

At Odds with Difference and Pluralism in Times of Hegemony

Candido Mendes

The Accelerated Regression of World Dialogue: Towards a Fundamentalism of Reason?

The present perspective of the world reception to the Dialogue of Civilization shows the overwhelming impact to the Mahomet cartoons. The Middle-Eastern distress in response to the Danish drawings against the Prophet exceeded any controlled demonstration. In addition, the beginning of the European reaction to the mounting unrest in Islamic cities signals the rise of a new fundamentalism of the Western reason. Are we on the eve of a primary, surprising and defensive Enlightenment in the aftermath of an impending closure of an exchange between cultures? Upon the ravage of the Islamic world, the West may tend to support, without concessions, the rights of reason, reaffirmed in two of its direct corollaries, namely the freedom of expression and the freedom of the media of our times, at the full risk and responsibility of their stakes.

The initial reactions of the European media, recognizing the disproportion reached by the response to the car-

toons, straightforwardly refused to abide by the formal demands for apologies, upon the huge range of values put in conflict.

The Bush evangelism, nevertheless, hastened to express such regret in the name of religion and with respect to the platform of human rights. Does the reaction manifested by major French, Spanish and Italian dailies express only the immediate tensions *vis-à-vis* the Islamic world after the terrorist assault on the World Trade Center? Or is it the platform of freedom conquests that is in question? Secularity, as gained in history, claims its respect for religions, fully recognizing their equal places in the contemporary public space.

The controversy triggered by *The Jyllands-Posten* cartoons indeed involves not the simple contextual reciprocity of dialogue between cultures, but rather a confrontation, in its absolute, transcendent sense of mankind's rights and their support, at level with what intrinsically makes modernity driven by the Enlightenment, namely such true, intrinsic progress of the time of men.

Therefore, in itself, what the blasphemy questions, as far as neo-fundamentalisms are concerned, is the very exchange of the Islamic culture, with critical reason. What is at stake at the effective isochrony of a world's mind in reflection, where a contextual thinking does not preclude a working consciousness as a transcendental conquest, inseparable from a *Dasein*, a being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 2006).

Also alongside this direction, one is required, together with a preliminary, epistemological reading of the dialogue

of cultures, to see, within the deepest Islamic scholarship, how the dialectics of modernity advances and responds to such simultaneity of critical thought, regardless the contextualities of world representations, of their coding and of their Rosetta Stone (Bordes-Benayoun and Schnapper, 2006).

Modernity and Critical Thought

The extraordinarily rich contributions of several Islamic thinkers, including Abdul Karim Soroush, Mohammed Arkun, Fazlur Rahman, and Abdel Mahid Charfi, mark in their approaches this seminal breakthrough. They face themes such as the theory of contraction, in the expansion of religious knowledge, the thinkable and the unthinkable in contemporary Islam, a new vision of the Koran and the Revelation, and a reassumed comprehension of the prophecy's sealing. A theorist like Abu Zayd summarizes all this global, deconstructive thinking, as he reflects over the long duration and the reference polarities in their contents. In his veritable, comprehensive exegesis, he sets the distances between manipulation and hermeneutics (Benzine, 2004).

Western post-modernity might find in this reception and in its broad range the same isochronial opening, thoroughly working today in true epistemic efforts overcoming blocking methodologies or voids in the references to the sense of contemporariness.

A new demand points today to the raising of new collapses in these deconstructions and of an irrupting collective unconscious with all the vigor of its irrationality. There would be, along the axis of the great Western rationalism, an instinctive rescue of the *cogito*, in prey with the swell of difference carried out to its intransitive, assertion in a world threatened by globalization (Glazer, 1997).

One could not, however, be held only with this new concern, going up to the crack of this long push towards the platform of transcendence, in the context of men's history (Favre, 2006).

