting them by the hour from rising in the morning to afternoon and night (three times a day). See *Exercises*, First Week [24] (Ignacio de Loyola, 1952, p. 162).

<sup>30</sup> "Use the daily examination of your consciousness" (*Constituciones*, III, 1, [261]; Ignacio de Loyola, 1952, p. 430).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, [23], p. 161.

<sup>32</sup> *Reglas de San Ignacio*, II. *Constituciones de los colegios*, [53-64]; *Ibid.*, pp.588-590.

<sup>33</sup> And so it is not strange that Suárez's crowning work would carry the title recommended by the *Regla de San Ignacio: Disputationes Metaphysicae*, and that Descartes

Sturm, and texts by the “Brothers of the common life,” although the most frequent was the Spanish Jesuit F. Suárez (who was alive during the time that Descartes studied philosophy and would only die in 1617, when Descartes left the school). He had therefore begun his properly philosophical education with the *Logic* (in approximately 1610, after his classical studies in Latin). He studied it in the consecrated text used by all European schools of the Company, of which there were innumerable editions all over the old continent, from Italy and Spain to Holland and Germany, and also at that time in France. This was the *Logica mexicana sive Commentarii in universam Aristotelis Logicam* (Köln, 1606, the year in which René entered school at La Flèche) by the Mexican philosopher Antonio Rubio (1548-1615).<sup>34</sup> Who would have thought that Descartes studied the *hard part* of philosophy – the *Logic*, the *Dialectic* – in a book by a *Mexican* philosopher! This constitutes part of our argument. In 1612, he was introduced to mathematics and astronomy, as part of the curriculum we have seen. He would be occupied with metaphysics (Suárez’s *Disputationes Metaphysicae* is the first work that Descartes’ read according to his own confession, and as we have seen above), and the ethics during the years 1613 and 1614.

As we will see later, this work by Suárez – anticipated by suggestions by Pedro de Fonseca in Coimbra, as we will explain later – is not at this point a commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, but rather the first systematic work on the subject (which would anticipate all ontologies of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, like those of Baumgarten, Leibniz, or Wolff, and those to which they referred explicitly).

At all moments of the “Cartesian argument,” one can observe the influence of his studies with the Jesuits. From the radical reflection of consciousness on itself in the *ego cogito*, to the “salvaging” of the empirical world through recourse to the Infinite (a question dealt under this name in Suárez’s *Disputatio* 28), demonstrating its existence in an Anselmian manner (a question dealt with in *Disputatio* 29), in order to on this basis reconstruct a mathematically-known real world. This method – which took mathematics as its model – was one of the subjects that were passionately debated in the halls of the Jesuit schools. Such schools, as is evident, come from Southern Europe, from Spain, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, from the Mediterranean as it dumps into the Atlantic. Shouldn’t the 16<sup>th</sup> century, then, have some philosophical interest? Is Descartes not the fruit of a *prior* generation that prepared the path? Were there not *modern Iberian-American* philosophers before Descartes, who opened up the problematic of modern philosophy?

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himself would himself pen the *Regles sur la direction de l’esprit* (even the phrase “direction de l’esprit” reminds us of the “spiritual directors” of the Jesuit schools). In the *Discours de la Méthode*, II y III, he continues to speak of “rules”: “Principales regles de la methode,” “Quelques regles de la morale.” Souvenirs of his youth?

<sup>34</sup> Although of a Peninsular origin, he arrived in Mexico at 18 and studied all of his philosophy at the University of Mexico (founded in 1553). It was there that he wrote the work which as a result bore the name *Mexican Logic* (with the title even in Latin). In Mexico he also wrote a *Dialecticam* (later published in 1603 in Alcalá), a *Physica* (published in Madrid, 1605), a *De Anima* (Alcalá, 1611), and an *In de Caelo et Mundo* (Madrid, 1615). Other masters had also studied in the college, like Pedro de Fonseca from Portugal (professor at Coimbra, as we said above, beginning in 1590).

### c. Descartes and the Augustinianism of the *ego cogito*. The modern “new paradigm”

The subject of the *ego cogito*<sup>35</sup> has its Western and Mediterranean antecedents, although this does not undermine in any way its *novelty*. The references to Augustine of Hippo are undeniable, although Descartes occasionally tried to seem to not have been inspired by the great Roman rhetorician from Northern Africa. And nor did he admit the influence of Francisco Sánchez, or anyone else. In effect, during his time Augustine argued against the skepticism of the academics; Descartes against the skepticism of the libertines. To do so, he referred to the indubitability of the *ego cogito*.

The subject always returns to *self-consciousness*, a philosophical question that also referred to a classic Aristotelian text from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which would inspire Augustine, and later, among others, R. Descartes:

There exists a faculty by which we feel our acts [...]. He who sees *feels* (*aisthánetai*)<sup>36</sup> that he sees, he who hears [feels] that he hears, he who walks [feels] that he walks, and so in other things we *feel* (*aisthanómenon*) what we bring about. Because of this we can *feel* (*aisthanómeth'*) what we *feel* (*aisthanómetha*) and know (*noômen*) what we know. But we *feel* and we think because we are, because to be (*eînai*) is to *feel* and to think.<sup>37</sup>

We are dealing, then, with the phenomenon of “self-consciousness,” that should be defined according to Antonio Damasio as a “feeling”<sup>38</sup> neurologically linked to speech centers.<sup>39</sup>

For his part, and in an analogous way, Augustine had made the similar point in the *De Trinitate*.<sup>40</sup> This is why Mersenne, having scarcely read Descartes’ *Discourse*, warned his friend of the similarity of his text with that of Augustine in *De civitate Dei*, book XI, chapter 26. Descartes responds that it seems to him that Augustine “se ha servido del texto con otro sentido del uso que yo le he dado.”

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<sup>35</sup> The central texts are found in the 4<sup>th</sup> part of the *Discours* (Descartes, 1953, pp. 147ss), and in the “Second Meditation” in the *Méditations touchant la Première Philosophie* (*Meditationes de prima philosophia*, which in its first French version bore more similarity to Suárez: *Méditations métaphysiques*).

<sup>36</sup> This is an act of “sensitivity” for the Stagirite, as equally today for A. Damasio, who recalls that the *cogito* is a “feeling.” See Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando-London: Harcourt Inc., 1994).

<sup>37</sup> EN, IX, 9, 1170 to 29-34. This self-consciousness of human acts was called *synaísthesis* by the Stoics. See J. V. Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum Fragmenta* (Stuttgart, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 773-911), and *tactus interior* by Cicero. This is the whole question of “high self-consciousness.” See G.M.Edelman, *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire. On the Matter of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). Italics added.

<sup>38</sup> See Damasio.

<sup>39</sup> See also Edelman.

<sup>40</sup> Augustin, *De Trinitate*, XV, 12, 21

("has served the text with another sense of use I have given")<sup>41</sup> Arnauld reacts in the same way, referring to the previously mentioned text *De Trinitate*. Descartes would later, in his responses to the objections raised against the *Meditations*, suggest still another text.<sup>42</sup> We could say, then, that Descartes had certainly read and been inspired by Augustine, which doesn't take away from the new and profound meaning of his argument—one which not only refutes the skeptic, but bases subjectivity on itself, an intention completely absent in Augustine, who had to base it on God, and moreover this was never a solipsistic subjectivity in the case of the Carthaginian. This new foundation—sensed in the ontological experience of 1619 alongside the Rhine—still needed to register itself within the Augustinian tradition:

Augustine's method is of the same nature as Descartes' [...] Because [Descartes], as a mathematician, decides to set out from thought, [and] will no longer be able, as a metaphysician, set out from a thought other than his own. Because he has decided to go from thought to the thing he will no longer be able to define his thought other than by the content that said thought exhibits to the intuition that learns it [...] A metaphysic of the distinction between body and soul had in Augustine a powerful support [...as with] the proof of the existence of God [...] that San Anselmo had deemed necessary to modify and simplify [...] being] the only escape offered to Descartes.<sup>43</sup>

So Descartes took mathematics—on Francisco Suárez's third level of abstraction<sup>44</sup>—as the prototypical mode for the use of reason. He discovered thus a *new philosophical paradigm*, which while known among earlier philosophy, had never been used in such an ontologically-reductive way. The metaphysic of the individual, modern *ego*—the *paradigm of solipsistic consciousness* (as K.-O. Apel would say)—began its long history.

#### **d. Ratio mathematica, epistemic rationalism, and subjectivity as foundation for the political domination of colonial, colored, female bodies**

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<sup>41</sup> Etienne Gilson, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée Médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien* (Paris : J. Vrin, 1951), p.191.

<sup>42</sup> "Si non esses, falli omnino non posses" (*De libero arbitrio* II, 3, n. 7). See the edition by Ch. Adam-P.I Tannery, Descartes, 1996, vol. 7, pp. 197ss.

<sup>43</sup> Gilson, p. 201.

<sup>44</sup> As early as the *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis*, on physics (*In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis*), we read about the "tres esse abstractiones..." (*Art.3, Proemio*; Antonii Mariz, Universitatis Typographi, 1592, p. 9): the abstraction of sensible matter (natural philosophy), the abstraction of intelligible matter (metaphysics), and the abstraction of all matter (mathematics). This book discusses the original wisdom "secunum Aegyptios" (*Proemium*, p. 1), prior to falling into an absolute Hellenocentrism, since it was the Egyptians who discovered that the intellection of the universe cannot be reached without "solitudine, atque silentio" (this is the *skholé* that Aristotle also attributes to the Egyptians) (*Ibid.*). Mario Santiago de Carvalho, 2007, shows that in this course on physics we already find a modern concept of imaginary time (which makes us think of Kant). See "Aos hombros de Aristóteles (Sobre o nao-aristotelismo do primeiro curso aristotélico dos Jesuitas de Coimbra)", en *Revista filosófica de Coimbra*, (2007), 32, pp. 291-308.

Anthropologically – which is to say ethically and politically – Descartes faced an aporia that he would never be able to resolve. On the one hand, he needed the *ego* of the *ego cogito* to be a soul independent of all materiality, all extension. The soul was, for Descartes, a *res*, but a “thing” which was spiritual, immortal, a substance separate from the body:

[...] I have thereby come to know that I was a substance (*substance*) whose essence in its totality or nature consisted only in thinking, and that, to be, needed no place, nor did it depend on any material thing. Such that this I (*moi*), that is, my soul (*âme*), as a result of which I am what I am, was totally distinct from the body, and was even easier to know than that body, and that even if that body didn't exist my soul would not cease to be everything that it is.<sup>45</sup>

After the appearance in 1637 of the *Discourse*, and later of the *Meditations*, Arnauld felt that Descartes “attempted too much,”<sup>46</sup> since by categorically affirming the independent substantiality of the “soul” (*res cogitans*), it was then impossible for him to *unite* that soul with an equally substantial body (*res extensa*). Regius, more clearly, showed that the only solution that remained for him was the *accidental* unity (*per accidens*) of soul and body.

Descartes therefore needed to assert the substantiality of the soul in order to have all of the sufficient guarantees for skeptics of the possibility of a *mathesis universalis* – of a certainty without the possibility of doubt. But in order to be able to include the problem of feelings, imagination, and passions, he needed to define how the body (a quasi-perfect machine, consisting only of quantity) could come to be present in the soul. Moreover, after the existence of God was ensured – through a purely *a priori* Anselmian proof – he then needed to be able as well to access a real, physical, “external world.” The body was the necessary mediation. Hence Descartes fell into a circle: to open himself up to an external world he needed to be able to assume the union of body and soul; but the union of body and soul was based on the assumption of an external world opened up to us by our feelings, imagination, and passions, that have been put into question by the *cogito*. Gilson writes:

From the moment at which Descartes decides to unify the soul and the body, it becomes difficult for him [...] to distinguish them. Not being able to *think* them except as two, he must nevertheless *feel* them as *one*.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Discours*, IV; Descartes, 1953, p. 148; Descartes, 1996, vol. 6, p.33. In the 1598 volume of the *Commentarii Coll. Conimbricensis, In tres libros de Anima*, ed. by Antonii Mariz in Coimbra, we find a *Tractatus De Anima Separata*, Disp. 1, art. 1 (pp. 442ss), a discussion of the immortality of the soul which could have inspired Descartes. See Mario S. de Carvalho, “Intellect et Imagination”, en tiré à part de *Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale* (Brepols), 11, p. 127) where he notes that, following Pomponazzi y Caetanus, the Coimbrians proposed: “La singularité de l'âme ... ne tient uniquement à son indépendance de la matière, mais aussi au fait d'avoir un activité propre,” which Descartes would adopt as his paradigm.

