

THE CONQUEST OF DIFFERENCES

THE “ANTAGONISM OF RACES” IN THE LIBERAL CIVILIZATIONAL PROJECT IN LATIN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

In this essay we argue that based on the late-medieval and Enlightenment answers to the question of the origin and causes of cultural differences, the liberal civilizational project, starting from the category of the concept of Nation, institutionalized four ideological traditions, or what Foucault (2002) calls: “discursive constellations”, namely: (i) The freedom of the will, (ii) environmental determinism, (iii) trade as a sign of civilization and (iv) the inexperience of freedom. These traditions, as an explanation of the supposed Central European superiority and justification of imperialist practice, resulted in a discursive object: the “antagonism of races”; from whose dissolution (the harmony of races), the Creole elite thinks, capitalism will be introduced in the new republics; however, and through the mediation of the “class struggle”, “resistance” was given rise as a common identity of the Latin American peoples and as a counter-discourse to the elite and its idea of education and progress.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of ideas, education and progress are inseparable concepts. This interrelation finds in indigenous education a natural place for criticism. And by critique we understand what Adorno (2008) points out: thinking about the future as a utopia or alternative form of life in the trance of birth, and not acting “at the service of an already existing reality” (p 248). We do not seek to interpret the indigenous, since that corresponds to its legitimate recipients, not even to make an interpretation of its history and its struggles. What is proposed here, saving distances, is to create a picture of understanding, obviously limited, of the meaning of ethnoeducation, of its appearance, for modern thought: its contribution to the design of the Latin American future.

It turns out that indigenous education includes, in our opinion, an alternative proposal to modern capitalist development; it is a legitimate vindication of ancestral traditions and knowledge, despised by modernity. It proposes another way of thinking about reality and inhabiting culture. Enlightenment thought, the object of interest of our inquiry, generated a particular way of thinking about things. It forced the subject to abstract himself in the representations offered to him by the data of the senses, and as multiple, his psychic consistency was fragmented and, with it, the perceived reality. For this reason, the modern cannot see continuity in nature, except by dividing it into stages of development which, despite their pretensions, do not fail to present obstacles to

understanding. His drama, the one that imprisons him, the one that limits his creative potential, is that he finds himself anchored in the fragmentation of the real and, nevertheless, strives in vain for the contemplation of the totality; For this, he resorts in vain to the making of successions, orders, apparent continuities, laws, links, interrelations that have no other land than the realm of opposites. The truth of the premises that provide the truth of the conclusion. How else can we understand that modern reason has “rationally” justified its colonizing voracity, its disrespect for what is foreign, its desire to accumulate, if not as a consequence of its own ideological referents, of its fragmented way of returning to the question of the being of the being. It was Hegel’s merit to establish—as a sententious closure to an epoch—the “Unfortunate Consciousness,” in which when the subject believes he has reached the “stillness of unity,” consciousness is expelled before the monolithic existence of another-consciousness, irreducible, refractory to its science, its technique, or its history, but which stands as its pure negativity, as an awareness of its essential contradiction.

At the time of the crisis, the “Creole intelligentsia”, formed in the schemes and coordinates of the Enlightenment, sought to improve the conditions of material backwardness of Spanish America through a resignification of its immediate past. A resignification that implied a negative view of the original inhabitants, which constituted an obstacle to ordinary thought, fearful of the unforeseen, taught to use the technique as a substitute for authentic thinking, a direct cause of the fear of being indigenist (Kusch, 2000). Conceptually establishing the ideological resources that explain difference and whose implications we feel today, openly confronted by the multiculturalism reality, is the task of philosophical thinking in Latin American perspective. Education and progress must find in this unmasking the hidden face of its radical lack of a proposal where we all fit.

In the pages of this essay we want to argue that based on the late-medieval and enlightenment answers to the question of the origin and causes of cultural differences, the liberal civilizational project, starting from the category of Nation, institutionalized four ideological traditions, or what Foucault (2002) calls: “discursive constellations,” namely: (i) The freedom of the will, (ii) environmental determinism, (iii) trade as a sign of civilization and (iv) the inexperience of freedom. These traditions, as an explanation of the supposed Central European superiority and justification of imperialist practice, resulted in a discursive object⁵⁰: the “antagonism of races”; from whose dissolution, the Creole elite thinks, capitalism will be introduced into the new republics; however,

50 See Foucault. (2004) *La arqueología del saber* pp. 65 -81

and through the mediation of the “class struggle”, “resistance” was given rise as a common identity of the Latin American peoples and as a counter-discourse to the elite and its idea of education and progress.

THE QUESTION OF DIFFERENCE AND IDENTITY

In classical antiquity, Greek nationality emerged from the representations of other cultures made by its historians. The very notion of history (*historein*), Halbfass (2013) observes, presupposes openness to the foreign, the world beyond, strange and hostile, where to find the meaning of one’s “Greek being”.⁵¹ The trade of the Greek colonies of Asia Minor and the Alexandrian conquests gave rise to the cultural exchange that would allow, centuries later, the Stoics to speak of a universal citizenship, cosmopolitanism. We find Hecataeus describing the wonders of the Egyptian world, its temples hidden behind thick walls that housed 345 statues of priests. Images of other lands and people that amazed the imagination, from Herodotus with the terrible and warlike Scythians to the “fabulous races” of the medieval encyclopedites of the 12th century.