An Unshareable Fear

Moreover, after September 11, and the explosion of a culture of peace, we face a universally inappeasable fear, unable even to a shareable panic. Emergency exits are equivocal and carry us out furthest away from the practices of detente of the good old days of late 20th century. The new outlined confrontation between West and Islam presupposes confused, discontinued alarms and straightforwardly different mobilizations.

The fall of the W.T.C put the Oval Room perpetually on its guard against the violence of terrorism, at one time anonymous and unverifiable, creating this new contradiction for the international coexistence of a “super-*potestas*.” Never before has a world power been the continued, conscious prey, at one time, of its imminent blow (Lewis, 2005) of a

specific aggression, whereby Al-Qaeda may target Los Angeles' Library Building, for example, as a catastrophic sequel to the Manhattan twin towers episode. Especially, this is only the beginning of times when young girls carrying dynamite corsets, in Iraq or Palestine, kiss their parents goodbye and leave to explode inside a bus. They are driven by a response to the collective unconscious's faintness after such long expropriations of the soul, experienced by the cultures object of the radical domination, to the extreme point of rapture by the West, and its infinite apparatuses and wonders. It is an obsolete de-victimization, which has the full power of a surge of awakenings sharpened by the revolution of Khomeini in Iran and supported by the successive chain of distress where Al-Qaeda in Kenya, Tanzania, then Aden, carried the final blow against New York. This would be a true "Big-bang," a response of historical vindication carried out with an apocalyptic dimension. The movements in reaction to the cartoons of the Prophet showed how much the wave of rejection was reinforced, with the masses in Damas, Cairo, Tripoli or Beirut beyond any control by any system.

Hegemony, Contradiction and Preemption

At the same time, this era of regression accelerates, due to the fact that, beyond the corollaries of the civilization of fear, the order of hegemony tangles up with objective contradictions of its own *diktat* and the models of its *potestas* (Zizek, 2004). The Oval Room world can even allow itself

to face its own assumptions, according to which a truth imposes itself by its internal consonance as well as, especially, by compliance to the established rules of the game.

Exactly the opposite occurs nowadays, considering the growing elusive respect to democracy, emanating from effectively free elections, like fundamentals of general recognition, for international stability, and the reference between Society and State. The emerging resistance of the United States against Hamas, who legitimately seized the power in Palestine through general elections, shows the limits of the ideological range of the *urbis et orbis* model of coexistence between Washington and the peripheries. Admittedly, the purposes of radical conflict with Israel imply all efforts of the United Nations in order to ensure international world order. But they do not include the rejection, in principle, of the new emerging actor, Hamas, in Ramallah, or of the principles of recognition whereby a reliability in itself of the model might still make progress on the *ad hoc* stakes of the Oval Room.

We have not quite realized every step where the complexity of hegemonic conditioning can face not only its own discourse but also the very sequence of the event (Baudrillard, 2004). A brand new power is manifest on those unilateral limiting margins, truly in detriment of the established givens of the conflict, which are projected onto a whole new range of initiatives, when the action and interactions cross quite disparate scales, as compared to their former assumptions.

There are, with the pre-emption and quartering of old event-driven serializations, not only the still unperceived impact of such an ousting on the collective unconsciousness, but also the subliminal construction of its representations and compensations, from the point of view of the old collective protagonistic level (Kastoryano, 2006). Or, especially, of what, *vis-à-vis* such subtractions, continues to comprise a symbolic compensation, a sense of sacrifice and a collective rescue. How does the ousting of the event reflect over the imagination—in all the violence of the shock grammar and its expected gamut? To which point has the stake of hegemony and its discourse not only drawn aside the event, but also installed an odd, subjective aim at the range of erratic substitution, by such evacuation and such resumption of its course completely removed from the antecedent? Can one escape from the sequences but not from the transcendence of their transformation into a spectacle? Also, what is the weight, in backlash terms, of the sequels for the traditional assumed roles of resource and risk in taxes by their options? Does the fall of the WTC provide a surplus of a ravaged awareness? Such a spectacle wake up on the collective unconsciousness a fitting prowess-martyrdom, and a vindictive connotation only found *ex post*, facing the awesome tide of the World Trade Center collapse (Stockhausen). Can history write off such late awakening of a collective perception? Social complexity moves in the open, with no *a priori* rule to cumulate mobilization with conscience and collective reification, with virtualization and its

fetish. Which was, in this causality inner, the link between the fall of the towers and the surge against blasphemy? Without such apocalyptic glare, would the shock level have reached such an identitary fusion? And to which point has this imagination, thus triggered, brought up the acting of a collective unconsciousness for good?