<sup>46</sup> Gilson, p. 246.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250. Italics added.

Thinking the body as a machine without quality – purely quantitative: an object of mathematics, mechanics – complicates Descartes' hypothesis with regard to two objections. The first: how can a physical machine communicate with an immaterial substance? The hypothesis of the "animal spirits" (transported in the blood) that unite with the body in the "pineal gland" was not convincing. The second: how can the passions move or withhold the cognitive activity of the soul? As hard as Descartes tries he can never show that the passions, linked to the body, connect to the soul and the cognitive activity that moves it. Moreover, since the body is a purely quantitative machine, and the passions would necessitate a qualitative organism, they themselves remain totally ambiguous.

That pure machine would not show skin color or race (it is clear that Descartes thinks only from the basis of the white race), and nor obviously its sex (he equally thinks only on the basis of the male sex), and it is that of a European (he doesn't sketch nor does he refer to a colonial body, an Indian, an African slave, or an Asian). The quantitative indeterminacy of any quality will also be the beginning of all illusory abstractions about the "zero point"<sup>48</sup> of modern philosophical subjectivity and the constitution of the body as a quantifiable commodity with a price (as is the case in the system of slavery or the capitalist wage).

## § 2. The crisis of the "old paradigm" and the first modern philosophers. The *ego conquiro*: Ginés de Sepúlveda

But prior to Descartes the entire 16<sup>th</sup> century had passed, a period which modern, central-European and North American philosophy attempts to ignore up to the present.

In effect, the most direct way of providing a basis for the praxis of trans-oceanic colonial domination – a coloniality which is simultaneously the very origin of Modernity, and as a result a world-historical novelty – is to show that the dominant culture grants the benefits of civilization to the most backward (a "stupidity" that Ginés will call *turditatem* in Latin and I. Kant will deem *unmündigkeit*<sup>49</sup>). This argument, which lies beneath all modern philosophy (from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century) is put forward masterfully and with great impact for the first time by Ginés de Sepúlveda (+1573), a student of the Renaissance philosopher P. Pomponazzi (1462-1524), in the Valladolid debate beginning in

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<sup>48</sup> Santiago Castro-Gómez refers to the *disproportionate* claim of Cartesian thought to situate itself beyond any particular perspective the "zero-point *hybris*." Like the Renaissance artist who, on tracing the horizon and the vanishing point in the perspective of all the objects he will paint, does not appear in the painting himself, but is always "he who looks and constitutes the painting" (this is the inverse of the "vanishing point") and passes for the "zero point" of perspective. However, far from being an uncommitted "point of view," it is this point that constitutes all commitments. M. Weber – with his claim to represent a objective, "value-free" viewpoint – is the best example of this impossible pretension of the "zero-point." The *ego cogito* inaugurates this pretension within Modernity.

<sup>49</sup> And of which what we have deemed the "developmentalist fallacy" consists, in the belief that Europe is more "developed" – as in the "development" [*Entwicklung*] of the *concept* for Hegel – than other cultures. See Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, 1995.

1550, promoted by Carlos V (1500-1558) in the manner of the Islamic Caliphates to “reassure his conscience.” This was an “Atlantic” dispute—no longer “Mediterranean,” between Christians and “Saracens”—which sought to understand the ontological status of the “Indians.” These were “barbarians” different from those of Greece, China, or the Muslim world, that Montaigne—with a profoundly critical implications—defined as cannibals (or indigenous Caribes<sup>50</sup>), that is, those “we can call barbarians with respect to our rules of reason.”<sup>51</sup> Ginés writes:

It will always be just and in conformity with natural law that such [barbaric] peoples be subjected to the empire of princes and nations that are *more cultured and humane*, so that by their virtues and the prudence of their laws, they abandon barbarism and are subdued by a more humane life and the cult of virtue.<sup>52</sup>

This is a reworking of Aristotle, the Greek philosopher of slavery in the eastern Mediterranean, but one now situated on the horizon of the Atlantic Ocean, which is to say, one with global significance:

And if they reject such an empire, *it can be imposed on them by way of arms*, and such a war would be just according to the declarations of natural law [...] In sum: it is just, convenient, and in conformity with natural law that those honorable, intelligent, virtuous, and human men dominate all those who lack these qualities.<sup>53</sup>

This tautological argument—which is such because it sets out from the superiority of its own culture simply because it is its own—will be imposed throughout all of Modernity. The content of other cultures, for being different from one’s own culture, is declared non-human, as when Aristotle declared Asians and Europeans to be barbarians, because the only “humans” were “those residents who lived in the [Hellenic] cities.”<sup>54</sup>

The most serious part of this philosophical argument is that just war against the indigenous peoples is justified for the very fact of having impeded the “conquest,” which to the eyes of Ginés is the necessary “violence” that needed to be exercised in order to civilize the barbaric, because if they were civilized there would no longer be any cause for just war:

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<sup>50</sup> The Antillean Tainos did not pronounce the “r,” and so “Caribe” and “cannibal” was the same.

<sup>51</sup> “Of Cannibals,” in M. Montaigne, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris : Gallimard-Pléiade, 1967), p. 208. Montaigne knew very well that if we situate ourselves from the perspective of these “so-called” barbarians, the Europeans deserved to be called “savage” on their part for the irrational and brutal acts that they committed against these people.

<sup>52</sup> Sepúlveda de Ginés, *Tratado sobre las Justicas causas de la Guerra contra los indios* (Mexico City: FCE, 1967), p.85. Italics added.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87. Italics added.

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle, *Política* I, 1; 1253 a 19-20.

When the pagans are no more than pagans [...] there is no just cause to punish them, nor to attack them with arms: such that, if some cultured, civilized, and humane people are found in the New World, that do not adore idols, but instead the true God [...] war would be unlawful.<sup>55</sup>

The cause of just war was not being pagans, but being uncivilized. So the cultures of the Aztec Empire, of the Mayans, or of the Incas were not an indication for Ginés of high civilization. And, on the other hand, the ability to find another people who might adore “the true God” (who was European, Christian) was an absurd condition. For that reason, the war of conquest against “backward” peoples was tautologically justified, but always through an argument that included the “developmentalist fallacy”:

But look how much they fool themselves and how much I disagree with such an opinion, seeing on the contrary in these [Aztec or Inca] institutions proof of the coarse and innate servitude of these men [...] They have [this is true] a republican institutional structure, but no one possesses anything as their own,<sup>56</sup> not a house, not a field at their disposal to leave in their will to their heirs [...] subjects of the will and caprice [of their bosses] rather than their own liberty [...]. All this [...] is an absolutely clear indication of the submissive and slavish mindset of these barbarians.<sup>57</sup>

And he concludes cynically by showing that the Europeans educate the indigenous peoples in “the virtue, the humanity, and the true religion [that] are more valuable than the gold and silver”<sup>58</sup> that the Europeans brutally extract from the American mines.

Once the justice of European expansion is proven to be a civilizing task, emancipating those living in barbarity, the rest—armed conquest, the plunder of the gold and silver mentioned, the abstract declaration of Indians but not their cultures as being “human,” a political structure in which power resides in colonial institutions, the dogmatic imposition of a foreign religion, etc.—is justified. Earlier, Juan Mayor (1469-1550), a professor in Paris, a Scottish Scotist, had written in his *Comentario a las Sentencias* in reference to the American Indians: “those people live bestially (*bestialiter*) [...] and so those who first conquer them will rule justly over them, because they are *slaves by nature* (*quia natura sunt servi*).”<sup>59</sup>

The entire argument is based politically—in the final instance—on the right that the King of Spain had to such colonial domination. In book I, title 1, law 1 of the

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<sup>55</sup> Ginés, p. 117.

<sup>56</sup> Ahead of J. Locke or Hegel, he understands “private property” as a precondition for humanity.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*. On one of Pope John Paul II’s trips to Latin America, an indigenous person from Ecuador presented him with a Bible as a gesture of returning to him the religion that they had claimed to teach the Indians, and asked of the Pope that he return the wealth that had been extracted from the West Indies.

<sup>59</sup> Mayor, 1510, dist. XLIV, q. III. Italics added.

*Recopilación de las Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias* (1681) we read: “God our Master in his infinite mercy and goodness has given us without us deserving it such a large part in the Dominion of this world [...]”<sup>60</sup> This concession granted by the papal bull *Inter caetera* of 1493 and signed by the Pope served as a political (and religious) justification, but not a philosophical one. As a result, the argument offered by Ginés was necessary and complementary.

There is a final argument that I would like to recall, and it is the following: “The second cause is to exile unspeakable stupidities [...] and to save from great injury the many innocent mortals that these barbarians sacrificed every year.”<sup>61</sup> That is to say, war was justified to rescue the human victims offered up to the gods, as in Mexico. We will see later the surprising response from Bartolomé de las Casas.

### § 3. The first *early modern academic-metaphysical philosopher*: Francisco Suárez

The impact of the modern invasion of the Americas, of the European expansion to the western Atlantic, produced a crisis in the old philosophical paradigm, but without yet formulating another, entirely new one—as Descartes, setting out from 16<sup>th</sup>-century developments, would attempt to do. It bears mentioning that 16<sup>th</sup> century philosophical production in Spain and Portugal was linked on a daily basis to Atlantic events, with the opening of Europe to the world. The Iberian Peninsula was the European territory which most lived the effervescence of the unexpected discoveries. News arrived constantly from the overseas provinces, from Spanish America and the Philippines to Spain, from Brazil, Africa, and Asia to Portugal. Philosophy professors in universities in Salamanca, Valladolid, Coimbra, or Braga—which, since 1581, functioned as a single university system due to the unity of Spain and Portugal—had students who arrived from or set out for those territories, and the subjects related to those worlds were worrying and well-known to them. No European university north of the Pyrenees had such a *global* experience. So-called “Second Scholasticism” was not a simple repetition of what had already been said in the Latin Middle Ages. The irruption into the universities of a completely *modern* religious order—but not simply through being influenced by Modernity, but instead through being *one of the intrinsic causes of that very Modernity*<sup>62</sup>—the Jesuits drove the first steps of a modern philosophy in Europe.

The philosophical thought of the new *modern* order that was the Jesuits, founded in 1536, is of interest to any history of Latin American philosophy, since they arrived in Brazil in 1549 and in Peru in 1566, when the conquest and colonial institutional order had been definitively established in the Indies. They no longer called the established order into question, turning their attention instead to the two “pure” races on the continent: the Creoles (children of the Spanish born in the Americas) and the indigenous Amerindian population. Race, as Aníbal

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<sup>60</sup> *Recopilación*, 1943, vol. 1, p. 1<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Ginés, p.155.

<sup>62</sup> The Jesuits would quickly come to enjoy a near-monopoly on philosophical education in Catholic Europe, because Protestantism tended to grant greater importance exclusively to theology.

Quijano has shown, was the habitual mode of social classification in early Modernity. Mestizos and Africans did not have the same dignity. As a result, in Jesuit schools and *haciendas* there were African slaves who worked so that the benefits could then be invested in missions for Indians.

For its part, on the Iberian Peninsula there was a simultaneous development, because in reality colonial Ibero-America and metropolitan Spain and Portugal constituted a philosophical world, continually and mutually influencing one another. We will see some of those great masters of philosophy of the first early Modernity, who will then open the way to the *second* early Modernity (that of the Amsterdam of Descartes and Spinoza, the latter being a Hispanic or Sephardic Jew even by philosophical training).

In this, we cannot leave out Pedro de Fonseca (1528-1597), as one of the creators in Portugal of so-called *Baroque Scholasticism* (1550-1660).<sup>63</sup> Between 1548 and 1551 he studied in Coimbra, where he began to teach from 1552. His most famous work is the *Commentaries on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* (1577),<sup>64</sup> and his writings were published, in many editions (up to 36 times in the case of his commentary on the *Metaphysics*), in Lyon, Coimbra, Lisbon, Colonia, Venice, Mayence, and Strasbourg.

Although not Fonseca's personal work, he educated the team of Jesuits – among them Marcos Jorge, Cipriano Soares, Pedro Gomes, Manuel de Góis, and others – who proposed to completely modify philosophical exposition, to make it more pedagogical, profound, and modern, incorporating recent discoveries, critiquing old methods, and innovating in all subjects. The course went into publication in 1592, in eight volumes that concluded in 1606, under the title *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis*, a fundamental text for students and professors of philosophy alike across all of Europe (Descartes and Leibniz, for example, praised its soundness).