The Mediterranean world represented a whole “human universe” (Braudel, 1989) divided by the multiple incommensurations of races and creeds, but which found in the discovery of America the justification for its encounters and disagreements. More than forty-two million square kilometers populated from pole to pole, one sixth of the known continents, which, as A. Humboldt pointed out, could not be known even in a lifetime lasting century (Ortiz, 1992, p. 85). It meant the awareness of the need to assume differences; but it was up to Spain — perhaps the most intolerant nation of its time — to open the controversy about the nature and meaning of diversity and the unity of peoples around Human Rights.

The awareness of difference required a long-term historical process. With the discovery of America, —product of the rise of mercantilism that since the end of the 15th century, was planetary—, a new category was created, in the minds of the intelligentsia: “The

51 Werner Jaeger in *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (1957) states “History means, for example, the exploration of strange, singular and mysterious worlds. This is how Herodotus conceives it, with a keen perception of the morphology of human life, in all its forms, we also approach the most remote peoples today and try to penetrate their own spirit.” (p. 5)

world”. However, and as Góngora (2003) states, the discovery was not an immediate phenomenon. Little by little, Europeans assumed that this was a non-Asian, unknown and strange continental body. Gradually, their categories of compression were modified as news of the new lands and peoples arrived⁵². Although “the world” existed as a planetary unit, there was also the question of the origin of peoples and the explanation of their differences. The most inflexible beliefs had to compromise in the face of the forcefulness of the evidence.

Who were those beings that Columbus brought to present to the monarchs? Why did they not practice any known religion? Why had the ancient historians not spoken of the existence of that world and those people? The Bible and the tradition of the three sons of Noah (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) – which explained the genesis of lineages in the 16th century – could not explain the centuries of distance between the old and the new continent. What mystery did providence reveal to humanity at the end of the 15th century? Faced with the amazement aroused by the novelty, the cleric chronicler Francisco López de Gómara came to say in admiration in 1554: “The greatest thing after the creation of the world, taking out the incarnation and death of the one who created it, is the discovery of the Indies; and that’s how they call them New World.”

The religiosity and Greco-Roman mythology present in the Spanish chronicles will explain, in the European mind, the characteristics of the inhabitants of the West Indies. This was the beginning of modern ethnography and anthropology. However, and in order to “assimilate” the difference, the affirmation of one’s own (Western-Christian) culture was resorted to, since diversity, by itself, questioned the claim of universality of the Christian religion (so longed for in the West after the fall of the Roman Empire) and admitted a moral relativity opposed to the Imperium Christianum accentuated in the era of Charles V. This feeling of overvaluing one’s own and despising what is not one’s is at the root of the nationality that will develop later.

52 Herbey Frey (2002) writes: “The novelty of America exerted pressures on European thought, while, on the one hand, it demanded new orientations and, on the other, it gave rise to attempts to understand the new by means of tradition. Thus, the thought that tried to approach the novelty of this uncontained “other” world was not free from ties to the philosophical tradition from which it could not free itself without suddenly running out of theoretical instruments and methods.” (p. 102)

NATION AND CIVILIZATION IN THE ENLIGHTENED ERA

In the 18th century, the scientific and cultural movement called “The Enlightenment” took place⁵³, which Emanuel Kant, in 1784, defined as “the emergence of man from a minority of which he himself is guilty”.⁵⁴ A movement that emphasized the use of Reason to respond to the social and reforming demands of the time. In the understanding of difference, neither did the enlightenment—initiators of contemporary social science (*i.e.* Montesquieu, D’Holbach; Turgot; Condorcet; Hume, A. Smith, John Miller, Lord Kames, and Adam Ferguson) — were able to shake off the prejudices about the customs of the peoples known until then. However, there is no doubt that it contributed to the establishment of the anatomical, physiological, psychological, natural capacities and basic needs of humanity (Nutini, 2001, p. 25).

As for the nature and cause of the differences between peoples, enlightenment rationality could not afford gaps, empty spaces, dark areas, unknown terrain, since this would ultimately mean validating the biblical version (and the ancient regime). On the contrary, the differences, according to them, must have originated from previous and lower stages of humanity, an event that would support the very enlightened idea of “human perfectibility”, preached by renowned thinkers such as the Marquis de Condorcet (1743 – 1794).

