A Post-Modern Model of Social Development

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Abstract

On the basis of a theory on Modernity as a *specific* anthropological culture, a theory we have developed in previous publications. We analyze the neo-liberal theory on social development as expounded by Fukuyama, offering an alternative explanation on why historically Capitalism defeated Socialism. In the light of the current global climate crisis and other related crises, we question the future of Mankind and neoliberal ideas, proposing a post-modernity model, which we believe is the only one able to prevent the collapse of present civilization. In this sense, a transformation of the United Nations (UN) is proposed.

Keywords: Theory of Modernity, 21st century's ecologic-social crisis, self-optimizing homeostatic development paradigm

Un modelo posmoderno de desarrollo social

Resumen

Basándonos en una teoría de la Modernidad como una cultura antropológica específica- teoría que hemos desarrollado desde 1998 en publicaciones anteriores, analizamos la teoría neoliberal expuesta por Fukuyama, ofreciendo una explicación alternativa a por qué históricamente el Capitalismo derrotó al Socialismo. Ante las nuevas realidades, raíz de la crisis del cambio climático global y de otras crisis relacionadas, cuestionamos el futuro de la Humanidad y las ideas neoliberales, proponiendo un nuevo modelo como única salida posible para evitar el colapso final de la presente civilización. En este sentido, proponemos transformar la Organización de las Naciones Unidas.

Palabras clave: Teoría de la Modernidad, crisis ecológico-social del siglo 21, paradigma de desarrollo homeostático auto-optimizante

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1. Introduction

The Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar wrote: "the kingdom of abundance promised by the development discourse and strategy of development produced the opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment…Untold exploitation and oppression are only the most pathetic signs of forty years of development" (Escobar, 1995, p. 4). He referred to the failure of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as the major institutions in charge of the development of the so-called Third World.

In our view, this failure, coupled with the present global climate crisis and the emergence of *New Infectious Diseases* (NID), including Covid-19, AIDS, Ebola, etc., is currently affecting dramatically the so-called developing nations, which represent the majority of the world population. This makes it urgent to undertake a serious discussion on the existing different theoretical approaches to development of the so-called Third World and, in general, of humanity, aimed at designing alternatives to the Neo-liberal model imposed by these institutions.

In this line of thought, we have published an updated version of our general anthropological theory (1998, 2019, 2020), whose relation to the subject of development is highlighted and enlarged in the present article. In this respect, it is a significant antecedent that a post-Modernity paradigm of development, named as *Gross National Happiness Index* (GNH), has been implemented for the first time in recent history in Bhutan (Ura 2005, 2012, 2015).

As we know, World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), apart from the humanitarian motivations they may have as per their stated principles, have been, since their origin, instrumental in assisting USA geo-political strategy of world hegemony. The general economic policies of these institutions were initially conceived as tactical to counteract the ideological and political expansion of the USSR after World War II, and were based on Keynesian economic principles. But since the end of Cold War and the disintegration of the USSR, the World Bank and the IMF, which function under the business principle of "one dollar one vote", and are financed basically by the US government, condition their financial aid to the underdeveloped nations to implementing the so-called "structural changes", which means the compulsory adoption of neo-liberal policies of development.

2. "The End of History"

Francis Fukuyama's book, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama, 1992), is an interesting book on why humanity attained to its "supreme stage of development" (sic) with the victory of Capitalism over Socialism. Fukuyama is a noted representative of the neo-Liberal theory. As a sociologist and philosopher, he has contributed in molding the social thinking of a not small number of influential intellectuals and politicians of both Western and non-Western countries. Therefore, his main thesis deserves some comments.

In the first place, it should be pointed out that Fukuyama's thesis represents a return to the 19th-century Theory of Social Evolution, developed mainly by Spencer (1908). According to this theory, human history follows a universal line of evolution, which inexorably leads to a supreme stage of evolution, embodied by modern Western culture. For that reason, it is not exaggerated to say that Fukuyama's ideas are intimately related to Marx and Engels's Theory of Historic Materialism, as both are rooted in 19th century evolutionism. The difference between them is that for Fukuyama human history concludes with the worldwide establishment of a liberal society, while for Marx and Engels the end of history is achieved by the worldwide implantation of communism. Moreover, from our theoretical perspective, both Liberalism and Marxism spring from the same foundational Cultural *Myth of Modernity*, particularly Anthropocentrism, Eternal Progress (in the sense of technological and economic growth), and the All-Embracing Techno-Scientific Reason (Armand, 1998).

An important claim by Fukuyama is that there is a "universal human nature" characterized by an innate rivalry and need of the individuals to be socially recognized. This opinion reflects his very poor knowledge on the wide variety of cultural values that anthropologists have discovered and described during the last two centuries of field researches. By the way, the main contribution made by Anthropology to social sciences has been its empirical demonstration of the Cultural *Relativity*.