Pre-emption and Subliminal Retrieval

How do these emerging diffuse actors behave *vis-à-vis* such an expropriation scenario? Especially when this subtraction of the event takes place, following a historical dismissal in the long term, and suddenly becomes the prey of its seizure by an excessive spectacle and its subsequent mobilization? In the long term, history shows us that a collective awakening is not a, *per se*, condition for a decisive subjective play, in the causality of events dealing with “global social facts” (Bello, 2005). Colonial assimilation, for example, managed to be perpetrated in subtle caesuras, many times by delaying the national re-appropriation of political independences, when proselytism held to ransom, without remainders, identity assertions persisting at the heart of the dominated people.

One wonders which scenario is opened today on the assumption of cumulating these two conditions, when hegemony imposes pre-emption on the Islamic world at the moment of a full swarming of its delayed conscience and in the wake of the Western expropriation. This sudden es-

trangement will perhaps, still ravaged, avenged, and reinforced, reach the point of martyrdom and testimony, which has been shown, in its anonymous tragedy, by the spontaneous awakening of terrorism, built-up since the invasion of Iraq. Considering the new Iranian escalation, the Oval Room says it is ready to provide “any responses” up to some of the new innovations and sequels to the *Star Wars* saga (Peters, 2005). To what point do radical horizon changes inscribe forever pre-emption as a fact marking today the organization mode of complexity, subjected to hegemony, in these times inaugurated by the 9/11 aftermath?

The Stake of the Irrational

A doubly termed irrationality may also account, on the antagonists’ side, for a cumulative jump in the hegemony scenarios as being precisely the natural logics of conflict, in the early 21st century. How to appraise such a much orchestrated escalation tragedy? Can the trajectory drawn by Ahmademinejah, as a reprisal of the Khomeyni tradition, elude the adversary, and in spite of the long Khatami dialogue, through a re-affronting at any risk, still stop preemption? The nuclear threat games reflect an outdated tone, faithful to the cold war climate, talking of alert exchanges, anticipated symbolic confrontations, and discharge of the effective aggressive power, in an always-symmetrical resumption of threats and responses. In the context of hegemony, risks only come from irrationality, and then from

confrontations passed on to testimonials, nevertheless their radical anonymity. In fact, in this context, the desire of the bomb from Iran has to be shown in the labyrinth of alleged peaceful uses of atomic energy. Ahmademinejah's threat plays in this universe whereby rhetoric becomes the event through to its own enunciation. Irrationality is the continuous escape to preemptive surge, for good. The post-September 11 era buries any idea of resuming the world's order as thought by a culture of peace, disarmament and good will- ingness, according to the old world of nations, with their al- liances and sovereignties now corroded by hegemony (Hersh, 2004). There is no return to the *status quo ante*, as if the occupation of Iraq could be reversed just like the U.S. did in the Vietnam War. At the same time, what it is the trig- ger for the outburst of a final solution against the second "axis of evil" in Teheran?

Hegemonic Logic in Distress

We are very close to a new stage of history where causa- tion flirts with spectacle in order to disentangle itself of the old event's entire linearity. It is marked by sequels, expo- nential reprisals, irrational turnings, perverse accountancies of mobilization and open bluff games, amidst the full para- doxes of the hegemonic rationality. Doubly termed confron- tation endeavors to recover the land of exponential power beyond deterrence, at the erratic cost of absolute power. It is crucial to inquire into the cumulative causality of these

states of representation of the Islamic world over the West, and the successive sides of this delayed, continual logics. It follows in successive stands the sacrificial attack, the vindicatory conscience, the permanent confrontation, and the irretrievable account settlement. The late game, kept out of night-light by the apocalyptic disproportion of September 11, has raised the accelerating recoveries in this mobility through anticipation testimonials where Islam prophecies have taken the form of anonymous and uncontrollable martyrdom. It is with the threatening thus unchained that the Moslem world can still avoid the advent of the preemptive universe.