The rational explanation of cultural difference was condensed in the concept of “nation” as the ultimate stage of the civilizing process. All known peoples, Condorcet affirms, belong to the same family, associated with European nations by the same level of civilization (Evans-Pritchard, 1987, p. 75). It was necessary to overcome, through rational history, those fanciful narratives that did not “explain” the steps of the human race from its remote past to contemporaneity (18th century). An explanation of the differences that linked bourgeois aspirations with a common project that would over-

53 The chronological and ideological coherence of the German (Aufklärung) and English (Enlightenment) enlightenments has been discussed. See: Laudin. (2016) Was ist Aufklärung?: « unité et diversité des Lumières », « wahre Aufklärung » ou « radical Enlightenment »? Esquisse d’un bilan de quelques recherches récentes. *International Journal of Philosophy* No. 4, November 2016, pp. 223-238

54 Immanuel Kant: The answer to the question that is the enlightenment. P.9 Cit. Joachim Storing, H. (2016) *Universal History of Science*. Madrid: Tecnos.

come European fanaticism and religious intolerance, the dead weight, in those circumstances, of the coveted progress.

To understand the path of evolution, the objective differences between man and animal would be the baseline. A people will be all the more civilized⁵⁵ the more distant it is from animal need and adopts the rational will concretized in a language, a morality and a social order. What was the main difference that separates us as a human race from the animal? The use of freedom. The self-determination of the will established three main differences by which humanity had to overcome: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. The savage is a human being constrained by necessity; he is not free but a slave to his appetites. The barbarian corresponds to a higher level, but his desires are disordered and wrong; the civilized man, on the other hand, is the one who, making use of freedom, chooses what is just and convenient. For Christian religiosity and from the myth of Noah’s Ark, Africa would correspond to the kingdom of the savages, Asia would belong to the barbarians, and Europe to civilization. With the discovery of the fourth continent, the New World, it will then be necessary to determine to which kingdom it would belong in that tripartite geographical and moral arrangement of the known world.

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

Late medieval religious discourse had established a common origin and explanation of the difference. But, subtracting from the scientific spirit of the time, that explanation was more an article of faith than an object of empirical verification. However, the reference to free will (*liberum arbitrium*) united, in the end, the enlightened and religious views.

Christian religiosity came from a process of mutual discrediting with the *barbari* (Jews and Muslims) to whom it denied even their humanity. Heresy implied a deviant “will” and with it a lack of freedom that took the heretic back to his animal condition. According to the scholastic philosophical-theological doctrines: the law does not apply

⁵⁵ Originated from *zivilita*, an expression with which the Renaissance differentiated themselves from the medievals.

to forced necessity and there is no moral responsibility; for there is no freedom⁵⁶; and the animal, being subject to natural necessity, lost it.

Likewise, for enlightenment thought, the self-determination of the will also marks the division between the animal and the rational being. In the same way that evangelization and baptism are required to restore humanity to the heretic, enlightened education is needed to restore the reason of the barbarian and bring him to the enjoyment of civilization. In that thinking, the barbarian had a better chance of being redeemed by education (evangelization) than the savage, who had to be reduced to slavery. Primitive man, more identified with the wild beast than with civilized man, would lack freedom in the sense of “full and effective will,”⁵⁷ but which, for the purposes of his research, meant an early stage of development.

On the other hand, the understanding of human civilizational progress had to establish, in the manner of Newton, the general laws of the necessary continuity of the stages of development. As an event of the past, foreign to direct observation — much less to experimentation — that law had to be found in the “realm of finalities”, that is: in the “theoretical or conjectural history” that from an inductive reasoning would explain the origin and development of differences. Philosophy of history that reached its apogee with historicism with important implications at the time of the American revolutions (Artunduaga, R., & Cardona D., 2012).

To this must be added the spirit of fraternity of the French Revolution of 1789 that rejected all odious divisions. That is why the Scottish Enlightenment, with Adam Ferguson at the head, denied the existence of “natural men” because life in society is the nature of man. That is, to say that the primitive did not have a society is to deny his humanity, which is inappropriate. A palace is the same as a hut. The two realities are part of the same social nature of man. However, it is worth remembering in passing that much earlier, in the middle of the 16th century, and making use of the Aristotelian scheme, Bartolomé de Las Casas observed that the indigenous people were peoples equal to the Romans or Greeks. There existed in their societies the same order and harmony as in those celebrated nations of antiquity.⁵⁸ In this order of ideas, Enlighten-

56 Cf. William of Auvergne (1190 – 1249) *De anima* II, 15

57 See Voltaire (1996) in *Elements of Newton's Philosophy*, (p. 21).

58 The friar Jerónimo Román would refer in this subject to Las Casas in his *Republicas del Mundo* of 1575 (Góngora, p.52)

ment French thought opposed the practice of slavery that made those who practiced it more savages than those who suffered from it. Will this fact help to explain the discord between Spain and France in the 19th century?

The question of civilizational level is based on the economic and religious rivalry between European nations, —mainly between the English, French and Spanish—, which fed the conception of racial superiority. Ethnocentrism will materialize in the pseudo-scientific idea of the incidence of climatic factors and racial mixture in the apparent decadence of the customs of peoples. An attack directed mainly against the Spanish empire, although it should be remembered that “while the European nations had expelled the natives from their lands, noted the Count of Campomanes, Spain had transformed them into useful subjects (...) The English, for example, tended to exclude the native population from their society, the Spaniards, on the other hand, to include it” (Weber, D. p. 20).

