

ON THE PAPERS BY GARETÓN AND DOS SANTOS

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A NECESSARY WARNING

I am most honored with the invitation to take part in this Symposium but I can't help feeling uneasy as a commentator of these two papers written by such distinguished social scientists. I am a geographer, and used to direct my worries to the man's role in connection with the natural spheres, in the fields of climate, geomorphology and environmental quality. But I must also admit that, since a long time, geographers have been forced to open their minds beyond the concreteness of the spatial territoriality to penetrate the intricate web of the abstract spaces of Economics. Some of us have discarded environmental determinism in favor of the economic one. In this way, if I am not totally ignorant of the area, I am not a specialist in the proposed theme of this scientific meeting. Nevertheless, I was told that one of the targets of this symposium was to formulate an interdisciplinary view, which may justify my presence.

I SOME POSSIBLE REMARKS

The reading of (and now listening to) the two papers brought to my memory an essay, written in 1990 by the Brazilian political scientist Francisco Weffort, under the title "The Wrong America". At the beginning I was horrified with the cruel portrait he had given from our Latin America but, at the end, the author addresses the reader with this question: "Is there any place for some hope?" And then, he himself states: "I do believe the answer is yes". And the reason for his belief was based on *Change, Internal Change*.

Professor dos Santos' paper has much to do with the portrait depicted by Weffort. The protruded analysis of the American imperialism on the focus of "dependence" theory, made by Santos, conducts us to the Weffort's opinion that, since the 1980's, the only important link we keep with the rich developed countries is the one of "debts". In some way, the weight of the resentment has driven him to stop in a past position (a close one but past), stopping at the threshold of the present moment and effective problem. If not totally pessimistic, his mood is, at least, skeptical. Professor Garretón avoided the ideological speech and conducted his analysis

if not to a borderless optimism but, clearly, in a realistic way. As he pointed out, from close past and present day, “There is an accumulated experience that allows us to critically view the voids and disarticulations which structural adjustment had left behind in the social and political areas, at the same time having the capacity of the social actors been extremely limited.”

Under this highlight his paper has put, side by side, both “Market Economy” and “New State-Relations” in Latin America. And Change is a must concerning the second one.

These differences between the two social scientists may be a consequence of the Brazilian and Chilean peculiarities, if one considers the (permanent) differences in territorial space and (present) economic achievements between our two countries. This fact demonstrates how Latin America is a good example of “unity in diversity”. It is my belief that, altogether, the two papers gave a quite satisfactory picture of the Latin American situation.

In such a way, I dare to present here a few remarks which, by no means, try to correct or disapprove whatever was said by the two colleagues, but only to remember some possible unfocused connections and mainly to underline some important highlights in both papers.

Due to the limited time available, my topics are reduced to the following:

1. On the subject of the re-thinking and new formulations on the (qualitative) concepts of *Democracy* and *Development* I wish to underline that in Latin America the “excluded” people, hunted by bad professional politicians are wanted as *Clients* but socially discarded, or not considered, as *Citizens*. In such a way it is difficult to consider a *Civil Society* driving the democratic processes.
2. The virtual disappearance of the so-called “New Social Movements”, so important during the 1960’s, shows two side-effects, concentrated as urban problems: a) a negative one such as the irruption of violence (robbery, plundering, highjacking or kidnapping); b) the peaceful stemming of the so-called “parallel or informal economy”, not considered in the official statistics.
3. The social problem of “exclusion” is connected – at least in the large territorial countries – with the geographical problem of the wide regional disparity in level of development.
4. The development of a new economic macro-pole in the Far East is not to be con-

sidered only as an economic novelty. For Latin America it is a chance to encounter new allies or partners as there is no more time for helpers or donors. Also, from the cultural point of view, it is important for the whole Western world. We have lots of things to learn from Eastern cultures and philosophies.