Only by this stage of unnegotiable irrationality can Rumsfeld's buttons still remain halted by the Islamic new public conscience of the rejection to any intervention in the Middle East. The swell against the cartoons may have provided such a proof in advance. Eventually, "Marines" were not received in Baghdad as liberators of Saddam's yoke. Likewise, Ahmademinejah succeeds in showing how eager the Oval Room is for "any-azimuths" confrontation as a requirement for setting a hegemonic order. In such a cumulative reverse of logics the "axes of evil" objectively become residues of resistance—at the old level of sovereignties—against radical intervention, ensured by the fight against universal terrorism.

Democratic insurance is no longer due to the bastion of difference but rather, *urbi et orbis*, to the earthmoving of a flat tening order, by either throwing the opponents to the

void, or offering them a return to the system as replicants. As long as a truce can be still supported by the marshes of irrationality, or as long as Iran faces the imminence of a new preemptive irruption, it is necessary to signal the hostage area, where difference can still be maintained between exile and survival, at the peripheric regimes already menaced by the escalation of simulacra (Baudrillard and Valiente Noailles, 2005).

Prospective Diasporas and Identities

The appeal to the concept of Diaspora (Safran, 1991) would still help us to retain the stake of these collective actors' sense, at the brim of the very stage of their history. They would not be driven out of their original territory, pushed by the first alignments of hegemony as a democratic diktat put forward early political forces split on a civil war stage, at the edge of new war of religion, at the risk of a return to ethnocide. In the deepest of their quest identities, peripheries would wanton out of the paradigm of a national soul. Virtualization becomes hegemony's final blow, with the seizure of the dominated cultures' subjectivities.

Even in the good old colonial times of domination and massive migrations, they secured their Diasporas' survival by safeguarding the bridgeheads of their first and fundamental identity matrixes, and every historical beginning returned to the Jewish paragon. In our times, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, diasporas featured in the American

vastnesses, as an example of such primordial roots, with the Chinese or Japanese flow of immigrants. Or, in the mid twenties, the Armenians in their voluntary ghetto (Van Hear, 1998). In spite of distances, undecieved by the caesura, these identities at large always took shape according to a center and to a peripheral fold in the traditional references of a historical space. The pattern stood, regardless of the migrations' forced character, as a consequence of a civil war, or of the original countries' own demographic explosions. We can see now the increase of a different, prospective diaspora (Kodmani-Darwish, 1997). The identity gathering moves to the dimensions of a future seizure, at the same time, also emphasized by the de-axed times of a radical wandering, as a world fully threatened, after 9/11.

The construction of this prospective identity reflects the large migratory flows of these last 30 years continental displacements towards Europe. They respond to the successive sagas—Turkish-German, Maghrebo-French and generalized Arabs of in the UK. The November 2005 incidents in the Parisian suburbs show very well how any policy of assimilation disappears. Eventually, the attraction exerted by the megalopolis only reproduced the center/periphery opposition in resonance of a growing memory of failure before new horizons. This would plunge any Diaspora into a true loss through a discourse whose intransitive violence is the answer to the old civilizing, flowing movements, betting in early modernity of the last two centuries on the world's macro-balance games, dynamisms and their final success.

The concept of a prospective Diaspora, beyond simple return, has an identity reference frame, which also shows itself in the Caucasus exposed to the Empire de-mediation, propelled into the subjective collectivity of a world going global (Scheffer, 1995). The historical proportions of this clamor faces, at the same time, a national State, recasting, the multiple social times of its memory. This fundamental uprising is as out of date as again, rebirthed, for having covered, its Islamic and pre-Islamic basis, of its recognizable cultural roots, together with their different Empires, and, as a first Empire of modernity, the Soviet system (Chauprade, 2006).