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM

To the issue of freedom as a determining factor in civilization is added that of the influence of the environment. In 1768 Cornelius de Pauw’s book entitled *Philosophical Investigations on the Americans* was published in Berlin, a work that represented a general disqualification of the original inhabitants of the New World. De Pauw, based on Georges Louis Leclerc, Count of Buffon, argued that climate exerted a strong influence on character, taking this idea from reading Montesquieu, Sir John Chardin, and Dubos (Branding, 2015 p. 463). To argue that the inhabitants of America were incapable by nature of governing themselves —because their lands had not been worked into “fetid marshes”—, De Pauw collected the stories of travelers to confirm, by force, the ideas about the evolution of civilization. In the beginning, De Pauw thought, individuals brutalized by the climate were able to appeal to the “germ of perfectibility”, abandoned nomadism and fishing, making the “leap” to agriculture. Becoming sedentary, it was inevitable that they would form a “political constitution”, which would suppose the establishment of law in general and property in particular.

The physician Hippocrates and the Greek historian Hesiod had written about environmental determinism. The first will write the book: *Air, Water and Places* where he establishes the influence of the living environment on the individual. For the historian, on the other hand, the environment will be a key to understanding the decisions of indi-

viduals and the nature of their customs (Gracia, 2005). Determinism will become a scientific doctrine from the works of the Newtonian mathematician Perre-Simon Laplace (1749-1827); According to him, in order to understand the nature of a phenomenon, it is necessary to consider all the conditions of its appearance. There are no capricious generations in the kingdom of nature, each and every one comes into being through the succession of its causes. To understand the law governing that necessity, or its sufficient reason, is to know the principle of the evolution of matter.

Just as the animal condition established the level of civilization, the idea of commerce served as a sign of civilization for environmental determinists.

TRADE AND CIVILIZATION

In Pauw's line, the historian W. Robertson, rector of the University of Edinburgh, wrote an emblematic work: *History of America* (1777) which was part of his project to write a "history of the Human spirit" (Brading, 2015, p. 468). Developing the ideas of Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and John Millar, he argued that trade was a clear sign of civilization; for it was not possible without the right to private property. Modes of subsistence also determined the development of primitive societies. Being follows the operation of the spirit. Production would become more complex as demographics increased. The human spirit, by the requirement of social complexity, would pass from the savage stage to the barbarian stage and, from there, finally to civilization.

Regarding the indigenous people of the New World, Robertson saw them as a living vestige of the beginnings of humanity. Although they enjoyed a common humanity with the Europeans, the Indias had not developed their productive forces, due, among other things, to the influence on the character of the harsh environmental conditions. Irreparably separated from the progress of European nations, the West Indians could only be placed on a lower rung of culture. It is worth remembering, however, opposing opinions that enhanced Rousson's visions of the "noble savage": possessor of a natural, pure philosophy, uncontaminated by the vices of so-called civilized nations. Their detachment from money, together with their inclination to peace, represented what had been lost to Europeans after a long, tiring and ostentatious history, what they could never be again.

England, as well as Spain, Portugal and France had developed a trade because they were, “fortunately” in that geographical enclave through which manufactures flowed from east to west. Advantage also for Muslims. This made them think that feverish trade was an unmistakable sign of civilization. Thus consequence was confused with cause, since the division of labor, which would be at the basis of political organization, proclaimed by the main English economists, does not respond so much to a rationalization of production, as to a need of demand, which could only be satisfied with a “free” source of resources: America. In other words, the division of labor is directly proportional to the complexity of the interactions of its members, and this interaction is conditioned, in turn, by demographics closely linked to the carrying capacity of their territories.

Thus, it is easy to identify a division of labor in dense societies such as that of the Aztecs or the Incas (which Robertson considered to be in the last stages between barbarism and civilization), but difficult to appreciate in small societies. With the new impetus that the exploitation of America gave to world trade, the demand for manufactures and natural resources reconfigured Europe socially and economically; but on the basis of that reconfiguration Europe gave a negative judgment on America, confusing, as was said, the consequence with the cause.

Although Robertson was widely accepted and read in Spain, the same did not happen with the work of the Frenchman Guillermo Thomas Raynal, who, although a disciple of Buffon like Robertson and a follower of environmental determinism, pointed out that the domination of Spain, indolent, fanatical and despotic, according to him, was a cause of the backwardness of those original cultures: an extension of North Africa (!). Only by virtue of the free trade policies of Charles III, Raynal believes, will it be possible to reverse that ominous history that gravitates in the future of America.

In synthesis, at the end of the 18th century, for Enlightenment scientific thought, Native Americans were conceived as specimens that demonstrated the existence of fundamental principles or laws of development that governed human society (Weber, D. p. 50). They involved the transition from the initial stages of civilization, the “state of nature”, to the artificial European societies. In this way, the evolutionary idea was given rise, devoid even of Darwinian work.