A picturesque and eloquent case of cultural relativity is the following: the people of inner New Guinea, when they learned to play football thanks to the Western missionaries, they accepted enthusiastically the new sport. But for the astonishment of the missionaries, the players instead of looking at the victory of one of the teams, multiplied the number of games until victories and defeats for each team were equal. The games did not end with one team winning, but until it was sure there were no losers (…) (Quoted by

Lévi-Strauss, 2011). This example, and many similar ones, makes it evident that individual or group rivalry and competitiveness are not universal values as claimed by Fukuyama.

In relation to the problem of Islamic fundamentalism, Fukuyama argues that part of the reasons for the current Islamic fundamentalist revival is the strength of the perceived thread from liberal Western values to traditional Islamic societies (1992, p. 46). Now, *fundamentalism* is a notion that implies returning *to the source.* So Islamic fundamentalism represents returning to the sources of Islamic culture, that is, its religious, social and economic foundational myths and social archetypes. But a question arises naturally at this point: shall current revival of the founding liberal Western cultural values, which is a return to the sources or original archetypes of Modernity, be regarded also as a sort of fundamentalism? The answer is yes, for there is no way to exempt the current return to the liberalist values from being a kind of fundamentalism, unless of course one resorts to the ethnocentric evolutionistic theory that regards Western modern civilization as the summit of human evolution. Moreover, in a certain way, Islamic Fundamentalism can be understood better as a social and political reaction against the re-emergence and hegemony of Western fundamentalism.

It should be warned, however, that this last assertion is not an insinuation aimed at attenuating the crimes of few Islamic terrorist organizations. Instead, we are convinced that, by attesting objectively the simultaneity of these two opposite fundamentalisms, we are rather contributing to a better understanding of our historical time and thus to the possibility of a less dangerous world. Notwithstanding, the prospect of a less dangerous world seems far away when one sees the increasing social and economic inequalities growing at both national and international levels after the return of Western neo-liberal supremacy.

In this respect we should recall Victor Hugo's most famous novel, *Les Misérables,* written during the apogee of the liberalist social system. In this, he vividly depicted the harsh living conditions of the European working class and their sharp contrast with the opulent wellbeing of the social upper classes during the 19th century. We should not forget that these kinds of social disparities nurtured the emergence of the radical 19th-century European labor unions and the up-surging of Marxist and Anarchist ideologies, as well as an extreme social revolt such as the *Commune de Paris* in 1871.

Unfortunately, Fukuyama and the neo-liberal establishment in general seem to underrate the lessons of History. Nevertheless, recent socio-economic statistics, as well as the frequent massive street protests in

Europe, and the democratically elected leftist governments in some Latin American nations (Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia) show that the so-called New Liberal Order may be a transitory phenomenon that could lead the world to the re-emergence of new radical leftist reactions. To those reactions we have to add an especially disturbing new factor: the emergence of massive worldwide environmentalist protests.

Fukuyama claims that the progressive unfolding of modern natural sciences produces a certain directional history and a certain uniform social changes across different nations and cultures (1992, p. 80). He sustains that the progressive advancement of natural sciences and technology is the engine that moves History. According to him, behind this "engine" is the eternal pursuit of human beings to gratify their desire for security (that is weapons), as well as the limitless acquisition of material goods, which is only assured by modern science and technology. Moreover, he adds that the desire for permanent economic growth seems to be a universal characteristic of virtually all present-day societies (1992, p. 81). In this respect, it should be noticed, however, that in all of these statements Fukuyama is but ethnocentrically projecting the cultural myths and social values of his own culture, specifically in this case by the *Myth of Eternal Progress* (conceived in a materialistic and pragmatic sense), and the *Myth of Techno-Scientific Reason as an Absolute.*

We have claimed in other writings (Armand 1998, 2004, 2019, 2020), that the internal logic of modern Science and Technology ultimately takes to a world where Modernity would have not only achieved its declared goal of mastering Nature, but of replacing the entire *Bio-sphere* by a man-made sphere or *Techno-sphere*. In this sense, that logic implies a world where the progressive advancement of Science and Technology would have made it possible to remake artificially almost all manifestation of life, including human brain (Artificial Intelligence). A world such like that would be necessarily ruled by an elite of technocrats, as prophesied by Huxley in his A *Brave New World* novel (1932). This ruling caste would run mass-production factories of pseudo-human beings, which would be programmed to behave in predestined ways in order to accomplish certain tasks needed by that type of social system and according to the interests of certain nations and/or private corporations. This kind of world represents the final logical result of the Cartesian epistemology upon which modern Science and Technology are constructed. This possibility seems to lay ahead for humanity in the long range if ongoing trends are maintained. What is most important is that it would involve the extinction of human freedom,

including the conception of Freedom itself and the desire for it, which represents precisely the antithesis of the West's most precious ideal: Freedom. Hence, the prospect that the logic of Cartesian Science and Technology may ultimately lead to the annihilation of the very idea of Freedom constitutes an essential contradiction in Fukuyama's neo-liberal theoretical approach to human development.