Descartes proposes in his famous work a reflection on method. This was the preferred subject of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Coimbrarian philosophers,<sup>65</sup> inspired by the problematic opened up by, among others, R. Agricola (1442-1485), who would influence Pedro Ramo, in his treatises in *Dialectics*, which was where method was studied. Luis Vives (1492-1540) would equally be influential on the question of method, and Fonseca himself, in his famous work *Dialectical Institutions* (1564),<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See José Ferrater y Mora, "Suárez et la philosophie moderne", en *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, v13n2 (1963): pp. 155-248. *Second Scholasticism* in its most traditional sense begins with Juan de Santo Tomás and his *Cursus philosophicum* (1648), which at any rate still enjoyed an exceptional degree of clarity and depth, but which would decline with the passing decades.

<sup>64</sup> We have consulted the *Commentariorum Petri Fonsecae in libro Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, edited by Franciscum Zanettum, Rome, 1577, with Greek text and Latin translation, as well as simultaneous commentary.

<sup>65</sup> See Miguel B. Pereira, *Pedro da Fonseca. O Método da Filosofia* (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1967), pp. 280ss.

<sup>66</sup> In Coimbra we were able to consult the *Institutionum Dialecticarum, Libri Octo*, published by Iannis Blavii, 1564. See the 1964 edition by Joaquim Ferreria Gomes under the title *Instituições Dialécticas*, Universidad de Coimbra, Coimbra. It begins: "Hanc artem,

identified “method” as “the art of reasoning about whatever probable question” (I, 2). After innovative clarifications, Fonseca indicates that “methodological order has three objectives: to solve problems, to reveal the unknown, and the clarify the confusing,”<sup>67</sup> using mathematical method as his example, which leads to a *sui generis* “topical-metaphysical essentialism,” which in some ways anticipates Descartes.

For his part, Francisco Suárez (1548-1617)—from the same order and with the same renovating impulse—represented the culmination of the work of his predecessors. He was professor in Salamanca from 1570 and also in Coimbra and Rome, and his *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (1597) can be considered the first modern ontology. He abandoned the mode of exposition of the *Commentaries* on Aristotle, and for the first time set forth a systematic book that would mark all later ontologies (we have already mentioned Baumgarten, Wolff—and through his intermediary Kant—Leibniz; but we could add moreover all those from A. Schopenhauer to M. Heidegger and X. Zubiri). He had an exemplary independence of spirit, using great philosophical masters but never confining himself to any one of them. After Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, it was Duns Scotus who most inspired him. Suárez’s work is of a systematic order. In the first 21 *Disputas*, he deals with ontology in general, and from the 28<sup>th</sup> on, as we have seen, he enters into the question of the “Infinite Being” and the “finite being.” The *Disputationes Metaphysicae*<sup>68</sup> appeared in 19 editions from 1597 to 1751, eight of these in Germany, where the work replaced for a century and a half the manuals of Melanchthon.

For his originality and possible influence on Descartes, we should also mention Francisco Sánchez (1551-1623), a Portuguese thinker who penned an innovative work entitled *Quod nihil scitur* (*That Nothing is Known*)—which appeared in Lyon in 1581 and was republished in Frankfurt in 1628—from which it is possible that Descartes took some ideas for his crowning work. In Sánchez’s work, the proposal was to arrive at a fundamental certainty by way of doubt. Fundamental science is that which can prove that *nihil scimus* (we know nothing): “*Quod magis cogito, magis dubito*” (the more I think, the more I doubt). The later development of such a science should be, firstly, *Methodus sciende* (the method of knowing); then, *Examen rerum* (the observation of things); and thirdly, *De essentia rerum* (the essence of things). As a result, although “*scientia est rei perfecta cognitio*” (science is perfect knowledge of things), in reality this is never achieved.

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qui primi invenerunt Dialecticam nominarunt, postrea veteres Peripatetici Logicam appellaverunt” (cap. 1; p. 1).

<sup>67</sup> Pereira, p. 340.

<sup>68</sup> We have consulted the *Metaphysicarum disputationem*, published by Koannem et Andream Renaut, Salamanca, 1597, whose vol.1 includes the first 27 *Disputationem*, and vol. 2 the rest up to 54. The question of “Infinite Being” and “finite being” is discussed beginning in *Disp.* 28, sect. 2, vol. 2, pp. 6 ss., From the “*opinio Scoti expenditur*” (which is perfectly coherent, since it was Duns Scotus who posed the question of the absolute in this way). The problem of the “analogy” is dealt with in sect. 3. To Suárez’s *Dialectic* we should add his *Philosophical Isagoge*, published in 1591 (with a critical reprint by Joaquín Ferreria Gomez published in 1965, University of Coimbra), which also saw 18 editions by 1623.

Similarly, Gómez Pereira—a Sephardic Jewish convert born in Medina del Campo, and later a famous doctor and philosopher who studied in Salamanca—wrote an autobiographical scientific treatise (like the *Discourse on Method*) under the strange title *Antoniana Margarita, opus nempe physicis, medicis ac theologis...* There, after he puts in doubt all certainties like the nominalists, we read that: “Nosco me aliquid noscere, et quidquid noscit est, ergo ego sum” (I know that I know something, and he who is capable of knowing something, therefore that is me).<sup>69</sup> In the philosophical environment of the 16<sup>th</sup> century a certain skepticism toward the old would open the doors to the new philosophical paradigm of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Modernity.

The influence of these authors from the South in central Europe and the Low Countries was decisive at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century: they ruptured the structure of the old (Arab-Latin) paradigm (of the Middle Ages).

#### § 4. The first philosophical anti-discourse of *early* Modernity. The critique of the Europe of the World-Empire: Bartolomé de las Casas (1514-1566)

Although he came prior to the other thinkers explained above, we have left the philosophical position of Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566) for last in order to show with greater clarity the difference between his and other positions. Bartolomé represents the *first head-on critic of Modernity*, two decades after its birth. But his originality is not to be located in Logic or Metaphysics, but rather in Ethics, in Politics, and in History. It all begins on a Sunday in November 1511, when Antón de Montesinos and Pedro de Córdoba launch in the city of Santo Domingo the first critique of the colonialism inaugurated by Modernity. On the basis of Semitic texts (from *Isaiah* and *John* 1, 23) they exclaimed: “*Ego vox clamantis in deserto [...] I am a voice [...] in the desert of this island [...] you are all amid mortal sin, and in it you live and die, for the cruelty and tyranny that you use toward these innocent victims.*”<sup>70</sup> This is an accusative *ego clamo*, which criticizes the new established order; an *I criticize* in the presence of the *ego conquirero* that inaugurated Modernity:

Are they [the Indians] not men? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not obligated to love them as you love yourselves? [...] How can you be in such a deep dream and so lethargically asleep?<sup>71</sup>

The entirety of Modernity, during five centuries, would remain in this state of “lethargy” of *ethical-political consciousness*, as if “asleep,” without “feeling”<sup>72</sup> toward the pain of the peripheral world of the South.

<sup>69</sup> See Bueno, 2005, p.328.

<sup>70</sup> B. de las Casas, *Obras escogidas* (Madrid: BAE, 1957), vol. 2, p.176.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Montesinos asks: “Do you not feel it?” (*Ibid.*). The pages which follow from the *History of the Indies* deserve a thoughtful reading (pp. 177ss). This was a moment at which Modernity could have changed its course. It failed to do so and its route was inflexibly fixed until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The astonishment of the conquistadors that their every action was unjust and morally-lacking was such that they could not believe it. The discussion was lengthy. The Dominicans had the philosophical arguments; the colonizers their unjust

Only three years afterward, and not unrelated to this critical irruption in Santo Domingo, but now in 1514 in Cuba, in the hamlet of Sancti Spiritus, and three years before M. Luther put forward his theses in Wittenberg and virtually simultaneous with Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, Bartolomé de las Casas clearly grasped the meaning of this critique. When Europe still had not awoken from the shock provoked by the "discovery" (for Europe) of an entire New World, Bartolomé had already begun his critique of the negative effects of this modern civilizational process.

In a strictly philosophical and argumentative manner, Bartolomé refutes, a) the claim of the superiority of Western culture, from which the barbarism of indigenous cultures was deduced; b) with an exceedingly creative philosophical position he defines the clear difference between, b<sub>1</sub>) granting the Other (the Indian) the universal claim of his truth, b<sub>2</sub>) without ceasing to honestly affirm the very possibility of a universal validity claim in his proposal in favor of the gospel; and finally, c) he demonstrates the falseness of the last possible cause justifying the violence of the conquest, that of saving the victims of human sacrifice, as being against natural law and unjust from all points of view. He proves all this argumentatively in his voluminous works written amid continuous political struggles, on the basis of a valiant praxis and confronting failures that do not bend his will to serve those recently-discovered and unjustly-treated inhabitants of the New World: the Other of this nascent Modernity.

The life of de las Casas can be divided into stages that allow us to discover his theoretical-philosophical development. From his arrival in the Caribbean to the day of his rupture with a life of complicity with the conquistadors (1502-1514). He was a young soldier under Velásquez in Cuba, and later a Catholic priest (ordained in Rome in 1510) on an *encomienda* in Sancti Spiritus, until April of 1514, when he read the text of *Ben Sira* 34, 20-22, in a liturgical celebration requested by governor Velásquez: "To offer in sacrifice that which is stolen from the poor is to kill the child in the presence of the father. Bread is the life of the poor, and whosoever takes it away commits murder. To take away the food of one's fellow man is to kill them; to deprive them of a the salary owed is to spill their blood."<sup>73</sup> And in an autobiographical text, Bartolomé wrote:

He began to consider the misery and servitude that those people [the Indians] suffer [...] Applying the one [the Semitic text] to the other [the reality of the indigenous Caribes] he determined within himself, convinced of the truth, that all that in these Indies was committed toward the Indians was unjust and tyrannical.<sup>74</sup>

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and tyrannical habits. In the end, the latter prevailed permanently, and it was on their basis that Modern European Philosophy was established. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century on the right of the modern Europeans (and North Americans of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) to conquer the Planet would never again be discussed.

<sup>73</sup> See my comments in Dussel, *Materiales para una política de la liberación* (Madrid-Mexico: Plaza y Valdés, 2007), pp.179-193.

<sup>74</sup> B. de las Casas, *Obras escogidas*, vol. 2, p. 356.

And that early philosopher still refers:

In confirmation of which everything he read he found favorable and he was accustomed to say and affirm, that, from the first moment that he began to reject the darkness of that ignorance, he never read in a Latin volume any reason or authority to prove and corroborate the justice of those Indian peoples, and for the condemnation of the injustices done to them, and evils and damages.<sup>75</sup>

From 1514 to 1523 Bartolomé traveled to Spain, receiving counsel from Cisneros (regent of the Kingdom), and from the King, in preparation for a peaceful community of Spanish farmers who would need to share their lives with the Indians in Cumaná (the first project for peaceful colonization), returning to Santo Domingo after the failure of this plan.<sup>76</sup> The new period (1523-1539) would be one of long years of study for Bartolomé, and the beginning in 1527 of his *History of the Indies*—a book which must be read through the optic of a new philosophy of history—as well as his monumental *Apologetic History of the Indies*, in which he begins to describe the exemplary development and the ethical life of the Amerindian civilizations, against criticisms of their barbarism:

It has been published that they were not people with sufficient reason to govern themselves, lacking humane policies and well-ordered republics [...] For the demonstration of the truth which is the opposite, [innumerable examples] are brought and compiled in this book. With regard to politics, I should say, not only did they show themselves to be very prudent peoples with sharp and notable understanding of their republics [...] prudently governed, well-equipped, and with thriving justice [...]<sup>77</sup> All these universes and infinite peoples of all types God made the simplest, without evilness or deceitfulness, extremely obedient and faithful to their natural masters, without quarrels or tumult, that there are in the world.<sup>78</sup>

He thereby proves that they were in many ways superior to the Europeans, and certainly from the ethical perspective of strict fulfillment of their own values. It is for this reason that they cannot handle—and there is great rage or sickness as a result of—the violent brutality with which the modern Europeans destroyed these “infinite peoples”:

Those who have passed through there, *who call themselves Christians* [but are not in fact] have had two general manners and principles, in eradicating and scraping off the face of the earth those pitiable nations. The one, through unjust, cruel, and bloody wars. The other, after all those who would be able to yearn or long for or think of liberty had

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357

<sup>76</sup> See Dussel, 1977, pp.142ss.

<sup>77</sup> Las Casas, *Obras escogidas*, vol. 3, pp. 3-4.