To conclude, enlightened research was committed to the idea of the unity of the human family that had to go through initial stages from hunting and gathering, to agriculture

and trade. Stages that would explain cultural differences in terms of progress and backwardness and mediated by the idea of cultural decadence.

Today we know that those original peoples were not backward embryos of later societies but constituted fully developed societies. However, well into the Age of Enlightenment, the Spaniards of the Bourbon era — and although already enlightened — were still committed to the evangelization of their “Indian subjects”, building Gothic churches, persecuting witches and understanding differences only from a particular exploitative, theocentric and apologetic perspective. The idea of the level of civilization that came from enlightened science was more an explanation and justification of the policies of liberalism, of the time of its formulation, than a solid idea about the origin and difference of peoples. It became over time a political argument to confront the European cultures that resulted in the two world wars of which no time is sufficient to regret.

CLASS ANTAGONISM: IDENTITY AS RESISTANCE

Entering the 19th century, proletarian and anarchist movements were suspicious of the bourgeois state and its project of integrating difference into the capitalist system of production. Nationality and the very idea of the nation presupposed, on the one hand, the celebratory attitude of the petty bourgeoisie, and on the other: the ideological strategy of the elites to perpetuate the situation of exploitation of the proletariat.

For Marx, class antagonism is at the origin of civilization and without which progress cannot be understood (Marx, 2004, p. 135). The “regime of class antagonism” is a historical phenomenon, i.e., the result of a dialectical process of development (thesis, antithesis, synthesis). In primitive societies, with reduced means of production and restricted exchange, they would exemplify a fair proportion between supply and demand. In other words, society consumed its own production without creating excesses or deficits of capital or labor. But that “just proportion” was subjected to the “vicissitudes of prosperity, depression, crisis, stagnation, new prosperity, and so on” (idem, p.145). And in order to respond to the cyclical dynamics of the capitalist economy, bourgeois theorists created an “ideological system” composed of “categories of political economy” that naturalized that inefficient cycle in order to “dislocate the members of the social system” by converting “the different members of society into so many separate societies that succeed each other” (idem, p.207). This dislocation of societies constituted the

main weapon of the bourgeoisie, since it hindered “class consciousness” and, with it, the possibility of unity in struggle.

Based on these ideas and with regard to Latin American identity, Marxist thought will influence a large part of the Latin American intelligentsia, particularly historians, sociologists and philosophers. The original societies, now disappeared, would have had balanced systems of production and consumption related to their own cultural creations and identities.

From the framework of antagonisms, we will speak, then, of modes of production of peripheral formation versus the capitalist agrarian-latifundist mode of production (Dussel, 1977) or of forms of indigenous production versus forms of Spanish production, (Fals Borda, 1982, p.13-23). In short, the expansion of industrial capitalism in the mid-17th century would be responsible for the destruction of that primordial harmony of social reproduction. And so, the denunciation of capitalism’s predatory attitude towards native cultures would give rise to the anti-system movements and indigenous demands of the 20th century. Proletarian identity or the consciousness of belonging to the proletarian class would in itself cancel out the idea of the nation.

As a result, renowned Latin American thinkers will be inclined to recognize as the only possible identity the condition of exploitation, dependence, resistance and Latin American liberation. In the primitive forms of production and consumption, that internal morality survives that define both the singular character of a community and the existence of an alternative social bloc to the nation-capitalism dynamism (Smith, D. p. 145). In the same way, all science (Westernizing knowledge) would be linked to its own cultural form (De Certeau, 1999, p. 142), which materializes in economic, legal and political discourses.

In effect, the enlightenment thought of the Republican era established an epistemological paradigm that breaks with the organic vision of the world in which “nature, man and knowledge were part of an interrelated whole.” (Castro-Gómez, 2011, p. 130). Thus, nature and cultures were subordinated to the epistemic dimension of colonialism (idem, p. 132). Ultimately, what is at stake is the coexistence of a capitalist, global, majoritarian and hegemonic culture, with cultures that, although of greater historical and ethical significance, are on the verge of extinction. Cultures, in short, condemned to never be realized (García-Nossa, 1981, p. 111).

THE ANTAGONISM OF RACES: THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

At the end of the 19th century and after the last revolution of independence from Spanish power in America, that of the island of Cuba (1895-1898), an attitude of revisionist introspection emerged in the Spanish intelligentsia as an attempt to understand and justify its imperialist past. From the beginning, the genuine purposes of Columbus in instituting the Repartimientos, and their subsequent decline due to the greed of the conquistadors, were questioned. An account was made of the Christian civilizational ideal that initially animated the enterprise of discovery. By considering, erroneously, that all the native cultures of America were either hunters or gatherers, the hypothesis of Malthus was rehabilitated in the peninsula who in his *Principle of population* of 1798 affirmed that the geometric growth of the indigenous population was opposed to and detrimental to the arithmetical growth of food resources, which did, in his opinion, the conquest of the New World is necessary and urgent.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Creole elite, now in power, had the opposite effect: of extroversion, of looking outwards. The indocility of the indigenous, mestizos and slaves, the outbreak of rebellions and civil wars everywhere, together with the emergence of multiple constitutions, among other things, made them think that four hundred years of colonialism made the indigenous an indomitable being, refractory to civilization, which is why an urgent moral reconstruction was necessary.