5. The re-birth of Geopolitics in the present world of technological high level of communication demonstrates the absurd of the idea about the “*End of History*”. Instead of an end the present world is on a threshold that requires an extraordinary vitality. This fact leads me to the following conclusion.

II A GEOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW AND INTERPRETATION OF THE PROBLEM OF “MARKET ECONOMY”

Since “MARKET ECONOMY” has become such a pervasive matter, both in academic speech and in mass media, in my position as a “laic” in the problem, I was so surprised because I always considered that “market” was something like a sine qua non condition to Economy. But in a short time I realize that the use and abuse of this term have the same similarity to what was happening with that geographical one of “*Greenhouse Effect*” transformed by mass media, from this basic mechanism of heat exchange in our atmosphere, in a terrifying “dragon of evil”.

This very morning, in our previous session, our colleague from Singapore – Professor Seah – in his brilliant text clarifies the question. As a matter of fact *Market Economy* (as well as *Greenhouse Effect*) is an “old wine which was being poured into new jars”. No doubt that the jars are new because the clay they are made of is being smashed under terrible pressure of the turmoil of our present world. Man’s activities are disturbing the heat balance between earth and sun. The improvement of communication enlarges market towards globalization.

When we consider man’s role in changing the face of earth, we acknowledge that the dynamics of History are followed, inevitably, by Geography, which is forced to change its ideas and its conceptual or theoretical framework concerning the world. My generation has crossed two “*New Geotraphies*”.

In our time, we are passing a crucial period where the amount of extraordinary change produces a *Historical Crisis*. In reality we are not precise in saying that we are dealing with a simple period of change. Changing is a continuous and permanent phenomenon. Almost every new century prepares its own “modernization” where some amount of old things and ideas are surpassed by others. A

Historical Crisis is something to be found at large intervals. Like the IInd century after Christ and (to be more brief) especially the XVIIth century, when the Newtonian Physics inaugurated the *Modernity* that has been prevailing till our present crisis.

Some philosophers of our days are proposing that the concept of *Modernity* – at least in its philosophical meaning – must be rescued for the special periods of accumulative problems which implies in an insufficiency of the old and the elaboration of a new concept of *Ratio*.

All along this XXth century, science took an enormous step from Quanta Theory (at the beginning) to the achievements of knowledge about the very complex system on which the old conceptual apparatus didn't work out anymore. We reach, nowadays, with the achievements of Dissipative Energies and the Chaos Theory, Fractal Geometries, etc., a deep feeling of limits to knowledge. Science, which has built up the extraordinary technology of our days reconsiders its limits and looks for new answers. This is a scientific counterpart of the philosophical problem of disclosing a new *Ratio*.

Science, Arts, Politics... everything is changing. Our Universities recognize they have become obsolete and face the problem of adapting themselves to the new times. Another theory of knowledge is in focus. After such a long time of fragmentation and specialization in all different fields of knowledge, we are looking for a *New Episteme*.

Why should Economy be exempted from all this crisis, especially when it is considered the motor of History? It must be quite clear that the changes in Economy are an inevitable part of the whole mass of needed change.

In several occasions the papers of this Conference have pointed out the necessity for new “common senses” in philosophy (Professor IIDA's Keynote Speech), a new rationality in technology, a new ethics in politics etc. In the elaboration of a new episteme, we must connect Western to Eastern thoughts, in such a way that this new knowledge will be able to create not only a new scientific spirit but a *New Humanism*.

Maybe after all those changes we in Latin America could find a place, not to dominate the world, but to join hands with all the other “wrong” nations to achieve a world where we find peace and social justice at least to provide the adequate level demanded by human dignity. We must recognize our faults and change. Only in this

way I do hope we shall overcome.

I dare to conclude by saying to my colleagues, economists in particular and social scientists in general, that it is very important to promote the search in the matter of *Transition to or of Market Economy* but we must consider that these “transitions” are just an important part of a new and spectacular transformation towards a new era.