<sup>78</sup> Las Casas, *Obras escogidas*, vol. 5, p.136.

died,<sup>79</sup> all those who could escape the storms they suffer, as is the case with all natural masters and men (because commonly wars only leave women and the young alive), oppressing them with the harshest and most horrible servitude in which man or beast could ever be put.<sup>80</sup>

In 1537 – a century prior to Descartes' *Discourse on Method*<sup>81</sup> – Bartolomé writes in Latin *De unico modo* (*Concerning the Only Way of Drawing All Peoples to the True Religion*), and with this work in hand undertook peaceful preaching among the indigenous people who would later receive the name of Vera Paz in Guatemala. Of that part of the book that has reached us (only chapters five to seven),<sup>82</sup> what most calls the attention is the theoretical power of the author, his enthusiasm for the subject, and the enormous bibliography that must have been at his disposal in Guatemala City at that time. It is a breathtaking intellectual work. With exacting logic, with an extraordinary knowledge of Semitic texts – from the Greek and Latin tradition of the Church Fathers and Medieval-Latin philosophy – with an imperturbable sense of distinctions, he proceeds by wearing down arguments with a profuse quantity of citations, such that even today he would be envied as a detailed and prolific writer.

Bartolomé was 53 years old, with a population of conquistadors against him, and an indigenous Mayan world which he didn't know concretely respected as equals. This was a manifesto of intercultural philosophy, of political pacifism, and a sound and anticipatory critique of all "just wars" (like that justified by John Locke) of Modernity (from the conquest of Latin America – which extended afterward through the Puritan conquest of New England – Africa and Asia, and the colonial wars right up to the Persian Gulf War and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars of our own times). It would be useful for European and North American leaders to re-read this crowning critique at the very moment of the *critical* origin of modern thought.

The central argument is formulated philosophically in the following way:

The understanding voluntarily knows when that which it knows is not immediately manifested as true, being as a result necessary a prior reasoning in order to be able to accept that what is at stake is the case of a true thing [...] proceeding from a known thing and another unknown by way of the discourse of reason.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Note that Bartolomé is describing the "master-slave dialectic." He demonstrates, moreover, that the "pacification" of the Indies would only be possible "after all those who would be able to yearn or long for or think of *liberty* had died." Bartolomé has a clearly anticipated vision of the violence of colonialism.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137. Italics added.

<sup>81</sup> Descartes bases *modern* ontology on the abstract and solipsistic *ego cogito*. Bartolomé, on the other hand, bases the ethical-political *critique* of that ontology on the responsibility to the Other, to whom arguments are due to demonstrate the truth-claim itself. This is a paradigm founded upon Alterity.

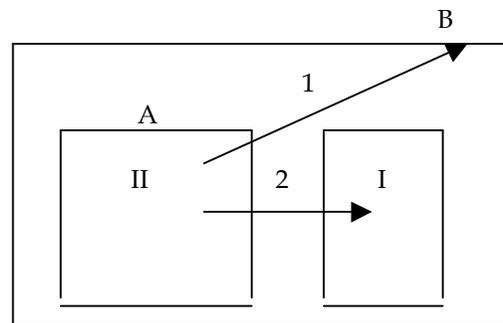
<sup>82</sup> Which come to 478 pages in the Mexican edition of 1942.

<sup>83</sup> *Del único modo*, ch. 5, 3; Las Casas, 1942, p. 81.

To accept what the Other says as true entails a practical act, an act of faith in the Other that intends to say something true, and this “because understanding is the beginning of the human act that contains the root of freedom [...]. Effectively, reason that all freedom depends on the mode of being of knowledge, is because the understanding only understands to the degree that the will desires.”<sup>84</sup> Having come some centuries before discourse ethics, Bartolomé recommended for this “to study the nature and principles of rhetoric.”<sup>85</sup> That is to say, the *only way* to attract members of a foreign culture to a doctrine unknown to them is—applying the art of persuasion (“a persuasive mode, by way of reasons in terms of understanding, and gently attractive in relation to the will”<sup>86</sup>)—to count on the free will of the listener in order that, without coercion, they might rationally accept the reasons given. It is clear that fear, punishment, the use of weapons and warfare, are the furthest possible thing from this sort of possible acceptance of argumentation.

Bartolomé is clear that the imposition of a theory onto the Other by *forcé*, by arms, was the mere expansion of “the Same” as “the same.” It was the dialectical inclusion of the Other in a strange world, as an instrument, alienated.

*The Violent Movement of the Expansion of Modernity*



*Clarifications of the figure:* I. Indigenous World. II. Modern European World. A. European ontological horizon. B. Horizon of the inclusion of the Other in the project of the modern-colonial World-Empire. 1. Violent act of modern expansion (the conquest, which situated the indigenous world I as a *thing*, an *objectum dominatum*).<sup>87</sup> 2. The act of domination by the modern over the peripheral world.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

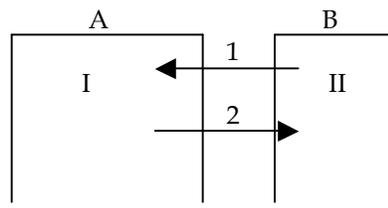
<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; p.94.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 32; pp. 303-304.

<sup>87</sup> In Descartes or Husserl the *ego cogitum* constructs the Other (in this colonial case) as a *cogitatum*, but the *ego conquiro* had already constituted this Other as a “conquered” (*dominatum*). In Latin, *conquiro* means: to seek out with diligence, investigate with care, and to gather. As a result, the *conquisitum* is that which is diligently sought. But during the Spanish Reconquest against the Muslims, the word came to mean to dominate, subjugate, to go out and recover territories for Christians. It is in this new sense that we now want to deploy the term ontologically.

To the contrary, Las Casas proposes a double act of faith: a) in the Other as other (because if the equal dignity of the Other is not affirmed and if one does not believe in its questioning then there is no possibility of rational ethical agreement); and b) in the assumption that the Other will accept the proposed new doctrine, which also demands an act of faith from that Other. For this it is necessary that the Other be free, that it *voluntarily* accept the reasons proposed to it.

*The Movement of Faith in the Word of the Other as Responsibility to the Other*



*Clarifications of the figure:* Firstly: I. Christian World (Las Casas). II. Indigenous World. A. Ontological horizon of the Christian. B. Alterity of the Other. 1. Appeal of the Other to (indigenous) justice. 2. Faith of Bartolomé in the word of the Other (the revelation of their other culture). In the second place, if the situation were inverted now, I would be the indigenous world and 1 the rational interrogation by Bartolomé de las Casas. That interrogation should have been followed by argumentation, whose *reasons* would – through the “gente motion of the will”<sup>88</sup> – allow the Other (the indigenous) (arrow 2) to accept the proposals of those who did not use weapons to propose Christianity (II: Bartolomé de las Casas).

Having practiced the peaceful method of indoctrinating the Mayans in Vera Paz, Bartolomé sets out for Spain, where thanks to many struggles he achieves the promulgation of the *New Laws* of 1542, which gradually eliminate the “*encomiendas*” throughout the Indies. This is a period of many argumentative writings in defense of the Indians: Modernity’s Other. He is named Bishop of Chiapas, but is forced to resign shortly thereafter in response to the violence of the conquistadors (not only against the Mayans, but also against the Bishop himself).

From 1547 he is based in Spain, but still crossing the Ocean on several occasions. It is there that he drafts the majority of his mature works. In 1550 he confronts Ginés de Sepúlveda in Valladolid, in *the first public and central philosophical debate of Modernity*. The perennial question to Modernity will be: What right does Europe have to colonially dominate the Indies? Once this subject is resolved – one refuted convincingly by Las Casas, but which fails categorically in the modern colonial praxis of the absolute monarchies and the capitalist system as a world-system – Modernity will *never again*, up to the present, ask existentially or philosophically for this right to dominate the periphery. Rather, this right to domination will be imposed as the nature of things and will underpin all modern

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 5, 1; p.65.

philosophy. Put differently, modern philosophy after the 16<sup>th</sup> century will be developed with the obvious and hidden—but never *rational*—need (because it is impossible and irrational) to provide an ethical and political foundation for European expansion, which doesn't contradict the imposition of said domination as an incontrovertible *fact* of having built a global system on the basis of the continuous exploitation of the periphery. The *first modern philosophy of early Modernity* still had a restless conscience toward the injustice committed, and refuted its legitimacy.

It is for this reason that we would like to return to two rational arguments that prove the injustice of the colonial expansion of Modernity. Refuting the false argument that the idols revered by the indigenous peoples could serve as cause for a war to exterminate them, Bartolomé argues the following:

Since they [the Indians] take pleasure in insisting [...] that, in worshipping their idols, they worship the true God [...] and despite the assumption that they have an erroneous consciousness, until the true God preaches to them with better and more credible and convincing arguments, above all with examples of Christian conduct, they are, without a doubt, obligated to defend the cult to their gods and their religion and use armed force against any who attempts to deprive them of that cult [...]; they are thus obligated to battle against them, kill them, capture them, and exercise all those rights which are the corollaries of a just war, in accordance with the law of peoples.<sup>89</sup>

This text demonstrates that there are many philosophical levels to analyze. What is essential is to grant the Indians a universal truth claim (since from their perspective, “they worship the *true* God”), which doesn't mean that Las Casas himself would not have the same claim (since Las Casas believes that theirs is an “erroneous consciousness”).

Las Casas grants such a claim to the Indians because they have not been given “credible and convincing arguments.” And since they have not been provided with such arguments, they have every right to assert their convictions, defending them to the point of the possibility of a just war.<sup>90</sup> In other words, the proof offered by Ginés is inverted: it isn't that their “barbarism” or their false gods justify a just war against them, but rather quite the opposite, that the fact of having “true gods” (until the opposite is proven) is what gives them reason to declare a just war against the European invaders.

The argument reaches the paroxysm of confronting the most difficult objection for a Christian, one proposed by Ginés, who justifies the war conducted by the Spanish in order to save the lives of the innocent victims of human sacrifices to the Aztec gods. Las Casas reasons in the following way:

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<sup>89</sup> Las Casas, *Apología* (Madrid: Alianza, 1989), p. 168.

<sup>90</sup> If we apply such a clear doctrine to the conquest of New England, and from there forward up to the current war in Iraq, we can see that patriots who defend their land are justified in doing so on the basis of the argument offered by Las Casas.

Men, according to natural law, are obligated to honor God with the best means at their disposal and offer them the best things as sacrifice [...]. However, it is up to human law and positive legislation to determine what things should be offered to God; the latter already confided in the entire community [...]. Nature itself dictates and teaches [...] that in the absence of a positive law ordering the opposite even human victims should be sacrificed to that God which, true or false, is considered to be true, so that by offering him the most precious thing, they show themselves to be especially thankful for so many benefits received.<sup>91</sup>

Once again we can see, as always, that by granting the Other the *claim to truth*—“false, considered [by them, until the contrary is proven] to be true”—Bartolomé arrives at what we could call “the maximum possible degree of *critical consciousness* for a European in the Indies.” This was still not the *critical consciousness* of the Indian herself, but the argument is so original that he would later confess that “I had and proved many conclusions that no man before me had ever touched upon or written, and one of these was to not oppose the law or natural reason [...] of offering men to God, false or true (holding the false as true), in sacrifice.”<sup>92</sup> With this, he concludes that the effort of Ginés to justify the conquest in order to save the human victims of sacrifice not only does not prove what it proposes to, but rather demonstrates that the indigenous—by considering these sacrifices to be the most honorable to offer, according to their beliefs (which have not been refuted with convincing arguments)—have the right, if prevented by force from carrying out such sacrifices, to engage in war, in this case a “just war,” against the Spanish.

In terms of political philosophy, moreover, and a century before T. Hobbes and B. Spinoza, Bartolomé de las Casas defines his position in favor of the law of the people (in this case the Indian people) against the prevailing institutions, and even the King himself, when these fail to fulfill the conditions of legitimacy or respect the freedom of members of the republic. On the occasion in which the *encomenderos* in Peru wanted to pay a tribute to the King for practically appropriating forever the services of the Indians, Bartolomé wrote *De regia potestate*, which should be considered alongside his *De thesauris* and the *Treatise of Twelve Doubts*. In the first of these works, he tells us:

No king or governor, however supreme, may order or mandate anything concerning the republic to the harm or detriment of the people (*populi*) or subjects, without having had their consensus (*consensus*) in licit and due form. Anything else would not be valid (*valet*) by law [...] No one can legitimately (*legitime*) [...] cause harm of any sort to the freedom of their people (*libertati populorum suorum*); if someone were to decide against the common utility of the people, without enjoying the consensus of that people (*consensus populi*), such decisions would be null and void. Freedom (*libertas*) is the most precious and admirable thing that free people can have.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Las Casas, *Apología*, pp. 155-156, 157, and 160.