Finally, let us comment Fukuyama's view on consumerist society. According to him, behind the advancement of science and technology lies what he has named as "the individual's need of recognition". *Recognition* means, for this author, the social acknowledgment of the individual's power, wealth and prestige. Hence the sprouting of modern citizen's typical craves for money and material wealth.

In Fukuyama's conception, Freedom means simply *freedom to have.* Now, modern men and women's needs are neither innate nor natural, but induced by alien agents, such as marketing publicity, which determines almost entirely their private and social behavior. They may be politically free, but are they really free? We will return to this point further below. By now let us say that given that the ultimate goal of Liberalism is Individual freedom; and that that goal is achieved through consumption, we ought to conclude that Liberalism further contradicts itself, for ultimately the modern insatiable crave for consumption takes human beings to a new and deeper form of alienation.

3. Why Capitalism defeated Socialism

Capitalism has emerged in a spontaneous way only in Europe. In other parts of the world, it was the result of military conquests or of some kind of economic or political constraints. For modern Western culture, as distinct from the rest of human cultures, Capitalism is something "natural", keeping with the spirit of that culture, and that is why it has worked well in Western nations. Socialism is a different story.

The origin of Socialism as an idea in 19th-century Europe can be explained as a belated consequence of the process of trans-culturization that took place between Western nations and their colonies, mainly in relation to the pre-Columbian Andean and Mesoamerican civilizations, where a kind of socialism had been established centuries before Europeans' arrival in America.

The idea of Socialism and that of *social equality* (this last still common among many Amazonian tribes) arrived to Europe as part of a wide range of European "discoveries" in America, which included the cultivation of

potato, maize, cacao, *Quina*, tobacco, rubber, coca, etc. Socialism as a form of social organization, as well as the idea of social equality, both unknown to 15th-century Europeans, might have stimulated the imagination of 18th and 19th-century Western philosophers such as Rousseau (1712-1778) and other intellectual inspirers of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and later on of early anarchist and socialist thinkers like Engels, Saint-Simon, Proudhon and others.

Capitalism is rooted in some cultural foundational myths that are unique to modern Western culture. Among these we have included in this essay only one directly linked to Capitalism that is *The Individual as Center of Society or Myth of Individualism*. Socialism, on the contrary, arises from an opposite cultural *gestalt*. While the latter is based on certain *foundational cultural myths* related to the conception of Man as being inherently part of the Cosmos and the Society (holistic conception), the former is based on foundational myths related to the conception of Man as inherently unique and isolated from the rest (dualistic conception). Hence, in cultures founded on a holistic conception, Capitalism does not sprout, or if it does, it becomes socially dysfunctional. The same is to be said vice versa: if Socialism is forced upon cultures whose foundational myths include the myth of individualism, it would not work properly. In both cases, a cultural dysfunction appears (Armand, 1998, 2004, 2019, 2020).

Cultural dysfunction is an analytical tool that explains why in developed Western capitalist countries, like Germany and England, contrary to the expectations of Engels and Marx, a socialist revolution has never occurred. Cultural dysfunction also explains why Capitalism has not been able to establish itself fully in the vast majority of nations, which have remained peripheral nations in relation to the centers of Western capitalism (Frank 1969; Wallerstein, 1974).

Therefore, the innermost cause of the historical collapse of the USSR lies in the essential contradiction between the socio-economic and political socialist structures of the latter and the subconscious cultural myths and social archetypes and values of the vast majority of the people conforming the USSR. So, in spite of nearly 70 years of Marxist indoctrination, the citizens of the USSR remained literally fascinated by Western fashions and technological gadgets, something that reflects their deep empathy with the myths of modern Western culture. This can be explained as follows: the majority of nations that integrated the USSR, including a large part of Russia itself, were Europeans, sharing thus with other European nations identical foundational cultural myths, social archetypes, and values.

By the end of the 70s, the contradiction between the Marxist model of societal organization and the above-mentioned cultural factors had become untenable for the USSR, keeping itself competitive with its capitalist rivals; particularly in the field of industrial production and electronics innovations, which specially requires a spirit of self-enterprise. Therefore, unable to keep its competitive edge with Capitalism, the Marxist socialist experiment ended up being a historical failure.

Now, as it is in any type of human society, Modernity as a culture rests on an array of subconscious myths and social archetypes that determine its main traits in the sociological, economic, political and socio-psychological orders. Some of these modern myths are the belief in Man as the Center of the Cosmos (Anthropocentrism), the Individual as the Center of Society (Individualism) and the Scientific-Technological Reason as an Absolute (Cartesian dualism). From these myths arises the concept of progress, which is conceived as an eternal economic, scientific and technological advancement, as well as its trend to replacing Bio-sphere by a Techno-sphere. The modern cult of economic growth is the logical consequence of these myths. We will return to this point further below.