The instability of the new republican configurations gave the impression to the world of the inability of the Latin race for self-government, as referred to by the Colombian thinker José María Samper (1831-1888) (Zea, 1993 p.13). In his opinion: the development of independence from Spanish power cannot be compared with that of the thirteen colonies of [North] America, since they, linked by a feeling of equality, had achieved social consolidation through the exercise of freedom of religion, freedom of exploitation and autonomy (idem, p. 14).

Antagonism that does not exist in Brazil because:

“[N]o having secular traditions (...) they were able to amalgamate more easily and readily with European civilization, since they had nothing to forget or unlearn, nor was their way of being profoundly opposed by colonization, an advantage that was lacking in Hispano-Colombia [Latin America], since nothing is more difficult than to implant in a relatively

civilized people an openly opposed civilization.” [Translated quote from its original in Spanish]

According to the above, the absence of racial antagonism in Brazil would explain the rapid assimilation of “civilization”. We cannot judge Samper because he could not witness the racial affirmative movements of the 20th century; The high level of Brazilian miscegenation, allowed by the Crown, gave the impression of racial harmony, to which must be added the late abolition of slavery (May 13, 1888). We refer to the myth of “Raizal Democracy”, an ideology that immobilized Brazilian society, preventing its identity recognition from the idea of a cultural superiority to that of the United States of North America (Hernández, 2017, p. 16). However, it is certain and proven that the indigenous population of Brazil was decimated, and the black was “categorized as someone incapable of full citizenship” (Santos, 1995 p.117)

The antagonism between the “white race” and the “men of color” [non-whites], as opposed to its counterpart: “raizal democracy” would explain the uneven development of the processes of cultural affirmation of Latin American nations. Perhaps guided by the ideas of European diffusionism, Samper thought that “Civilization” tends to balance differences (Zea, 1993, p. 19). Contact with other peoples will force the inevitable overcoming of the colonial era. The mistake of liberalism in the republican period was evident here: it meant freeing themselves from colonialism by assuming precisely that culture that reduced them to colonies.

From another point of view, there was a fear that the new republics would be a booty for the more developed states that had already shown their colonizing spirit over those nations that had not been able to stabilize. The unity of all differences was therefore a strategy to ward off those threats, and racial differences represented cracks in the common national project, so they had to be either denied with the ideology of racial democracy or dissolved quickly and violently as the ideology of race antagonism proposed.

In 1883, in Argentina, the work of the liberal D. F. Sarmiento appeared: *Conflicto y Armonía de las razas de América*, where he wrote:

All the efforts of the legislator to inspire them (the Indians) with the desire to improve their native faculties have been aborted. Neither the good treatment they have received if they were admitted into society, nor the important privileges with which they have been favored, have been sufficient to take away from them the fondness for wildlife which, however,

they know only by tradition. There are very few civilized Indians who do not sigh for the solitude of the woods and who do not take advantage of the first opportunity to return to it. [Translated quote from its original in Spanish]

This negative vision will guide the idea of the impossibility of the indigenous to comply with the law. For this reason, the *Indians* would be subject to subjection to the legal empire imposed by the white man; only in this way, he thinks, will the “harmony of the races” be possible that will guarantee the “practice of government”. To overcome the lags of not having overcome the passage from savagery to barbarism; Sarmiento thinks, the Indian should have been reduced to the “necessary” servitude, but redeemed by the use of the horse, introduced by Spain, which would restore him a moral superiority (Sarmiento, 1883 p. 153).

In the line of Sarmiento, Carlos Octavio Bunge, proposes as a solution to the indigenous question the Europeanization of the Indians through labor. Based on the hypothesis of the Asian migration of the indigenous people of South America, in *Our America* (1918) Bunge argues the need to overcome the common features in the “psychology of the Indian” (Bunge, 1918 p. 123): laziness, sadness, revenge, oriental fatalism and arrogance inherited from the despotic past of the indigenous people in Asia, before their migration to America. The evils of Spanish America, he affirms, have their origin in the combination of the indolent character of the Spaniards with the negligence of the natives. Added to this is the mistreatment or abandonment received by the Spaniards (idem, p. 130). All this generated a relentless struggle to assimilate to the European one or disappear.

From psychophysics, Bunge seeks to demonstrate the correlation of different physical traits with psychological ones, and to deduce a physical creole type to which corresponds a psychological type of its own. With this he sought to establish the scientific basis of what he would call mestizo morality: “In a word, every physical mestizo, whatever his parents and siblings, is a moral mestizo” (idem p. 140).