<sup>92</sup> Letter to the Guatemalan Dominicans in 1563; Las Casas, *Obras escogidas*, vol. 5, p. 471.

<sup>93</sup> Las Casas, *De regia Potestate* (Madrid: CSIC, 1969), pp. 47, 49.

This threatened the King's claim to exercise absolute power. Las Casas understands clearly that the seat of power resides in the people, among the subjects—not merely between the kingdoms that signed the pact with the King or Queen of Castille—and as a result the legitimacy of political decisions was based on the prior consensus of the people. We are in the first century of early Modernity, before the consolidation of the myth of European Modernity as the obvious and universal civilization that exercises power according to universal law over the colonies and the globe (Carl Schmitt's *ius gentium europium*), a myth definitively fetishized in Hegel's *Philosophy of Law*. As Bartolomé explains:

All infidels, of whatever sect or religion they were [...] with regard to natural or divine law, and that which they call the law of peoples, justly have and possess dominion over their things [...] And also according to the same justice they possess their principalities, kingdoms, states, ranks, jurisdictions, and lordships. The regent or governor cannot be other than he who the entire society and community chose in the beginning.<sup>94</sup>

The Roman Pope and the Spanish Kings—under the obligation to “preach the gospel”—granted a “right over things” (*iure in re*),<sup>95</sup> that is, over the Indians. But Bartolomé again writes that said right only operates *in potentia*, needing the intervention of a consensus by the indigenous to operate *in actu*. Since such consent has never existed, the conquest is illegitimate, and so he correctly concludes that:

Hence the King, our lord, is obligated by the threat of being denied salvation, to restore those kingdoms to King Tito [as a surviving Inca was called], the successor and heir of Gayna Cápac and the other Incas, and grant him all force and power.<sup>96</sup>

We are dealing with the most rationally argued work of early Modernity—the first *modern* philosophy—which meticulously refuted the proofs that had been given in favor of a justification for modern Europe's colonial expansion. We are dealing, as we have tried to show, with the *first anti-discourse of Modernity* (an anti-discourse that was itself philosophical and modern), inaugurating a tradition within which there would always be representatives during the entire history of Latin American philosophy throughout the five following centuries.

This critical philosophical anti-discourse offered by Las Casas would be used by the rebels of the Low Countries to emancipate themselves from Spain in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century; it would again be re-read during the North American Revolution, the independence of the Latin American colonies in 1810, and in other processes of profound transformation that took place on the continent. Politically defeated, his philosophy would nevertheless radiate outward up to the present day.

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<sup>94</sup> *Tratado de las doce dudas*, first principle; Las Casas, *Obras escogidas*, vol. 5, p. 492.

<sup>95</sup> Las Casas, *De Thesauris*, p. 101.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

### § 5. The critique of Modernity from “radical exteriority.” The critical anti-discourse of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala

But the maximum universally-possible consciousness is the critical consciousness of the indigenous people themselves, those suffering modern-colonial domination, those whose body receives the trauma of the modern *ego conquiro* most directly. For this, nothing could be better than the touching account—the anti-discourse of Modernity properly speaking—of one Guamán Poma de Ayala. In this case, it is the victim himself who utters the critique. We will attempt to track the arguments that Guamán Poma erected against the first early Modernity.

There were three moments in which the indigenous communities suffered increasingly the process of modern-colonial domination. In the first, indigenous people suffered the horrors of the conquest, and those communities that managed to survive were enclosed within the *encomienda* system and the *mita* mining system; institutions that were the object of Bartolomé de las Casas’ frontal critique. In the second, after the so-called “Junta Magna” of Felipe II convoked to unify colonial policy, and which is headed by the Viceroy of Peru Francisco de Toledo, the messianic utopias of the Franciscans and of those struggling in favor of the indigenous communities receive the frontal shock of a new colonization project (1569). At that point a new and directly anti-Las-Casian strategy is decided upon. The counter-argument within modern rationality was orchestrated during the government of the—decidedly Eurocentric—Viceroy, who entrusted (it seems) to his cousin García de Toledo the task of writing the *Parecer de Yucay*,<sup>97</sup> in which he attempts to demonstrate that the Incas were illegitimate and tyrannical, and that as a result the Europeans were justified in carrying out the conquest and “sharing out” of the Indies, to emancipate them from such oppression. Sepúlveda’s position had been modified, but regardless, in practice, it would be imposed as a hegemonic argument. From the economic-communitarian reciprocity of the great indigenous cultures we pass to despotism; there had been a demographic catastrophe—in certain regions only one third of the population had survived—and indigenous people had abandoned their communities to wander the Viceroyalty (these being the *yanas*, from which we get the name *yanaconas*), for among other reasons not having paid tribute now demanded in silver coins.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Beginning on March 15<sup>th</sup> 1571; See *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España*, 1842, t.13, pp. 425-469.

<sup>98</sup> See Wachtel, , *La vision des vaincus* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 134ss: “La destructuration.” The author shows (in the figure on p. 184) that in Incan times, the *ayllu* (basic community) paid tributes in work and products to the *curacas* (*caciques*, or chiefs) and to the Inca; the *curaca* paid tribute to the Inca and provided services to the *ayllu*; the Inca provided services to both the *curaca* and the *ayllu*. In the Inca Empire, the wealth remained within a closed circuit. After the conquest, the *ayllu* paid tributes in silver—and one had to sell themselves for a wage to get it—to the *curaca* and to the Spaniard; the *curaca* paid tribute to the Spaniard and services to the *ayllu*; but the Spaniard provided no service to either the *ayllu* or the *curaca*. Moreover, the wealth of the Spaniard leaves the Peruvian circuit and sets out for Europe. Such a process of colonial extraction of wealth is 500 years old, this being what the now-globalized colonial system consists of, changing mechanisms but not its deeper significance as a transfer of “labor-value.”

In the third moment, under the *hacienda* regime, the *mita* system of mining, the payment of tribute in silver, and the “reductions” (of various types), the indigenous peoples ended up definitively subsumed within the structure of domination of colonial society. We would like, therefore, to situate the critique offered by Guamán in this third moment.

We will pause to discuss a dramatic account, a critical protest against the nascent modern colonialism, a final effort to save what could be salvaged of the *old order* that prevailed under the Incas, the incredible work Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala. *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno—The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, which sets out from experiences probably collected between 1583 and 1612, but written as late as 1616<sup>99</sup>—is a “testimony” of the critical interrogation of Modernity’s Other, a perspective unique in its genre, since it allows us to discover the authentic hermeneutic of an Indian, from an Incan family, written and illustrated with a splendid semiotic capacity, with an inimitable mastery.

Guamán Poma, more even than the case of the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, since he was an indigenous person with a command of the Quechua language and the traditions of his oppressed people, demonstrates aspects of the everyday life of the indigenous community prior to the conquest and modern colonial domination. In effect, Guamán Poma produces an interpretive synthesis, a critical narrative which contains an ethic and a political view rooted in a “localization” of his perspective. In the first place, he argues:

Conzedera de los yndios del tiempo de los Yngas ydulatraron como gentiles y adoraron al sol su padre del Ynca y a la luna su madre y a las estrellas sus hermanos [...] Con todo eso guardaron los mandamientos y buenas obras de misericordia de Dios en este rreyno, lo qual no lo guarda agora los cristianos.<sup>100</sup>

Consider that the Indians of the time of the Incas were idolaters like the gentiles and worshipped the sun the father of the Inca and the moon their mother and the stars their brothers [...] With all this they kept the commandments and good works of the mercy of God in this kingdom, which Christians now do not keep.

He thereby adopts the modern Christian perspective that will be critiqued, as part of a rhetorical strategy which makes his proposals more acceptable. From this perspective he sketches the past: it was idolatrous, this is true, but they fulfilled ethical obligations similar to the Christian “commandments.” The only difference is that the Indians did indeed fulfill these obligations, whereas the modern European conquistadors did not. That is, Guamán will show with reasons the *contradiction* in which Modernity lives. The domination praxis of the Spanish Christians themselves is thereby critiqued on the basis of their own

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<sup>99</sup> See Rolena Adorno, “La redacción y enmendación del autógrafo...”, en Guamán, 1980, vol. 1. pp. xxxii ss.

<sup>100</sup> Felipe Guamán, *El Primer nueva Corónica*, (Guamán Poma, 1980), vol.3, p. 854.

sacred text: the Bible. This is a closed argument which demonstrates the performative contradiction of Modernity in its totality.

We want to make clear, then, that Felipe Guamán distinguishes between the belief that we could call theoretical (or “cosmovision”) and practice or ethics properly speaking. In the time of the Incas, these people were idolaters according to their cosmovision (from the perspective of Christian dogma), but they “kept the commandments” in their ethical behavior, “which [European] Christians now do not keep.” In other words, the indigenous people were, practically, and even prior to the conquest, better “Christians” because of their practices than the Spanish Christians of “the present.” Guamán’s entire *Chronicle* is an argument against the Modernity contributed by the Spanish conquistadors in the name of the same Christianity that they preached.<sup>101</sup> Like the Creoles, the already-Christian Indian Felipe Guamán thinks that it wasn’t the Spanish that brought Christianity,<sup>102</sup> and this allows him a hybrid understanding of time and space fitting for his syncretic narrative. He unifies the Incan and Christian visions into a “grand narrative” (more than merely fragmentary like postmodern narratives) on the basis of the oppressed existence of the Indians, “the poor of Jesus Christ.” He thereby shows that he possesses his own understanding—one which is Indian, American, and which sets out from the poor, oppressed, colonial, peripheral—of Christianity itself:

I say truly that God became man and true God and poor, that if the majesty and light he brought there was anyone who would not adhere to it, then the sun he produced would not be seen<sup>103</sup> [...] And hence he ordered that they bring poverty so that the poor and the sinners might come together and speak. And hence he ordered the apostles and saints that they be poor and humble and charitable [...] This I say certainly, counting on my poverty, placing myself as poor among so many animals that eat the poor, they ate me as they eat the others.<sup>104</sup>

This entire interrogative account is constructed, normatively, from the horizon of the dialectic that is established between, a) the “*poverty, humility, and happy equilibrium of the satisfaction of primary needs*” of all in the late Incan community, against the “*wealthy, arrogance, and infinite and unsatisfied longing*” of gold and silver, the idols of nascent Modernity. This is a categorical critique of Modernity on the basis of the world that preceded it; on the basis of an ecological utopia of ethical-communitarian justice, where there existed “good government” and not

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<sup>101</sup> There are, of course, exceptions: “Consider as wise [...] those holy doctors illuminated by the Holy Spirit [...] like brother Luys de Granada [...] like reverend brother Domingo [de Santo Tomás...] many holy doctors and graduates, masters, bachelors [...] Others [in contrast] who have not even begun to write the letters a, b, c, want to call themselves graduates, dimwit, and fraud, and sign as don Beviendo y doña Calabaza,” he writes with profound humor, irony, and sarcasm (*Ibid.*, p. 855).

<sup>102</sup> In the emancipation process of the late 18th and early 19th centuries (as in the case of Brother Servando de Mier in Mexico), not owing “even Christianity” to the Spanish allowed him to deny other benefits that they might have brought to the Americas alongside the conquest and colonial administration.

<sup>103</sup> Among Incas, no one was supposed to look at the sun (*Inti*), not even the Inca.

<sup>104</sup> Guamán, *El Primer nueva Corónica*; vol. 2, pp. 845-846.

violence, theft, filth, ugliness, rape, excess, brutality, suffering, cowardice, lies, arrogance, ... death.

Guamán's *Chronicle* is divided systematically into three parts. In the first part he illustrates – with many informative novelties and using the Quechua language – the cultural-political order that existed prior to the conquest: the *ex quo* utopia. The second part describes the atrocities of Modern colonial domination on the great Incan culture, comparable in its splendor to the Roman, Chinese, or other empires celebrated as examples by European moderns. In the third part, which always begins with “*conzedérese*” (i.e. exhorting the reader to consider, ponder, analyze, and take into consideration from ethical consciousness), Guamán establishes a face-to-face with King Felipe II of Spain, to explain to him possible solutions to the disaster of colonial disorder in the Indies. This work was written a century after Machiavelli's classic work *Il principe*, but it has a global rather than a provincial Italian significance; and some forty years before *Ming-i tai-fang lu* (*Waiting for the Dawn*) by Huang Tsung-hsi (1610-1695), a Chinese political text written in 1663 giving recommendations to a young Manchú prince.