At the level of the individual, these myths get manifested as an eagerness for economic power and as a materialistic conception of life. The latter is not a suggestion that in other present cultures the search for better material conditions of life does not exist; or that Western medieval Europeans for instance, did not pursue personal wealth and power. What makes modern men and women unique is that their whole existential purpose is centered, for the first time in human history, on worldly and materialistic issues. Ironically, in spite of this purpose, in general modern humans are far from being more existentially fulfilled than people of other cultures. This is clearly evidenced by modern men and women's typical stress, high suicide index, massive drug addiction, depression, anxiety and other chronic common psychosomatic pathologies.

4. Our contemporary civilization crisis

4.1. Global Climate Change and Covid-19 Pandemic

According to a report by Carlos Serrano in BBC in relation to the current climate crisis (BBC News, May 11, 2020):

> The facts are impressing: the Covid-19 pandemic has generated the largest fall of CO2 emissions ever registered in history… NASA has detected

> from the space the decrease of contaminating gas in the atmosphere…. The International Energy Agency EIA estimates that the world consumption of energy in 2020 will fall by 6%, which will lead to a further decrease of CO2 emissions. This percentage is equivalent to the total energy demand of India… Various analyzes by the specialized website Carbon Brief show that CO2 emissions will decrease around the 4% and 8% this year, which means 2.000 to 3.000 million of tons less of this gas in the atmosphere. Most of these falls arise from the decrease of emissions from terrestrial vehicles, whose use had decreased in March 2020 by 50% at global level…. In the last 100 years several crises have meant a decrease of CO2 emissions derived from the use of oil, gas and carbon. That occurred during the Spanish Flu pandemic, the Great Depression and the end of World War II. However, the greatest fall has been caused by Covid-19 during a few months… Unfortunately, adds professor Kaufmann from University of San Diego, …when the world's economy starts functioning anew, it is highly probable that we shall return to our old practices... China and the USA, the two superpowers, have seen how the pandemic destroys their economy…both countries are anxious to go back to their production levels existing before the virus, so their leaders may be thinking that the surest way is resorting to the old and reliable fossil fuels… But as professor Kaufmann says: when the climate crisis arises, it will be more severe than the pandemic. It will give you no opportunity of remaining at home two months and then go back to normality. You will not solve it overnight with a marvelous vaccine… Therefore, the effects of the pandemic on the planet will depend on the decisions taken at the moment of overcoming the sanitary crisis.

The Corona virus pandemic marked a turning point in human history. It has demonstrated beyond any doubt that the immediate cause of the current climate crisis is the excess of CO2 in the atmosphere, which derives from the historically unprecedented levels of economic activity. Hence, today, the dilemma facing humanity is whether or not maintaining the conventional development paradigms based on unrestricted economic growth; or rather conceiving new models of human progress and ways of living. These possibilities will be examined in the last section of this article.

As the pandemic has shown us, it is ridiculous to try to find a solution to the present global ecological crisis by simply introducing new technological devices, for this crisis is not of technological nature. It has to do basically with the cultural myths that underlie modern civilization. Moreover, historical experience has demonstrated that technological solutions applied to solve the environmental crisis aroused from the introduction of new technological devices too often resulted in creating a new environmental crisis. Let analyze five major examples that illustrate this point.

First example**:** although the use of new medical drugs, particularly antibiotics, have permitted sparing millions from death, they have nevertheless created new world sanitary problems, as they have recently led to a new phenomenon known as *Microbial Resistance.* This means the emergence of previously unknown microbial strains of old bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungus, which are causing new diseases such as New Gonorrhea and New Malaria, which have developed genetic resistance to these drugs due to their massive use. Besides, the massive prescription of antibiotics and other modern drugs with no regard for their long-range socio-economic implications has been one of the main responsible of the demographic explosion and the recurrent hunger episodes occurred since the 50s in the so-called Third World.

Second example: To deal with the problem of acid rain in 1979 in the highly industrialized areas of Europe and North America, it has been a common practice to install devices that filter out carbon particles from smoke. These devices have proved to be very efficient and today the air around industrial cities contains much less carbon dioxide than before. However, parallel to this, atmosphere acidity has increased a thousand fold, and the rain that falls on some parts of Europe and North America is now so corrosive that is affecting the growth of woodlands. This has occurred because sulfur is also present in smoke and was previously fixed by carbon; now, it is free to combine with atmospheric oxygen and hydrogen to form acids. What the engineers and scientists responsible for the acid rain mistake could not foresee either was that some years later we would have the ozone layer crisis as the result of the same shortsighted meddling. When they were asked about how these absurd outcomes occurred, they would reply: "*we will do better next time…".*

Third example: The introduction of private cars since the first half of last century was meant to satisfy the modern man's need for private mobility. This new cultural need inspired Henry Ford to start in 1920 the first world business of private car mass-production. However, today's hundreds of millions of private cars running the entire world are regarded as the main single cause of current climate crisis. Would electric cars solve this problem or would they create new ones? Who knows!