Bunge relies on the genetic laws of G. Mendel and on the idea of the existence of four “historical races”⁵⁹: the white, the yellow, the black and the Hispanic-American race. The latter was divided, due to miscegenation, into Hispanic-blacks and Hispanic-Indians and zambos. Any of these divisions caused a “psychological inharmony”, a

59 Linnaeus in 1770 in the *Treatise on the Human Races* divided them into: European whites, African blacks, Asiatic yellows and American reds. Hering, M. (2007). “Race”: historical variables. *Journal of Social Studies*, 16-27

“spiritual form of anthropological hybridism” that played against the Indian because it implied the internal struggle against his white content, (white tendency that would allow him to adapt to the environment); but they could well fall into heroism or misery, the latter being more likely (p. 142).

If miscegenation continues, he affirms, it would result in “the dissolution of the species by degeneration” (idem, p. 143). For Bunge, the crosses between the “historical races” were successful because they occurred naturally and according to a beneficial climate action; on the other hand, the crossing of the Spanish-American races was “artificial and against nature” and, she would affirm—for a history of machismo—: “nature—which because she is a woman is vengeful—we would say that she took revenge” (p. 144).

The pseudo-scientific bases were laid to justify the antagonism of races in Latin America and with it the theft of their lands and their people.

On the side of romanticism — a reaction to the positivism of Enlightenment genesis — the issue was no different. In its claim to be a bridge between the European legacy and its own, romanticism in Latin America put the individual before the collective. After years of Spanish domination, the national personality, embodied in the individual, suffered from such inexperience of freedom that cultural emancipation was required (Pena, 2011, 198). In this sense, democracy would only be possible through the correspondence between cultural development and individual freedom as a principle. Hence, the Romantics in America (except Rafael Núñez) leaned towards liberal thought and the need to break with the Spanish through a “reconstruction” of mentalities. To reaffirm itself as a novelty in the concert of peoples, the individual had to unite itself with that national being, and this ideology hid other worldviews: “other” ways of inhabiting culture.

This affirmed the “antagonism of races” because of Spanish domination. A tradition of thought was thus constructed in the same way that the British, invoking India’s feudal past, explained the alleged inability of the Indians to self-govern (Cohn, 1996, p.166).

FROM THE DIVERSITY OF RACES TO THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURES

The 20th century awakens with rumors of political and economic violence. Education was the indisputable property of the Church to the detriment of native cultures (Soto et al. 2019). The dispossession of indigenous lands was understood as a condition for the economic modernization of the country. In effect, the insertion of industrial capitalism required the individual appropriation of the land and of a peasant proletariat to sustain it. As the Castilians did, in their day, the indigenous people were forced to replace subsistence agriculture with a salary and thus turn them into one more cog in the capitalist market system.

In Colombia, in 1907, General Rafael Uribe Uribe synthesized the liberal civilizational project: “reduction of the savages” to turn them into key pieces for the exploitation of territories that would inevitably attract foreign investment. It did not take long for that conception of development to attack the possession of the indigenous people that dated back to colonial times; they were victims once again (!) of the conquest and of that “nationality” that was strange and foreign to them. Two visions of life confronted each other: one obsessed with profit, and the other based on harmony with “Mother Earth” and collective property, diametrically opposed to the new republic where that colonial inheritance of the rank that granted the possession of the land subsisted, a “Nobility by birth”, which without deceiving us, was based on the systematic theft of the land.

Since the catastrophe caused by the two world wars, Europe has been trying to unify itself in the recognition of differences. On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emerged, which brought together the precepts of the enlightenment: “the great human family”, “the high aspirations of man” and the right to “rebellion against tyranny”. Western nationality becomes a right. Article 26, as a reaction to the dominance of religion, states that education must strive for understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all ethnic or religious groups. Parents will choose what kind of education to give their children.

Inevitably, the disastrous events of National Socialism led to a reconsideration of the scientific basis of the conception of race that “degenerated” into racial superiority. The work of Franz Boas in 1915 (1959) called into question the ideas of racial types. Modern genetics leans towards a flexibility of the Darwinian type that would overcome the idea

of fixed races (Gómez, 1993). On the political side, in Latin America it is assumed that it is not the races that fight each other, but the imperialisms (English, French, American, Russian) that are the enemies of all cultures.

As a response to the old politics of comfort, Francisco Miró Quesada finds in that antagonism an opportunity for indigenisms to affirm themselves in their being and forge the national reality in the face of the nuclei of world power (Zea, 1993, p 35). If there is a unity, it must be that of affirming the denied and exalting the despised. The antagonism of races would mean, in this sense, the existence and recognition of multiple nations within the same nation, subjugated by a superior military and economic power, but not a moral one. Diversity of cultural projects made invisible since the conquest, colony and republic. Other authors, more conciliatory, will reaffirm that precisely the phenomenon of *mestizaje* in Hispanic America shows the openness of the indigenous people to difference, while the white man —who gave his body but not his soul (Sánchez, 1991 p.64)— would be more predisposed to war and domination.