In the first part, Guamán Poma demonstrates a *sui generis* integration of chronological modern and Incan traditions, but under the framework of the dominant logic of the “five [classic] ages” of the Aztec, Mayan, or Incan worlds. Hence he sets out from the Judeo-Christian Old and New Testaments and a European historical perspective, but he progressively links up with the historical chronology of the Incas in unexpected ways. The “First world” (like the first sun of the Aztecs and Mayans) is that of Adam and Eve<sup>105</sup>; the “Second world” is that of Noah; the “Third world” that of Abraham; the “Fourth Age of the world” that since “King David”<sup>106</sup>; the “Fifth Age of the world,” which within indigenous cosmivision represents the current order, begins with “the birth of Jesus Christ.”<sup>107</sup> And this is followed by the history of “Popes” Saint Peter, Damasus, John, and Leo.

At this point in the narrative – which was up to this point purely European – the story is interrupted with an exemplary illustration:<sup>108</sup> En Guamán Poma's spatial imaginary “above,” with the mountains as horizon and the sun (*Inti*) in the sky, was Peru, with Cuzco at its center with its “four” *suyos* (four regions according to the four cardinal points). “Below” was Castille, in the center, also with “four” regions. Here Incan spatial logic is used to organize the modern European world.

Immediately thereafter Almagro and Pizarro appear with their ships, and arriving from Europe they now locate the story in Peru.<sup>109</sup> Now located in Peru through this act of the “irruption” of Modernity, the story *in the Indies* paradoxically, only now and for the first time – and without an Incan description of the origin of the cosmos, which betrays a certain degree of modern influence in this “Christianized” Indian – does the narrative of the “five ages” or

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 16.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

“generations” of Amerindian myth begin,<sup>110</sup> expressing thereby an entire complex discourse indicating the particular way in which Guamán Poma structures his hybrid “cosmovision.” In effect, the story has various levels of depth, its own bipolarities, and extremely rich signifying structures.

In the first place, everything begins anew with the “five generations” of indigenous peoples (beginning with the “four generations” from *Uari Vira Cocha Runa* to *Auca Runa*).<sup>111</sup> With the Incan Empire as the “fifth,”<sup>112</sup> Guamán then describes the twelve Incas, beginning with *Capac Ynga*. But it is interesting to note that in the reign of the second Inca, *Cinche Roca Ynga*, the two stories—the modern and the Incan—become linked, thereby placing the Incas on the same level as the Roman emperors. Guamán locates in that period the birth of “Jesus Christ in Bethlehem,”<sup>113</sup> and shortly thereafter Saint Bartolomé the apostle appeared in Peru installing the “Carabuco cross” in the province of Collao, testifying to the tradition of Christian preaching in the era of the apostles.<sup>114</sup> This method of unifying chronologies—that of modern, Western culture with that of the Incas—shows us a particular sort of historical account, that of the “meaning of history,” exemplars that teach us to attempt comparisons on the centro-peripheral *khrono-topos*, with the periphery “above” and not “below,” and where the South is the point of “localization” of discourse, the *locus enuntiationis*.<sup>115</sup>

Guamán then describes the facts, on the basis of the *dual* principle—of all cosmovisions in the Americas from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego—since after describing the Incas, he now needs to deal with the twelve “Coyan queens and ladies,” wives of the Incas,<sup>116</sup> the fifteen “captains” of the Empire,<sup>117</sup> and the four first “queen ladies” of the four parts of the Empire.<sup>118</sup> Here we can see that both the “Incan Coyas” and the “queens” of the four regions demonstrate the clear presence of women within the Andean cosmovisión: always alongside the male (the Sun), we find the woman (the Moon).

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41ss.

<sup>111</sup> Guamán, who probably belonged to a pre-Incan provincial aristocracy, idealizes the times prior to the Incas, characterizing the latter as “idolaters.” Perhaps in this way, he is able to refute the argument of Francisco de Toledo, the Viceroy, accepting certain critiques of the Incas, but not of the culture of Tawantinsuyo as a totality.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63ss.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70. “He was born in the time and reign of *Cinche Roca Ynga* when he was eighty years old. And in the time of *Cinche Roca Ynga*, he suffered martyrdom and was crucified” (*Ibid.*). The birth of Jesus Christ initiated the “fifth age” of the European-Christian chronology, but this was now connected with the Incan “fifth age” at the stage of the second Inca. As the New Testament story indicates: in the time of “Emperor Tiberius...” (*Luke*, 3,1). Guamán Poma is speaking metaphorically: “In the time of emperor *Cinche Roca Ynga*...”

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72. This period saw great cataclysms, and it is this reason that the epoch is referred as the era of the *pachacuti* (the transformer of the earth) or *pacha ticra* (the one that turns it on its head). See *Ibid.*, p.74).

<sup>115</sup> See Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Guamán, *El Primer nueva Corónica*, vol. 1, p. 99.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154. There are lists of other “queens” of every region of the Empire.

Having finished the long list of principals, Guamán describes a collection of ordinances, orders, and laws promulgated by the Incas,<sup>119</sup> like an Incan versión of “Hammurabi’s Code,” but much more complete than the Mesopotamian version, at least in terms of its more varied subject matter. The authorities of the Empire “rule and give orders” from Cuzco to the various regions, provinces, peoples, communities, the diverse governing, accounting, administration, and military structures, dealing with the construction of aqueducts and roads, of temples, palaces, and houses. These laws govern principal and secondary priests, auxiliaries, celebrations, rites, cults, traditions, gods (*huacas*); the entire manner of organizing agriculture, harvesting, taxes, the distribution of lands; as well as the ethical codes of the family, marriage, education, judges and trials, and the bearing of witness, all of which demonstrate the political complexity of the Incan civilization.

He then describes the obligations of males according to ages (which are referred to as “streets”).<sup>120</sup> He discusses the sick and those hindered from working (called the *uncoc runa*):

The blind married the blind, the lame with the lame, the mute with the mute, the midget with the midget, the hunchback with the hunchback, the cracked nose with the cracked nose [...]. And they have their farm land, houses, inheritances, and help from their service and thereby there was no need for hospitals<sup>121</sup> nor alms with this sacred order and policy of this kingdom, as no kingdom in Christendom or among infidels has had or could have no matter how Christian [they might be].<sup>122</sup>

In effect, when a male child was born in the Incan Empire he would be granted a parcel of land, which if he were not able to work another would do it in his place for his “nourishment and sustenance.” Upon death, this land would be redistributed. By right of birth the child was given not a certificate or a document, but rather *the mediation necessary to reproduce his life until death*. It is this sort of institution that Guamán refers to as nonexistent in the modern system of civilization.

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.159-167. These even include the order: “We order that the lazy and dirty pigs be punished with that the filth of their farm or home or the plates they eat on or from their head or hands or feet be washed and given to them to drink by force in a *mate*, as punishment in all the realm” (*Ibid.*, p. 164). Hygiene and cleanliness were as important as the triple commandment of: “Do not lie; do not stop working; do not steal!”

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169ss. Of warriors from 33 years of age on (although these existed from 25 to 50 years old); “of the walking elderly” (from 60 years); from 80 years; of the sick and crippled; 18-year-old youths; 12-year-olds; 9-year-olds; 4-year-olds; children who crawl; one-month-old child. Each age had its rights to begin with, and thereafter also its obligations.

<sup>121</sup> Michel Foucault would have found this Incan institution interesting.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177. Similarly, “sick, lame, and blind women, widows, hunchbacked women and midgets, had lands and crops and homes and pastures, that sustained and fed them, and so had no need for alms” (*Ibid.*, p. 197).

These same ages (“streets”) are similarly described for women.<sup>123</sup> Activities or tasks are also explained month-by-month.<sup>124</sup> Guamán explains the system of gods (“idols”), rites, sacrifices,<sup>125</sup> witchcraft ceremonies, fasts, penitences, funerals, those of the “Coya nuns” (the vestal virgins of the Sun).<sup>126</sup>

This is all followed by a “Chapter on Justice,”<sup>127</sup> containing the “punishments” that the Inca applied to those who did not follow their ordinances. There were caves (*zancay*) where poisonous animals would devour alive the enemy (*auca*), traitor (*yscay songo*), thief (*suua*), adulterer (*uachoc*), warlock (*hanpioc*), or those gossiping against the Inca (*ynca cipcicac*), etc. There were also lower prisons, floggings, hangings, and the hanging of the guilty by the hair until death, etc.

There were also great celebrations,<sup>128</sup> sacred as well as profane, “love songs” (*haray harai*),<sup>129</sup> with beautiful music and dance from all regions of the empire. He describes the massive palaces—always accompanied by impressive illustrations—by city, the large merchandise depots, the statues, the Incan trails, the types of gifts. Finally, Guamán describes some political functions<sup>130</sup>: the viceroy (*Yncap rantin*), the mayor of the court, the greater sheriff, the magistrate (*tocricoc*), administrator (*suyucoc*), messengers (*chasqui*), and the “boundary placers” (*sayua cchecta suyoyoc*) who confirmed the land that each held, that of the Inca, and that of the community. Moreover, he goes to some length explaining the royal roads,<sup>131</sup> the hanging bridges, etc., and concludes discussing the secretaries of the Inca, the accountant and treasurer (with his *quipoc*: a text written in knotted cords, with which he carried out measurement and memorized numbers, taxes, debts, etc.),<sup>132</sup> inspector, and royal counsel.

This testimony concludes its first part with an interrogation:

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190ss.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 219ss. At the end of the work there is a very valuable description of the “works” properly speaking of campesinos (*Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 1027), where Guamán corrects a bit his first description “from above,” from the Incan festivals.

<sup>125</sup> These were certainly human sacrifices, some of “five-year-old children” (*Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 241), others of twelve-year-olds or adults.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 272ss.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 275ss.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 288ss.

<sup>129</sup> Of which this work has left testimonies which are not found in any other Quechua source (*Ibid.*, pp. 288ss).

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 312ss.

<sup>131</sup> I recall in my youth climbing mountains of some 6500 meters in height in Uspallata, in a long valley, and soon we crossed a path that was absolutely straight, to the horizon (perhaps some 30 kilometers). We were told: this is the Incan Road, some 4,000 kilometers from Cuzco. In effect, as Guamán says: “With every league and a half marked with milestones, each road four rods in width and with a straight line of stones placed on both sides, which no kings on earth have made like the Inca” (*Ibid.*, 355 [357]; p.327). I have seen in the Mediterranean the stone roads of the Roman Empire, from the north of Africa to Palestine, Italy, and Spain. None was as “straight” as that of the Incas.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 332-333, where we can see a sketch of this predecessor of the modern abacus.

Christian reader, you see here the entire Christian law.<sup>133</sup> I have not found the Indians to be as careful with gold or silver, nor have I found anyone who owed one hundred pesos, or a liar, or a gambler, or anyone lazy, or a male or female prostitute [...] You say that you must restore; I don't see you restoring in life or death. It seems to me, Christian,<sup>134</sup> that you are all doomed to hell [...] In arriving in this land, it was then against the poor Indians of Jesus Christ [...] As the Spanish had idols as written by the reverend father friar Luys de Granada [...], the Indians like barbarians and gentiles wept for their idols when they were smashed in the time of the conquest. And you have idols on your haciendas and silver from the world over.<sup>135</sup>

This was a fierce critique of the new fetishism of modern capitalism, which would sacrifice the humans of the South and nature to a new god: the increase in the profit rate (capital). Guamán sees this and describes it clearly.

In the second part of his *magnum opus*, Guamán begins, systematically, to show the Christianity that is preached and the perverse praxis of early Modernity. This is a most ruthless, ironic, and brutal description of the violence of the first expansion of modern Western culture. He begins the story with the question the Inca Guaina Capac puts to Candía, the first Spaniard to arrive to Peru:

And he asked the Spaniard what it is that he ate; he responded in the Spanish language and with gestures indicating that he ate gold and silver. And [ancina] gave large quantities of gold dust and silver and gold plates.<sup>136</sup>

From that point onward, it was all an anxious search for "gold and silver": "They all said: Indians, gold, silver, gold, silver from Peru."<sup>137</sup> Even musicians sang the ballad *Indians, Gold, and Silver*:

And as a result of this gold and silver part of this kingdom is already depopulated, the poor Indian peoples for gold and silver.<sup>138</sup> [...] That is how the first men were; he did not fear death through interest in gold and silver. But it is those of this life, the magistrates, priests, and *encomenderos*. With the avarice of gold and silver they are going to hell.<sup>139</sup> [...] How the Indians wandered lost without their gods and *aucas* and

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<sup>133</sup> By this he means: one can already see in the customs of the Incas all the beauty and value of the best of the modern Christian ethic, which they preach... but do not obey.