Fourth example: The last 200 years of amazing technological advancement has allowed humans to get free from their millenary burden of physical efforts and limitations imposed by natural conditions. Thanks to modern technology, women and men all over the world are now far from having to work as hard as their ancestors to perform ordinary daily tasks.

Thus, modern technology has liberated humanity from these traditional bondages. However, modern technological civilization has also created new human bondages, which are more detrimental to human happiness than material impediments, as they affect the inner aspects of human wellbeing. Among the psychosomatic disorders associated to the rhythm and demands imposed by present civilization, we have those already mentioned, chronic diseases, such as depression, anxiety and stress, all common to the dwellers of modern cities; as well as the historical records of cocaine, heroin, tranquilizers, and somniferous use.

Fifth example**:** The current climate crisis has unchained a variety of technological new inventions and projects, like for instance, building gigantic umbrellas around the Earth to redirect sun rays, or spreading hundreds of tons of chemical particles in the atmosphere to cool it, etc. These fantastic geo-engineering projects imply, however, unpredictable side effects on the Earth's atmosphere and on the global ecological system, whose consequences for humans, animals, and plants could be worse than those created by climate change itself or by the projected massive use of nuclear energy as substitute of fossil fuels.

A dubious case is the employ of renewable sources of energy, such as sun rays or photovoltaic energy, and the wind or Eolic energy. Most people believe, including many ecologists, that these so-called green technologies will have none or little impact on the environment, and that they will be the final solution to the climate change problem. However, recent studies have shown that it could be not necessarily so. For instance, the manufacturing of millions of solar and Eolic batteries used in these technologies, needed for satisfying the increasing demand of power of the modern world, would require the exploitation of thousands of mines containing the new minerals needed by those batteries, which could lead to seriously affecting the biosphere. Another example is that the huge space required by Eolic turbine fields, as well as their maintenance, implies the eradication of large spans of natural vegetation whose preservation is essential for absorbing present excess of CO2, and for the existence of some animal species, particularly important pollinating birds and insects.

To sum up: the absurd outcome of modern technology showed by these examples reflects some intrinsic characteristics of modern science and technology, which share the same conception of Reality as being a set of separated entities that are supposedly able of being known and handled independently. As we know, this epistemological conception is founded upon the premises set by French philosopher René Descartes (1596- 1650), which

has been useful for the explosive development of science and technology during the last two centuries. However, Cartesianism constitutes the epistemological base of modern existential separation between Man and Nature, and is therefore the root-cause of current climate crisis and in general of all modern environmental problems.

Intertwined with the former is the trend of Modernity as a culture of maximizing specific social variables, such as the ones related to the techno-economy, in detriment to the social system as a whole. This explains modern society's propensity to getting permanently in crisis, a phenomenon that anthropologist Bateson named as cultural *cysmogenesis* (1972). These crises can be internal (for instance recurrent economic debacles, social and political revolutions, wars, etc.), or external (climate change, pandemics, etc.). They can also be both internal and external (for instance contemporary global crisis is simultaneously internal and external).

Climate change represents the most serious facet of contemporary civilization crisis, for climate has been and will always be the material basis of every civilization. Hence, present changes in the planet's climatic conditions are a serious threat to Mankind. As we have referred to further above, the anthropogenic origin of greenhouse gases causing present global climate change has been demonstrated by the current coronavirus pandemic's effects on the atmosphere.

4.2. The Generalized Drug Addiction

Another important symptom of our contemporary civilization grave crisis is the generalized dependency on drug consumption, both illegal and legal. All experts coincide in that the war on illegal drug consumption and trafficking has been a total failure, and in that the use of cocaine and heroin, far from diminishing, has increased. But the problem of drug dependency goes beyond the use of drugs of natural origin. To the same have recently been added a new generation of synthetic drugs. Like cocaine, these synthetic drugs can be stimulants, anti-depressives, etc.; the difference is that their manufacture and use are legal. Among them, we have the tranquilizer known as *Prozac*, which to their millions of normal American users is today as familiar as the paper-handkerchief Kleenex.

4.3. The Growing Erosion of Ethics

More serious still than socially accepted drug dependency is the collective lack of an ethical frame of reference. The values and social conventions that have existed since immemorial times, which modeled

human relations, especially family and gender roles, and which had the fundamental function of giving coherence and order to society, have lost their authority and force. No alternative set of values has replaced them, quite the contrary: religious beliefs and socio-political ideologies that were valid until recently are continuously giving ground in the face of the silent advance of a shapeless and stultifying belief in economic power, money, consumption, and status. Apparently, the only tenet of this belief is a kind of social Darwinism, neo-liberal in essence, in which the survival of the fittest (whether individuals, groups and nations) is justifiable as a natural phenomenon, and should be the basis of all policy-making. Politics based on equality, fraternity, and liberty has had its day. Instead, we have the "real market forces" of economic pragmatism.