To the benefit of the true strategic debate regarding differences, brought to the last stake of pluralisms in search of the new isochronal history, we can see, in this huge theatre of Empires, the assertion of meaning and event—in a praxis, as creative as wild, in which identity emerges according to a new perspective. Where are at work the diachronically buried marks and remains of historical recognition? Where, indeed, to carry out even further, start true hermeneutics in order to find the minimal reference frames of such “being in the world,” exposed in its recasting with political differentials of memory?

From the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean

Any cultural dialogue depending on the last grounded historical mobility implies at the geopolitical level the eco-

conomic emerging leverages of globalization. Therefore, the impact of the huge Bakou–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline linking the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean (Simonet, 2006). Therefore, it is from the tallies of supra-continental integration that the oil economy of the Caucasus has established itself in an emerging Western market, assuring new connections between that area and the Latin world. It did so in a new crucial scenario where hegemonies still pay their debt with the territories and to the objectively conditioned games of their apparatuses of influence and control. It brings, at in the same time, a new shift of the Caucasus from the Eurasian continental mass, where the Soviet world widened on the dominant Slavic empires of the early modern era.

One does then meet, through a true tectonic history, a contemporary stake of such kind, which rejoins the Mongolian or Turkish historical course, throughout the last millenia, of the Western Asian population flows (Termon, 2005). One returns, with respect to the Latinity empires and the Arab print, to the theatre par excellence of civilizations and historical games of exponential “excess.” All this scenario is grounded on a literal emerging landscape for the impeding globalization. There are few dimensions in the world where international perspective also becomes a exemplary in such times, when the State assumes its Nation-like entity, still exposed to the turbulences of its regional rallying.

Turkey and Russia take shape as a counterpoint to such game where the geo-economy is dimensioned at the eleventh hour as the final body of the Azeri protagonism. The

Mediterranean escape from the Caucasus is of primary importance within this framework, which regains identity weights of a social memory and their mobilization in this specific “world-border” of Empires. At all events, and beyond the monumentality of the pipelines works, all the frame of this new Azerbaijan strategy profits from diachronic richness for that historical recovery of willful strength, at odds with the creative push of its diasporas.

The Caucasus Upstream of Difference

What is the Azerbaijani emergence, upon its collective recognition, working at the same time amidst new isochronal projects and the multiple architecture springs of its subjectivity?

The world of the Caucasus offers us an exemplary situation in its current search for, both, the Nation State and a stock for a “too much identity” of Empire, at an anthological crossroads of history’s courses (Carrère d’Encausse, 2005). It lines up in a whole density of references *vis-à-vis* this collective unconsciousness of Islamic revivals under Western expropriation. The Azeri universe is unexpectedly reinforced by the continental role as well as by an identity willfulness played even against mega powers built as system of reason or democratic accomplishment.

In such frames of identity search, few areas in the world can claim the resource fullness of these “diasporas-in-the-making” as seen by Kodmani-Darwish. The last found-

ing decades show us, in this creative dialectics, the cumulative reference in their pantheons among true national dynasties and their founders, the appeal to the Nation at the time of the overflow of this historical matrix by the West, and an eventual ethnical revival brought by the addition of regionalisms, or, at distinct enclaves, the test of an unheard-of acceleration reinforced by its extremes in order to best resist against an hegemony without borders (Laruelle and Peyrouse, 2006). Their founding memory is agonistic because it is folded up over canonically generational times. It can succeed by moving forward from an empire and its ideology of reason, together with a cultural background assumed in plain secularization like a heritage. It is with the rise of a paradigm that the force of a difference, lively acquired at the globalization crossroads meets its ramparts before hegemony. Rather by an optional collective will than by an inertial drive towards the future.

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