The enlightened idea of a human species that would unify differences in common faculties falls before the evidence of its devastating power, generating the crisis of the concept of race. In this sense, and without anthropological evidence, differences or identities, in their understanding, would have to be addressed from social psychology. Identity, from these approaches, is a kind of identity awareness arising from the relationship with geography and culture. In other words, there would be two aspects, one subjective and the other objective, that intervene in the distinction between “race community” and that of ethnic community. In the first factor, the subjective, the ethnic community is, above all, an “ethnic awareness” of its own specificity, which markedly differentiates it from other human groups. In relation to the objective factor, it relates to cultural “material” links: creations, traditions, institutions, language, history, geography and customs (De Obieta, 1989, 43). The idea of nation is now applied to small groups that call themselves as such. Thus, it was not possible to escape from the concept of nation, but to multiply its existence in nations contained in a geopolitical space.

In the 1960s and as a response to the crisis of liberalism, the cultural revolution (1968) took place, which claimed the recognition of the different forms of life at the individual and collective level. It will bring together the radical anti-system leftists around the figure of the victims of modern capitalist development (Aguirre, 2017). From the 1970s to the 1990s, a series of indigenous social movements took place in Latin America.

Mapuche Movement (Chile), Zapatista Movement (Mexico), Landless Movement (Brazil), the CRIC in Colombia, among others. The struggle is oriented towards the recognition of the new identities and cultures in resistance, with a wide reception and support in the Latin American intelligentsia, mainly of Marxist inspiration. Cultures in Latin America will be understood from the original relationship with their territories, which since the time of the conquest had been subject to expropriation. Autonomy meant the historical and real restitution of the land, which meant the assumption of cultural difference through ethno-education or what Zibechi (2017) would call “self-education in movement.”

Indigenous education required a break with the epistemological paradigm inherited from the enlightenment, so since the 1990s, several collective movements opened the doors for the recognition of ethnic knowledge. Recognition that also arose from an exhaustion of the modern scientific discourse that was projected as neutral, a-historical and independent of contexts (Artunduaga, 2017). We are referring to knowledge that is critical of power and that constitutes a genuine alternative for intercultural understanding of the future. Ethnic education involves the recovery of the organic vision of the world as an integral part of the recovery of the land and its nationality. Its language, traditions and knowledge are rescued through the education of its members, which will guarantee its survival.

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (C 169) — ratified in Colombia by law on 21 March 1991 — sought “to save eroded cultures (...) recalling the particular contribution of indigenous and tribal peoples to cultural diversity, to the social and ecological harmony of humanity and to international cooperation and understanding” (foreword). The Convention obliges governments to take “such special measures as may be necessary to safeguard the persons, institutions, property, labour, cultures and the environment of the peoples concerned.” Identity would be contemplated as a right inherent to the intimate personal awareness, beyond the national project of the enlightened Creole elite.

FINAL WORDS

The self-affirmation of one's own culture was Europe's conceptual strategy to understand what was different in the face of the novelty of the discovery-invasion of America. Cultural self-affirmation that was the result of a past of struggles against barbarians and heretics. Enlightened reason will not abandon this principle by dressing up the difference in scientificity and establishing the idea of the evolution of civilization in which the nation represented its last stage. Progress and nationality will be the axiom of understanding differences and that will have an impact on future educational proposals. The natural and the animal condition were conceived as opposed to progress through the ethical resource of the self-determination of the will. All this concealed the foundational ethnocentrism and its idea of education as a colonizer's vehicle. To this are added the ideas about the incidence of climate and racial mixture as elements of disqualification of the indigenous in an educational and civilizational project. All this came to be condensed, ultimately, in “private property” and commerce as principles of political society, thus giving the ideological basis of intelligence for the social, economic and cultural plundering of the American indigenous peoples.

Latin American political independence did not imply mental independence, but rather translated into the empire of the mercantile system in economics, and a federal republican government in politics. Faced with the failure of the new republics, the Enlightenment and Romanticism raised the idea of a unity in difference that brought with it the doctrines related to the “level of civilization”, now converted into ideological traditions operating in the educational and social proposal of liberalism.

The ideology of class antagonism and race antagonism, as the hidden face of the nation, emphasized the inveterate consciousness of oppression and that had historical manifestations such as Túpac Amaru and Manuel Quintín Lame, among many others. Unlike the route that Europe would follow with the idea of racial superiority, where, according to them, the creative spark of superior races would be diminished by the “mixing of bloods”; In the Latin American case, on the other hand, the existence of the division of races and their inclusion in the international proletarian struggle, as a reaction to the dispossession of land and culture, gave rise to the project of indigenous education that cannot be understood as an opposition to enlightenment thought, but as a result of its exhaustion.

The idea of the nation as the ultimate degree of civilization has its origin in the configuration of Western science, becoming a subsystem of politics. In these pages we have sought to understand science as a product of history and politics and not as an independent and disinterested entity, which, we believe, ultimately supports the proposals of a critical pedagogy that puts those ancestral forms of knowledge in dialogue with other forms of equally historical knowledge. From that dialogue, the realization of authentic Latin American plurinational democracy will be possible (Artunduaga, 2017). However, as long as our cultural, economic and political system does not revolve around the solidarity of man with man, harmony between cultures will not see the light, even if it continues to wait, longing, in the realm of the possible.