5. Is it possible to avoid a catastrophic denouement of contemporary civilization crisis?

On the basis of current trends this possibility looks utopian. Paradoxically, however, it is only a utopia that could save Mankind from a catastrophe. Under these circumstances, "utopia" must cease being something unattainable and become an over-riding necessity.

In the words of Edgar Morin:

> All great changes, all great leaps forward, both in the history of life and the history of mankind, have been a victory of the improbable. In the biological as well as the social world exponential curves sooner or later become "S" curves, with the intervention of regulating forces that are either external (environmental pressures) or internal (self- control). Thus, the predicted collision course with catastrophe is no more than an abstract vision. Moreover, the apocalyptic warning is a concrete help in correcting the course. (1980, p. 237)

Therefore, up to a point there are reasonable grounds for believing that the ability of humanity to overcome the present crisis is realistic. Indeed, the self-correcting mechanisms of the human species, which have worked in other periods and civilizations to avoid cataclysmic disasters, are fortunately starting to work today. As Morris Berman rightly points out: the emergence of holistic thinking in our time can be considered in itself as part of the process of self-correcting feedback (1997, p. 187).

Such a self-correcting process would have to be of the dimension of a cultural *mutation,* for it should be able to eradicate the fundamental

cultural myths of Modernity. Fortunately, holistic thinking is being increasingly adopted by Western scientists thanks to the continuous advance of Quantum Physics. This is showing us that Reality is not a patchwork-like set of discontinuous phenomena mechanically interconnected, as assumed by conventional Science, but a *continuum* of reciprocally caused phenomena. According to this, human society and natural environment, as well as the whole planet Earth and the entire Universe are but simple phenomenal expressions of the same Being—call it Universe, God, Tao, Brahma or whatever.

The coronavirus pandemic is a perfect example of how all phenomena are interconnected, as it has demonstrated that a change in a single component of the world-system (biologic-sanitary in this case) was able to disrupt the whole world system, notably its economy and the social behavior of human beings. Hence, it is to be expected that the present climate crisis will generate the same kind of domino effect too. Besides, we have also learned from Covid-19 pandemic that modern Science and Technology, and their related social and economic paradigms, should jump from their old Cartesian philosophical base to the new 21st-century holistic approach of Quantum Physics.

6. A post-modernity model of social development

6.1. The Relativity of Development

Our notion of Development is directly related to human needs and their satisfaction. The more a society is able to satisfy the needs of its members the more that society is developed. Notwithstanding, human needs are not universal nor are all of them innate to human being as such.

Human needs are inherently related to the notion of Freedom. Freedom is an abstraction. In itself, it is not a human need, but rather the result of needs being satisfied, and ultimately the absence of need. This implies that the more our needs get satisfied the freer we shall be. Paraphrasing American philosopher and poet Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), a free person is not he or she who has more, but him or her who needs less. This points out at an opposition between accumulation of wealth and freedom, since wealth creates new needs, like the need to preserve it, to guard it, and the desire to increase it. But in any case, freedom is always relative, for needs are part of the human natural condition. Thus, we may say that *freedom from* is freedom from need, or simply freedom *from.* Freedom

to is exactly the opposite of freedom *from*, since the word *to* implies a desire and thus that something is missing; that there is a need to be satisfied. In practice, Modernity typically conceives freedom as *freedom to*; that is, for most modern men and women, freedom means freedom to get ever more economic power and material wealth.

Capitalism is an integral part of Modernity, especially in its liberal version. Given that this socio-economic system requires intrinsically ever-growing levels of production and consumption, the numbers of needs in modern humans have to be permanently created. This is made possible by constantly manipulating human emotional impulses through massive marketing and advertising campaigns. Consequently, the conception of Freedom as *freedom to have* and Capitalism are two sides of the same coin. As said before, the Western original 18th-century ideal of Freedom has resulted in present times, a new kind of alienation. This takes modern individuals to live in a vicious cycle of frustration and satisfaction and thus to a chronic state of vacuity and anxiety.

In relation to our notion of development, we distinguish between human needs that are present in all human beings, irrespectively of their culture, which can be considered as actual human needs, and those that are induced by society, which varies from culture to culture. Among the universal or actual human needs are food and protection from the elements, which depend on basically on the climate. Apart from these material needs, there are the non-material or psychological human needs, such as the feelings of identity, security, membership, and appreciation or love. Ethnographic and archaeological evidences have demonstrated that humans in general need some array of beliefs on the meaning of life and the transcendence of it after death too, in other words, some kind of metaphysics or religion.

A society can be regarded as a developed society if it is able to satisfy their member's actual material and non-material needs, which varies *according to the cultural values and natural environment of each society*. This conception of development represents a radical difference from modern and conventional conceptions of development, in the sense that the latter is ethnocentric and absolutist, while the former is culturally and ecologically relative. As we will see further on, this conceptual distinction leads to tremendous differences in designing the goals and methodologies of development projects.

