

## **The Paris conference<sup>1</sup> on climate change and the end of triumphant modernity**

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The challenges of climate change are considerable. The matter is to reduce the growth of the earth temperature to two centigrade Celsius at the end of this century, facing a present day dynamics conducing to an increase of 4,8 centigrade. To reach this target, it is necessary to reduce of 40 % the production of greenhouse effects for 2050. The danger otherwise is to lose 30 % of world biodiversity, to arrive to perilous degree of acidity of the oceans and to force 400 millions of people to migrate because of the rising seas. The great producers of CO<sub>2</sub> are the three sources of fossil energies (coal, oil, gas) but the production of methane, an even more damaging gas than CO<sub>2</sub>, is coming from cattle raising.

The fundamental issue is the origin of such a situation, which has taken disproportional dimensions and has put humankind in front of a choice between life or death. The International Group of climate scientists (GIEC) affirms with 95 % of certainty, that it is the result of human activity. How to explain that rational beings are collectively adopting an irrational behavior? There are obviously a variety of reasons, but all are related to the moment when the human being considered himself not as part of nature, but as above it and began to develop the means of dominating it, without consideration for the consequences.

From the XIII century on in continental Europe, the development of a proto-capitalist market economy, pushed an activity unrelated to agrarian production. The progressive privatization of "commons" in England in the XV century, linked to the growths of textile industry, has been at the origin of the process of "primitive accumulation" of capital. The basis of the idea of progress of the Age of Enlightenment was created: linear progress, making of human being the only subject of his future. The development of scientific knowledge and its technical applications, at the source of such a promethean dream, seemed limitless. The transformation of "natural wealth" in "natural resources" accelerated the exploitation of nature, considered inexhaustible.

To reach such a goal, it was also necessary to release individual capacities from the burden of traditional social structures and to promote the individual as the privileged actor of progress. Private initiative was the way and the philosophical thought of the XVI and XVII centuries built its rational basis and the religious Reformation its ethical legitimacy. Everything was ready to build a modernity absorbed by the law of the market (Bolivar Echeverría). The economy has been detached from society (Karl Polanyi) and identified with capital accumulation, imposing its laws to all social processes, forgetting the "externalities", i.e. the environmental and social damage external to the market, but paid by the subaltern classes and Mother Earth.

Already at the middle of XIX century, Karl Marx (the first book of the Capital) said that the consequences of capitalist development, a very efficient system for the production of goods

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<sup>1</sup> COP21, the 21th Conference of Parts

and services, was leading to an imbalance of the metabolism (exchanges of matters) between humans beings and nature, because of the difference between the reproduction rhythm of capital (more and more rapid) and the one of nature (slow). This would lead to serious consequences.

Until the beginning of this century, the capitalist class, north and south, has despised ecological concerns, considered irrational. However, they began to take it seriously, when changes of environment factors affected the rates of profit and the accumulation of capital. They all began to paint themselves in green (greenwashing or green capitalism). Facing international conferences and measures taken by individual states, they launched an intensive and costly labor of lobbying, in order to keep the measures at a minimum rate and market friendly. To preserve the hegemony of the economic system, large corporations (petroleum companies like Chevron, Total and Petrobras; electricity companies such as "Electricité de France – EDF", banks like the "Banque Nationale de Paris-Paribas", etc....) sponsored major conferences of the United Nations: Rio+20 in 2012 and the COP21 in Paris in 2015. They organized also exhibitions of high level propaganda, like the one of the "Grand Palais" of the French capital, at the occasion of COP21.

It is not only a matter of defense of always more concentrated and financialized economic interests, but well the end of a modernity colonized by the logic of capitalist market. This implies not only the need to regulate the system, like in the 30s of the XX century, but to find an alternative paradigm of collective life on earth, a fundamental orientation of complementarity and solidarity, instead of excellency and competitiveness. Therefore, the climate issue is nowadays a part of the global class struggle.

A postmodernism built on individualism and refusing any idea of structure and system, is not a solution. On the contrary, it is the best bedfellow of neoliberalism, which needs this type of negation, when capitalism is organizing it as a global system. To elaborate, through thinking an action, a new modernity, based on respect of nature, prevalence of use value above exchange value, generalization of democratic processes and interculturality, is constituting the real goal for contemporary humanity.

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