<sup>134</sup> This is the reproach of a "Christian" Indian.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 342.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* ..

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* This "depopulation" owed to the violence of the conquest, the destructuration of the Incan agricultural system (e.g., the Incas maintained the aqueducts, up to 400 kilometers in length, in perfect conditions, amid mountains, with stone bridges, etc.; the European colonial world allowed the destruction of the entire hydraulic system, constructed over more than 1,000 years); and especially illnesses unknown to the indigenous race.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

their kings, their great masters and captains. At this time of the conquest there was neither God of the Christians nor King of Spain, nor was there justice.<sup>140</sup>

The primitive accumulation of capital—of Modernity itself—had begun its destructive expansion as a predatory world-system. After the initial chaos and violence begins the period of “good government” – which Guamán writes with irony –beginning with Viceroy Mendoza, since he writes:

[...] Poor useless and pusillanimous idiots were the Spanish, as arrogant as Lucifer. From Luzbel Lucifer, the great devil, was made. That is how you are, that I fear that you want to hang yourselves and take off your own head and dismember yourselves and hang yourselves like Judas and throw yourselves into hell. What God orders, you want to be more. If you are not king, why do you want to be king? If you are neither prince nor duke nor count nor marquis nor knight, why would you want to be? If you are a *pichero* or a shoemaker or a tailor or a Jew or Moor, do not rise up with the earth, but instead pay what you owe.<sup>141</sup>

Guamán discovers the process through which the *ego conquiro*—this expanding, self-centered subjectivity—passes, wildly overcoming all limits in its arrogances, until it culminates in the *ego cogito* based on God himself, as his own mediation to reconstruct the world under his control, at his service, for his exploitation, and among these the populations of the South.

And Guamán progressively describes one by one the public offices and how they oppress, rob, punish, and violate Indian men and women, such that “they lose the land and the kingdom will end up empty and uninhabited and the king will be very poor.”<sup>142</sup> And since the first period of the presidents and magistrates of the “very Christian”<sup>143</sup> audiences, “it has never been found that they have ruled in favor of the poor Indians. They come first to burden the Indians even more and to favor the neighbors and the rich and the miners.”<sup>144</sup> Guamán feels particularly scandalized by the way in which the authorities, and even the Spanish residents and slaves, use the wives of the Indians, since “they keep stealing their *haciendas* and fornicate with the married women and deflower the maidens. And as a result they find themselves lost and become prostitutes and give birth to many little *mestizos*<sup>145</sup> and the Indians do not reproduce.”<sup>146</sup> The

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 405.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

<sup>143</sup> Note the irony: Bartolomé de Las Casas also said “they call themselves Christians,” the same that Guamán says here. “Christians from the mouth outward,” but true “demons from the mouth inward,” as with George W. Bush’s proposal to spread “democracy” to Iraq. Modernity is always identical to itself.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453.

<sup>145</sup> Guamán is particularly scornful of “*mestizos*,” whom he deems “*mesticillos*” [Tr: “little *mestizos*”].

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 468. One of Guamán’s obsessions is that “the Indians of this kingdom will cease to exist first” (*Ibid.*, p. 483), since the female Indians are snatched away from their natural partners. Among the miners, the Spanish take “the women of the Indians [... by]

Spanish—and especially the “Christian *encomendero* of the Indians of this kingdom”<sup>147</sup>—are criticized for their actions, which show a special sadism, since “they punish the poor of Jesus Christ in the entire kingdom.”<sup>148</sup> Guamán thereby dismantles one by one the injustices of the entire colonial political and economic order of Modernity. The Church does not escape his accurate, ironic, and acute criticism either.<sup>149</sup> He collects still more documents regarding the various “treaties” and “sentences,” to give examples of the unjust oppression that is practiced on the Indians.<sup>150</sup>

Regarding the Indians that collaborated with the conquistadors, he termed them “*mandoncillos*,” or “little bosses,” who often without being from Inca families pass for nobles for the simple fact of ruling in the name of the Spanish. There were Incas, “principal” leaders, who had under their orders a thousand tributary Indians (*quranga curaca*), or five hundred, or a “greater boss” with one hundred, or a “little boss of fifty Indians,” or of only five or ten.<sup>151</sup> There are also those *curacas* who run mines and stores. There were exploiters, thieves, drunks, liars, fakers, highway bandits, “who steal the *haciendas* of the poor Indians.”<sup>152</sup> As always, this is followed by a list of “women, queens, and Coyas,” the wives of the “little bosses,” which he calls “madam,” or “*doña*.”<sup>153</sup> To top it all off, the Christian Indians put into power by the Spanish, the collaborators, whose role is to impart “justice”<sup>154</sup> given the generalized corruption—which was not permitted during Incan times—do not always fulfill their functions

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force and take them away [from their husband] and deflower them, and they rape the women of their foremen, sending their husbands to the mines at night or sending them far away” (*Ibid.*, p. 489). By the way, the suffering of the Indians in the mines, in the *tambos*, would be unimaginable (see pp. 488-505). He further characterizes the Spanish men and women as short, fat, lazy, arrogant, and sadistic in their treatment of domestic Indians (pp. 506-515): “Before you are against the poor of Jesus Christ” (*Ibid.*, p. 515).

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 519ss.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 523. “And similarly with the women, because they tame them and save them for themselves [de la taza y servicios personales] [...] And they fornicate with the maidens and widows” (*Ibid.*, p. 526).

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 533ss. “The Indian women become whores and nothing can be done. And so they don’t want to marry because they are following the priest or the Spaniard. And so the Indians of this kingdom do not reproduce, but instead mestizos and mestizas and nothing can be done” (*Ibid.*, p. 534). The critique of the Church and the clerics reaches p. 663 (702 [716]), being one of the institutions that he specifically focuses on. In a sense, it is only the Franciscans and especially the Fathers of the Company of Jesus who come off well. This demonstrates a long-term hypothesis in the ideological history of Latin America. See p. 603ss, and something earlier on p. 447: “If only the clerics and Dominicans, Mercedarians, and Augustinians were like these so-called fathers of the Company of Jesus, who do not desire to return to Castilla rich nor to have a hacienda, but for whom wealth is measured in souls!”

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 670-687.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 688ss.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 736. Guamán belonged to a family of Yarovilcas, local bosses who preyed on the Incas (see *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 949). Fake *curacas*, collaborators with the Spanish, had forced them off their lands. It is for this reason that Guamán despised these “little bosses,” *curacas* who were not nobles but “faked it.” On his mother’s side, he might have been linked to a secondary Incan lineage.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 707ss.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 739ss.

Finally, Guamán confronts the Indians themselves, those poor members of the population:

If the priests of the doctrines and the mentioned magistrates and *encomenderos* and Spanish would permit it, there would be saints and great lettered and very Christian men [among the Indians]. But said officials all obstruct this with their treatment.<sup>155</sup>

That the Indians remain good and “political” they owe more to the memory of their old customs and despite all of the extortions that the conquistadors exercise on them. Modernity, in this case, is the cause of corruption and destruction. Now, Guamán describes the beliefs, “from below,” from the indigenous peoples (as previously he had described the gods and the *uacas* of Incan times): from crucified Christ, the Trinity, Saint Mary and other saints, purgatory, devotions, baptism, and alms. Despite so many truths, the communities were now full of poor who were begging for alms (there didn’t exist the possibility for beggars, as we have seen, during Incan times):

For this, the inspectors of the holy mother Church are guilty of not visiting the poor, sick, crippled, lame and one-handed and old and blind, the orphans of all peoples.<sup>156</sup>

This shows great misery among the Indians, a misery which was impossible in the times of the Inca. The situation of the Indian had visibly worsened with the presence of Modernity. Hence appeared the “Creoles and Creole Indians, Indians born into this life of the time of Christians,” who are easily corrupted because they have lost their community; they become Hence appeared the “Creoles and Creole Indians, Indians born into this life of the time of Christians,” who are easily corrupted because they have lost their community; they become *yanaconas*,<sup>157</sup> drunks, cocaine addicts, and “the most Christian, even if he knows how to read and write, carrying the rosary and dressed like a Spaniard, with a collar, appears holy, [but] when drunk talks to demons and reveres the [pre-Columbian tombs known as] *guacas*.”<sup>158</sup> As a result, there is no shortage of “Indian philosophers, astrologers that know the hours and Sundays and days and months, years, to sow and collect the foods every year [...]”<sup>159</sup> Our critic ends his description of the lamentable state of the Indies by indicating that “he the author walked in the poor world with the rest of the poor Indians to see that world and manage to write this book and chronicle, to serve God and his Majesty and the good of the poor Indians of this kingdom.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 764.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 791.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 803.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 809.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 830.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 845.

In the third part, from the utopia of the past<sup>161</sup> and the negativity of the disastrous present, Guamán now imagines a future project of “good government,” from the utopian future horizon of the “City in the sky for the good sinners”<sup>162</sup> and of the “City of Hell”<sup>163</sup> [...for] the avaricious, ungrateful, lustful, arrogant, punishment for the arrogant sinners and the rich who fear not God.”<sup>164</sup> The argument occupies the first part (“Consideration of the Christian of the world that God exists” [que ay Dios]<sup>165</sup>). Understand that here, Modernity is located “in hell.”

This is followed by the “question chapter,”<sup>166</sup> where he argues within a densely rational political logic, confronting a critical reader regarding the gravest problems that he has progressively discovered in the colonial world of Modernity, narrated in his *Chronicle*. He places questions in the mouth of the Spanish King, hurled at the “author” (Guamán), which deserve to be dealt with individually, but for limits of length, we cannot discuss them here. Finally, he sadly describes “the world [to which] the author returns,” his poor point of departure, the people “of the poor of Jesus Christ,” after they have passed more than thirty years, the time in which he traveled all over Peru, to inform the King of Spain and propose corrections for such disorder. These possible “corrections” are deemed “Considerations,” and like all of Guamán’s work, these proposals are framed within a horizon that derives its meaning from a profound cosmic wisdom, setting out from the beginning: “God created the sky and the whole world and all that is in it.”<sup>167</sup> Then, he divides time into ten ages with “Peru” – neither Modernity nor Judeo-Christianity – as its axis. These include the already discussed ages – from the Uari Vira Cocha to the Auca Runa – the fifth of the incas; the sixth of the *Pachacuti Ruma* (the age in which everything was turned “upside-down” and “stood on its feet”: here we are dealing with a cosmic revolution prior to the conquest); the seventh, which refers to this very

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<sup>161</sup> There still exists, it would seem, a double-past. There is that of the Inca, which is frequently adopted as a reference-point. But at times we can sense a degree of criticism of Incan domination from the perspective of those regions further from Cuzco (to which Guamán himself belonged), and this is why we read: “The fourth *Auca Runa*, were people of little knowledge but were not idolaters. And the Spanish were of little knowledge but were from the beginning idolatrous gentiles, as were the Indians from the time of the Inca” (*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 854). It would seem that, for Guamán, the greatest civilizational development involved idolatry, which was not the case for the more simple peoples lacking in mutual domination, as were the civilizations prior to the Incan Empire. “The ancient Indians up to the fourth age of the world called the *Auca Runa* looked to heaven [...] The Indians of the time of the Incas were idolatrous like the gentiles and worshipped the sun-father of the Inca” (*Ibid.*, p. 854).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88. He writes: “The city of God and of poor men that kept their word.” Into this city, very few Spanish – but all the poor Indians, the “poor of Jesus Christ” – entered.

<sup>163</sup> Interestingly, he uses the historico-political categories of Augustine of Hippo.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 882. Our author comments: “Consider the patience of the Indian men and women in this life of so many evils of the Spanish, the priests, the magistrates and mestizos and mulattos, the blacks, the *yanaconas* and *chinchonas* who take the lives and the entrails of the Indians. Consider this.”

<sup>165</sup> This is the title of the final “Table” (*Ibid.*, s.n. [1186]; vol. 3, p. 1067). This subject is discussed beginning at *Ibid.*, vol.3, p. 852.

<sup>166</sup> From *Ibid.*, p. 896.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 852.