The etymological meaning of the word *development* is unfolding. Hence, development means unfolding of the potential of an individual, species or a human race. It follows that in the case that a nation development

means the unfolding of its own culture. Therefore, the model of development spontaneously adopted by a given nation is relative to that nation's culture only. Furthermore, development to be genuine and socially functional and satisfying to the majority of members of a nation could not be an imitation of other nation's models of development. This common-sense notion appears distorted since 19th century by theory of Social Evolutionism, which surprisingly is still prevailing in today's social and economics sciences. Development conceived as a process of imitating the Western model of development has proven to be a goal that the majority of nations have been unable to achieve. This failure has its roots in the natural impossibility for non-Western nations to internalize the foundational myths, social archetypes, and cultural values upon which the Western model of development is based; since assimilating Western modern cultural myths, social archetypes and values implies the losing of their own cultural identity. From this arises the persistent resistance of majority of nations to follow the Western model.

Now, there are today several billions of human beings whose actual material needs are far from being satisfied, including one billion suffering from chronic hunger. What these peoples require is a kind of development aimed at stimulating their own economy within their own cultural frame. This is quite different from what the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other similar institutions have been doing; that is taken underdeveloped countries to simply become suppliers of cheap raw materials, *maquilas* merchandises and tourist destinations for the Western capitalist markets.

On the other hand, implementing a post-modernity model of development, especially in non-Western nations, leads to a radical change in the role Anthropology would play in development projects**.** As we know, anthropologists are regarded as mere auxiliary advisers in Third World development projects, employed merely to assist economists and technicians. This is consistent with a neo-liberal conception that sees development as just a techno-economic process.

If instead development is understood as a holistic process, which comprehends not only economic factors but human non-material needs as well, the result of many development projects would be not just more efficient, but socially harmonious and satisfying for the peoples to whom the projects are intended. Unfortunately, however, most anthropologists employed in development institutions are expected to prepare reports on how to break or bypass the cultures of developing countries, since, for their big bosses, traditional cultures represent an obstacle for modernization

and progress. A different story is the development of Western nations and so-called Emerging Countries like China, North Korea, India, etc.) But while the poor nations of the world are regarded as under-developed from the viewpoint of their economic performance, the so-called First World nations should be regarded as *over-developed* from the same point of view. This implies that while the former requires some kind of economic growth to solve their poverty problems, the latter require a *process of economic degrowth.* Therefore, the latter instead of continuously emphasizing economic growth should consider the new paradigm we have named as *Optimizing Homeostasis***.** This new general development paradigm (Armand, 1998, 2019, 2020 and also Daly, 1992), appears as the only one compatible with the historical imperative of getting over the ecological and societal crisis that is threatening the future of humanity.

A *homeostatic economy*, and in general a homeostatic society, does not imply a stagnant system, but rather one that *optimizes* instead of *maximizes* its variables. A homeostatic type of economy and society is the opposite of modern type of economy and society, in the sense that the latter tends to maximize selected societal variables, to the detriment of the system as a whole, particularly economic growth and consumption. The implementing of this new development paradigm means to revert that trend and eventually dismantling modern unrestricted economic growth policies.

Nevertheless, a considerable number of critics of the homeostatic paradigm, especially those who adhere to the neo-liberal ideology, argue that any limitation to economic growth would end up reducing business activities and job opportunities, therefore leading to more poverty. This is a fallacy. Actually, in an optimizing homeostatic economy there would be a greater number of businesses and jobs, though of a different nature. New businesses and jobs can be created directly and indirectly by projects like, for instance, restoring the hundreds of millions of acres of forest destroyed around the world during the last 250 years; which in turn would lead to splitting today's overcrowded megalopolis into a series of smaller, manageable, and friendly cities. This and other similar ecological mega-projects would generate hundreds of thousands of new jobs and businesses during several decades, compensating thus any loss due to the introduction of the new paradigm.

Given this broad understanding of the concept of *Optimizing Homeostasis,* upon which the post-modernity model of development is based, one can realistically expect that it would be assumed and supported by an ample spectrum of political tendencies and economic interests. However,

some readers may think that this scenario could be misunderstood, or even disguised by vested interests in order to bypass the need of restricting economic growth. This possibility is real. In fact, there is a domineering theoretical tendency known as the *Modernization of Ecology* (Gouldson, 1996; Radcliff and Woodgate, 1996; Mol, 1996), which attempts at channelizing the increasing people's concern for the environmental crisis, through the manufacturing and selling of all sorts of so-called *eco-techno* gadgets, including supposedly ecologically safe systems of energy production. The assumption behind this tendency is that a permanent economic growth should not or cannot be stopped, and that any environmental crisis can be solved by new technologies, as in the case of the climate crisis, by implementing new non-contaminating sources of energy. Hence the renovated interest in building nuclear plants in countries like China, Japan, South Korea and the United States. This, in spite of the fact that Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant faced 1 0 years ago an extremely dangerous failure, and that the problem of how to dispose safely of the radioactive waste has never been solved. Therefore, in line with the thesis of modernization of ecology, there is a high degree of probability that we will start soon seeing a worldwide proliferation of nuclear plants under the dual pretext of rescuing world economy from the damages caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the need of reducing CO2 emissions. What is to be emphasized, however, is that none of these technologies, being implemented individually or conjunctly, is able to solve the contemporary global crisis. In this respect we should be able to differentiate the disease from its symptoms. Hence, if Mankind is to avoid a final collapse of Civilization, due to current climate crisis or perhaps due to a worse crisis (for instance, a new world war combined with economic recession), we need to treat the disease at its roots. Fossil fuels are not the root of our current global crisis, as optimistic technologists like to believe, but a mere symptom of that profound systemic *cultural dysfunction* we have tried to analyze.

In respect to the optimizing homeostatic type of economy, we have to add that essentially this new development paradigm represents a *recuperating and preserving* type of economy, which is totally different from an economy such as the modern one. As opposed to the latter, an optimizing homeostatic type of economy maintains production and consumption at the level of the actual needs of each nation, and within the limits of tolerance of its natural environment. It goes without explanation that an optimizing homeostatic world would tend to keep the size of the planet's human population in homeostatic condition.

Now, to put into practice a post-modernity model of development at world scale, some important changes at international level are needed. As we know, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the two principal world organizations in charge of the development of the under-developed nations. They both work independently of UN´s development programs, a situation that has led to wastage of financial resources, time and labor. On the other hand, as said before, these organizations are financially supported by Western nations and especially by the US government. As we know, main decisions taken by these institutions are voted after the rule of business corporations known as "one dollar one vote" (Sachs, 2005). This means that the whole matter of the development of the so-called Third World, which comprehends the vast majority of humanity, is in the hands of a few Western governments, especially the US. Hence, one has not to be very clever to realize that their development policies are biased by US interests and in general by Western ethnocentric prejudices.

If we are to overcome the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) hegemony and their biased model of development**,** we have no choice but to resort to the United Nations (UN), for this is the only existing organization that represents the interests of humanity in general**.** Notwithstanding, for the UN to be able to incorporate these two institutions, some changes concerning its foundational principles and internal functioning are required. Firstly, it should become a really democratic organization. In other words: it *should be governed by the delegates of the entire 194 planet´s nations*, and not as it is currently the case, by a handful of selected economic and military superpowers, who necessarily looks first for their nationalistic interests. This change implies that some norms concerning the eligibility of the members of the Security Council and other key sections of the UN are to be revised. Secondly, UN should be invested with *executive attributions* regarding matters affecting humanity in general, such as are the global ecological crisis, global sanitary security, growing human migrations, and poor human living conditions in large geographical areas of the world, and so on. This is just a matter of logic: if there are supra-national problems affecting the whole of human beings, they should be supra-nationally handled by supra-national entities representing all human beings. The old notion of "national common good", inscribed in almost all countries; Constitutions have to be subdued to a 21st century's notion of the *Planet's Common Good.* To provide a legal platform to this notion supra-national governance is required. This would lead to overcoming the present *Era of Imperialisms,* which is an era of atavistic

national, racial, or religious prejudices, as well as to the end of the arrogant idea of a supposedly providential world mission nurtured in some modern nations, which for centuries has meant for millions a state of permanent unrest, revolts, subjugation, and misery.

However, the world realities that have emerged since UN was created in 1945 are obviously different from today's realities. In our time, we are facing a much more complex and dangerous set of crises, to which present UN is not adapted. Hence, if it is going to avoid decadence and extinction, it should transform itself in order to respond to the new realities. The possibility of extinction of the UN is not unreal, as was implied in the menace of US president Trump in December 2020 of withdrawing from an institution whose main founder and financial support has been just the US.

As rightly expressed by M. Mesarovic and Pestel:

> With the new conditions of the planet, exemplified by the current global crisis, the world community has been transformed in a universal system, that is in an assemblage of functionally interdependent parts. Each part- be a region or a group of nations- has its own contribution to the organic development of humanity…In such a system, the growth of each part depends on the growth or the degrowth of the others. Therefore, the non-desirable growth of a single part threatens not only that part alone but the entire system. (1974, p. 26).

7. Final consideration

At the time of finishing writing this essay (January, 2021), humanity has suffered the dramatic consequences of a deadly pandemic (coronavirus disease). Shortly, an analogous experience will be occurring in relation to a longer and probably more devastating crisis (Climate Change). These unprecedented global crisis and human experiences will no doubt mark forever the collective mind of humanity, hopefully in the sense of engendering in it a permanent feeling of planet brotherhood and human unity. Hence our hope that a critical number of influential thinkers, scientists, politicians, educators, and mass-media agents may reflect in their actions and words this feeling for the good of all.

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