“Christian conquest of the *runa*,” the Indians; the eighth that of the wars between the conquistadors in Peru; the ninth that of “Christian justice, well-being” (read this expression in an ironic sense), of the first colonial era; and the tenth, the imposed colonial order.

Guamán begins from the framework of the origin and the process of the “universo” (*pacha*) with a first “consideration”: the service to the “wandering and sick poor people” which fulfills “the old law and God’s law,”<sup>168</sup> with the *corpachanqui* (“You must give them lodging!”). “Works of mercy” are the final criterion of Guamán’s argument: compassion toward the weak, the sick, the poor. In this ethical and political demand the “old law” of Peru and the best of Christianity—as reinterpreted by our “author”—coincide. Effectively, Guamán had a messianic interpretation of Christianity, an explicit anticipation of Liberation Theology:

Jesus Christ died as a result of the world and man. He suffered tortures and martyr [...]. He walked this life poor, persecuted. And after the day of judgement he will come [...] to pay the despised poor.<sup>169</sup> [...] The first priest on earth was God and live man, Jesus Christ, a priest who came from heaven poor and loved the poor man more than the rich. It was Jesus Christ living God who came to take souls and not silver from the world [...] Saint Peter [...] left everything to the poor [...] And all [the apostles] were poor and asked not for a salary nor rent nor looked for *haciendas*.<sup>170</sup>

In sum:

He who defends the poor of Jesus Christ serves God. This is the word of God in his gospel and defending the Indians of your Majesty serves your royal crown.<sup>171</sup>

Moreover, he advocated structuring institutions with a certain degree of unity, since in the earlier times, everything was understood because it was under the paternal power of a *single Inca*, while in the disorder of colonial Modernity “there are many *Incas*: the *Inca* magistrate, his twelve assistants are *Incas*, the brother or son of the magistrate and his wife and scribe are *Incas* [...]”<sup>172</sup> It was also necessary to be conscious of the fact that, with the presence of the Europeans, everything got worse for the Indians: “conzider that the Yndians [now] have many lawsuits [pleyto/pleito] in this life. In the time of the Yncas there were none.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Once again there is reference to a “law” prior to the Incas: “How the *first* Indians, although the Incas were idolaters, had faith and commandments from their gods and law and maintained and obeyed this good work” (*Ibid.*, p. 857). Guamán even criticized the Incas from the perspective of these original utopian times, since he himself was not from an Inca family, but rather a nobility dominated by the Incas.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 876.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 899.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 906.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 857.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*.

But the most significant political argument for “good government” consisted in the “restoration of power” to the Incas:

What you need to consider is that all the world belongs to God and hence Castille [is] of the Spanish and the Indies belongs to the Indians and Guinea belongs to the blacks. That each of these is legitimate owners, not only by law [...] And the Indians are the natural owners of this kingdom, and the Spanish natural [owners] of Spain. Here in this kingdom, they are strangers, *mitimays*.<sup>174</sup>

On the basis of the Incan understanding of global geopolitical spatiality, Guamán attempts to justify his project by counting strategically on the support of the Spanish King. Just as in the past the Inca Empire had been the “center” of the universe (*Pacha*), its “Navel” (*Cuzco*), from which the “four parts” of the world extend outward (in the direction of the four cardinal points, as in China or among the Aztecs in the “altepētł”), taking the shape of a “cosmic cross”; so too he now proposed, extrapolating from these imaginary geopolitical structures in a more global world, situating King Felipe of Spain in the “center,” with his “four parts” or kingdoms (the Incas, who reestablished power over all the Americas; the Christians around Rome; the Africans of Guinea; and the Turks up to Greater China).<sup>175</sup> A “monarch of the world” with “four” kingdoms (a globalized projection of the Inca Empire, but at the same time proposing – as did Bartolomé de las Casas – the restoration of the autonomy of the Incas, even if this be “under the *world hand*”<sup>176</sup> of the Spanish King): “Because he is Inca and King, so that another Spaniard or priest does not need to enter because the *Inca* was owner and legitimate king.”<sup>177</sup> A project of future political liberation is thereby clearly glimpsed, our present “second emancipation” (the first was partially completed in 1810, and the second includes the emancipation of the indigenous peoples, announced by Evo Morales in Bolivia, an Aymara rather than a Quechua like Guamán).

Were such a “restitution” impossible, it was necessary to think of a multitude of measures, on all levels of the administrative, political, ecclesiastical, military, sexual, and educational structures, etc., that Guamán sets himself to describing

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 857-858.

<sup>175</sup> “You must consider what great majesty the *Ynga Topa Inga Yupanqui*, King of Peru, enjoyed [... like that enjoyed by] the kings and princes, emperors of the world, as well as Christians like the Great Turk and the Chinese King, Roman emperors and of all Christianity and of the Jews and the King of Guinea” (*Ibid.*, p. 888). The Inca was a king on the same level of those described by other cultures, and moreover, the “Inca had four kings of the four parts of this kingdom” (*Ibid.*). Our author now proposes a new project: “For being monarch, King Felipe [below whom there would be four lesser kings:] To the first, I offer my child, a prince of this kingdom, grandson and great-grandson of *Topa Inga Yupangi* [here reproducing a bit the project of Torquemada’s *The Indian Monarchy*...]. The second, a prince of the King of Guinea, black; the third, of the King of the Christians in Rome [...]; the fourth, the King of the Moors of the Great Turk, the four crowned with their sceptres and [tuzones]” (*Ibid.*, p. 889).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 889.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 858.

with infinite patience in these “considerations.” As an example, one final quotation:

Consider that the magistrate enters saying: “I will do justice for you,” and steals. And the priest enters: “I will make you a Christian. I will baptize you and marry you and teach you,” and he steals and pulls to pieces and takes away wife and daughter. The *encomendero* and other Spaniards say: “Justice, let it serve the King because I am his vassal.” And they rob and pilfer whatever one has. And even worse are the Indian [*caciques*] and bosses; they tear everything away from the poor and unfortunate Indians.<sup>178</sup>

Adorno and Horkheimer in San Diego did not express as clearly this darkest face of Modernity, not in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. As a result, after these dramatic “considerations,” Guamán passes to the second of fifteen organized points that the “author” puts in the mouth of King Felipe. The second of these reads:

“Tell me, don Felipe Ayala, in that time, how were there so many Indians in the times of the *Inca*?” I tell your Majesty that in those times the only king was the *Inca* [...] But he lived [*viviase*] in the law and commandments of the *Incas*. And since there was a king, they served restfully in this kingdom and multiplied and had their *haciendas* and food to eat and children and wives of theirs.<sup>179</sup>

In the fifth question, the King inquires:

“Tell me, autor, how will the Indians become rich?” You must know your Majesty that they need to have communal *haciendas* that they call *sapci*, sowing corn and wheat, potatoes, peppers, *magno*, cotton, vineyards, handicrafts, dying, *coca*, fruit trees.<sup>180</sup>

“Good government” would consist—by members of Modernity—and would be completely summarized by, “all Spanish living like Christians.”<sup>181</sup> But if this were to occur in Modernity as such it would collapse, there would be no accumulation of wealth in the core. So we see that Guamán, like Karl Marx, organizes his argumentative strategy according to the same principle as the critic from Trier: to place he who claims to be a Christian in a clear performative

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 893.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 896. “Tell me autor, how is it that the Indians now do not multiply and become poor? I will tell your Majesty: Firstly, that they do not multiply because all the best women and maidens are taken by the priests, the *encomenderos*, the magistrates and spanish, the foremen, lieutenants, and the officials raised by them. And as a result there are so many little mestizos and little mestizas in this kingdom. With the pain of telling you [*mancebando*] they steal the women from the haciendas of the poor [... The Indian] would rather die than find himself in such pain” (*Ibid.*, pp. 897-898).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 898.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 902.

contradiction between his perverse actions and the ethics dictated by Christianity itself.<sup>182</sup>

What world did the “author” discover upon returning to his people?:

Having served your Majesty for thirty years, he found everything ruined, entering his houses and fields and pastures. And he found his sons and daughters naked, serving *pichero* Indians. And he did not recognize his children and nieces and nephews and relatives because they had become so old; they appeared eighty years old, all pale and thin and naked and barefoot.<sup>183</sup>

And this is not all, since his work, his *Chronicle*, would end up entombed in a European library in Copenhagen until 1908. The world of the poor “Indians,” the “poor of Jesus Christ” in full-blown Modernity, would have to wait centuries for justice to be done...

## § 6. Conclusions

We could still consider the thought and wisdom of the indigenous people of the Americas themselves, who were not impacted by Christianity (as was the case with Guamán Poma). They represent a critical “future reserve” as a result of their radical exteriority, but here we will leave off to not go on at great length.

Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala appears to have completed his *Chronicle* in 1616. One year earlier, the young René Descartes abandoned his nearly 20 years of study in the Jesuit school at La Flèche. No one knew or could have known about this original philosopher of an entire peripheral and colonial world founded by Modernity. Descartes’ future *ego cogito* would constitute a *cogitatum* which—among other *beings* at its disposition—would situate the corporality of colonial subjects as exploitable machines, like those of the Indians on the Latin American *encomienda*, *mita*, or *hacienda*, or the African slaves on the “big house” of plantations in Brazil, the Caribbean, or New England. Behind Modernity’s back these colonial subjects would have their “human being” taken away from them forever, until today.

If the suspicion that we have attempted to introduce were true, it would shed significant light on new investigations regarding the meaning of philosophical Modernity. If Modernity does not commence philosophically with Descartes, and if he should be considered instead as the great thinker of the *second moment* of

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<sup>182</sup> Marx’s text to which we refer says the following: “To the [Lutheran German] State which professes Christianity as its supreme norm, which professes the Bible as its Magna Carta, we must contrast the Words of the Sacred Scripture which, as such Scripture, is sacred even to the letter [for Lutherans]. This State [...] falls into painful *contradiction*, irreducible on the plane of religious consciousness, when confronted by those evangelical maxims which not only does it not obey, but which it cannot obey.” In Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” *Marx Engels Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956), vol 1, pp. 359-360.

<sup>183</sup> Guamán, *El Primer nueva Corónica*, vol. 3, p. 1008.

early Modernity – when the concealment, not of Heideggerian “being” but rather “colonial being,” had already occurred – then an entire process of *philosophical decolonization* needs to be undertaken. 17<sup>th</sup>-century Holland centered on Amsterdam, that of the East Indian Company, would be a world which emerged after the crisis of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish Kings and the empire of Carlos V (Wallerstein’s world-empire), which opened up to Europe the broad horizon of the first, colonialist, capitalist, Eurocentric, modern *world-system*. The 1637 of the publication of the *Discourse on Method* in the Low Countries – from an order already dominated by the triumphant bourgeoisie – would not be Modernity’s origin but rather its *second moment*. The solipsistic paradigm of consciousness, of the *ego cogito*, inaugurates its overpowering, crushing development through all later European Modernity and would be modified many times, in Hume, Kant, Hegel, J. P. Sartre, or P. Ricoeur.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this Modernity would be radically critiqued by E. Levinas who, setting out from the fifth of Edmund Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*,<sup>184</sup> attempts to open himself to the Other, and also to the other of European Modernity... but still within Europe. The Jewish holocaust would be, anyway, an irrational, intra-European disaster, far from the Enlightenment, as discussed by Adorno and Horkheimer. However, neither Levinas himself, nor any of the three generations of the Frankfurt School, manage to overcome Modernity, since they failed to recognize the coloniality of the exercise of Western power. Levinas remains inevitably Eurocentric, despite discovering the irrationality of the totalization of modern subjectivity, since he could not situate himself in the exteriority of metropolitan, imperial, and capitalist Europe.

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<sup>184</sup> A close reading of this *V Meditation* would be worthwhile, on the “Description of the transcendental sphere of the being as monological intersubjectivity” (§§ 42ss, of Husserl, 1963, pp. 121ss), in which the philosopher from Freiburg attempt to move beyond the *ego cogito*, when he deals with the question “of the Other” from the perspective of the “common life-world” (*der gemeinsamen Lebenswelt*) (§ 58, p. 162), setting out from the need to “admit that it is in me that the others as others are constituted” (§ 56, p. 156). For his part, Sartre will not be able to completely overcome the aporia represented by “the gaze” (*Le regard*) (Sartre, *L’être et le néant*, III, 1, iv; 1943, pp. 310ss), through which “the Other” is constituted as an irremediable object. The Other, for its part, similarly constitutes me as an object: “La personne est présente à la conscience en tant qu’elle est objet pour autrui” (*Ibid.*, p. 318).

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